

Tibbie came forward, and the expression on her face in a manner prepared Alison for part at least of what followed.

"I've come to confess, Ailie, and I'll just slide down here like I used to when I was a little bairn, and hide my face."

She slid down, and laid her head on the soft fold of Alison's widow's frock, and for the space of a few minutes silence reigned.

"I've got to go back a bit, to last August, when I was in London, before I came to you at the time of the fire," Tibbie began at length. "I met Archie Mackerrow there."

"By appointment or how?" asked Alison, in a puzzled voice, for the story was a little difficult to piece together, the distances seemed too wide to bridge.

"Oh no, quite by accident, and I don't know yet how he recognised me, for of course I was a girl in short frocks when he went away. It was easier for me. He was not so very much changed. It was at the Euston Hotel where I was seeking accommodation, and they had none, and he came to the rescue and I went to the Russell where he was staying. That was on the Wednesday, and I stopped over till Friday, and saw him off at Waterloo, and then he asked me to write to him sometimes, and that's all, at least until to-day."

Alison did not speak at all, and after another space Tibbie went on again.

"He was so dreadfully lonesome, Ailie, and he seemed to think he had a sort of right to me, don't you know, and I liked him to be like that, and I never was so happy in my life as those two days we were together. I don't know why I didn't tell you, I'm sure; I have often wanted to, but somehow it was all so difficult, through the late autumn."

"Well, and what is he saying to-day?"

"The same thing he said two months ago, he asked me to go out to Trinidad to him. He asked me that