

She stepped across to Madge, who was watching with great interest a tottering great beam in the eastern gable, which, being burnt clean through, could no longer support its dependent brickwork. Presently it fell into the innermost ruin with a great crash.

"Madge," said Tibbie hurriedly, "I wish you would go after the police and find out whether anything has been heard or seen of your father. I'm afraid to leave my sister. She's not herself. It looks to me as if all this misery had unhinged her brain. I'm going to try to get her down to the lodge and put her to bed."

Madge shook her head as if she did not believe it would be possible to accomplish that. Although philosophical in the midst of most upheavals, she was visibly shaken by the events of the night, and felt distinctly apprehensive regarding her father's safety.

For the moment Alison seemed to have forgotten her husband's disappearance; she was entirely concerned with what she imagined to be her own share in that night's crowning catastrophe.

"Dear, you must come away," said Tibbie firmly. "Can't you see that everything is nearly over? There is no use stopping. Come down to Garrett's cottage with me and let me get you something to eat or drink. Your hands are burning with a fever. Darling, you must come."

"My brain is on fire, but my heart is like ice," said Alison, as she suffered herself to be led away. "Oh, Tibbie, the misery of the world! How can God, if He knows and has any power, bear to have it so? There can't be a God. I've given up believing in Him."

Tibbie merely patted her arm, and tried to hasten her steps across the *débris* towards the clear spaces of the park.

Some premonition warned her that she had better get Alison into some safe shelter, where the further horror of the night could not touch her without warning. For it was not over yet.

She kept babbling as they walked of her own share