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—would come to her and, holding out his arms, would say, 'Your days of loneliness—of renunciation—are over. There is nothing now to part us.'

"The weeks and the months sped by, and he made no sign; at last, summoned by her, he did come; but it was to confess that he was engaged to another woman, a younger woman; one who had never known sorrow, one who had never had to withstand temptation. She was the daughter of his next-door neighbour. No doubt, innocently enough, this girl had betrayed her liking for him; he had been flattered; time and propinquity had done the rest."

A scarlet wave of indignation swept over Enid's face as she listened to this distorted version of her love-idyll, but she had sufficient strength of will to remain silent; she was determined to hear Mrs. Alston to the end. Perhaps that lady was a little disappointed at the reception of her narrative. She would have liked to have seen her listener wince, cry out, show some sign of dismay or suffering, as the fact of her lover's previous passion for another woman was forced home upon her—something to indicate that the thin edge of the wedge of doubt as to his future loyalty to her had entered her soul; but, beyond that one flush of outraged pride, there was nothing to betray the nature of the young girl's feelings.

"Can you wonder?" resumed the speaker, after a telling pause, "that my friend was filled with bitterness and anger when she found her just expectations ignored? when she found herself ruthlessly brushed aside, in favour of this younger claimant to a man's fickle favour? Can you wonder at her determination that this girl should at least know the unstable character of the being to whom she had plighted herself—that she should realize the fact that her bridal path would be strewn with broken oaths, with broken pledges—together with one woman's broken heart?"

Mrs. Alston's voice faltered, ceased. There was a moment of profound silence. Enid rose slowly to her feet. Her slim figure seemed to tower over the other's half-crouching form, as she said in clear, scornful tones:

"Why take refuge in the well-worn subterfuge of the familiar friend? You are the woman!"

ENID'S words acted like a trumpet-call upon Mrs. Alston; springing to her feet, she stood erect, her tall, queenly figure drawn to its full height; her small, dark head thrown proudly back, as with glowing cheeks and eyes that flashed a furious fire, she said:

"Do you think I am ashamed to own it? No, a thousand times, no! My love for Dick Emberson is at once my torment and my glory. I am ready to proclaim it to the whole world!"

"Why, then, did you take refuge in an anonymous slander?" asked the young girl, with a biting scorn.

"It was no slander!" was the fierce reply. "The contents of the letter are true—quite true; and if I hid my identity, it was for my boy's sake, not for mine; that the world should dub me weak and foolish might have hurt him, though it would not trouble me."

"You must be mad!" cried Enid indignantly. "How can you persist in your statement that Mr. Emberson was bound to you by every tie of honour, when you have acknowledged that you yourself gave him his liberty?"

"He knew right well," persisted Mrs. Alston, "that, although duty compelled me to banish him, deep in my heart I held his love as my most sacred possession, that, robbed of his presence, my life was one long, aching longing. When I was free, he would have returned to me; but you, with your seventeen years and your fresh, undimmed beauty, stood in his path and tempted him. When I think of all I have endured through you," she cried passionately, "I wonder that I do not kill you as you stand there!"

"I do not fear you, Mrs. Alston," responded Enid calmly, her blue eyes meeting unflinchingly the threatening fire of the flashing brown orbs; "and I am glad that I came to you—yes, glad, for I know now that Dick was a free man when he offered his hand to me."

With a slight bend of the head she turned to the door.

Mrs. Alston caught her by the sleeve and held her fast.

"Do you want me to humble myself still further?" she asked, in a voice vibrant

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