

ruthless unveiling of her sister's heart filled her with a sadness which was never afterwards quite effaced. She, too, could have asked rebelliously why a woman like Alison, so fitted for the gracious and peaceful side of life, should have been called to pass through experience so poignant. She was glad when they reached the lodge where the cottage door stood open, and the woman of the house only too ready to minister to the need of her unhappy mistress. She had a ready kettle boiling, and some tea was quickly made, which Alison did not refuse to drink. All the time Tibbie was keeping an eye on the avenue, down which she expected some messenger perhaps to come. The dawn was now breaking, and presently in one of her pilgrimages to the door she saw Madge's flying figure across the park and ran to meet it.

"They've found father," she cried breathlessly, when they were within range of one another. "Right down near the lake. Yes, he's hurt. The inspector says he has been hit on the head, but he isn't dead, and they're bringing him here. I've sent one of the lads on a bicycle for Guy. He ought to be here, don't you think?"

"Yes, of course; but did you say they were bringing your father here, to the lodge?"

"Yes, it's the nearest house."

"But I don't think Alison is able for that. She has had enough," said Tibbie apprehensively.

But just here Madge had one of her rare flashes of inspiration.

"I think you're wrong there, Tibbie. I believe if she saw him actually needing her she'd be quite herself again. At least we must risk it, for here they come, and we haven't time to get her away."

Tibbie ran back wondering whether to prepare Alison for what was coming, but when she got to the door the words seemed to cleave to the roof of her mouth and she simply stood dumbly until the little procession bearing the stretcher came in sight.