

said Tibbie's voice, clear and sharp; "and you know that you will not improve matters by this night's work, but make everything worse for yourselves and your wives and children. Mr. Crewe is not in the house. Are you going to stand by and see it burn, and do nothing to help its mistress, who has always been your friend. I am ashamed of you!"

"We didna set fire to it, miss. It were the Lord's doin'," some of them cried back in chorus. "An' 'E won't rest satisfied till there ain't a stick or stone of t'owd Hall left upo' another."

But Tibbie's brave words shamed them, and they stepped indoors, and worked with a will to carry out the contents of the house under her direction.

Alison stood like one paralysed, offering to do nothing, apparently caring not at all that her home must soon become the prey of the flames, and that probably by the morning light there would be nothing left but a mass of charred ruins or four walls standing naked and gaunt to the dawn.

"Look at Alison, Tibbie!" whispered Madge, in a shivering voice. "She looks as if she were not quite right in her head. I wish you'd go to her. What does it matter about the things being burned; probably they are all covered and more by insurance. Father left nothing of that kind to chance."

"Madge, where is your father? Perhaps she's thinking of him. We must make sure that he isn't anywhere in the house. She said he was not in the library when she came down to seek him. Where can he have gone?"

Tibbie sped over to Alison's side, and laid her hand on her arm, only to be met with a smile which was sadder than any tears.

"Alison," her sister said sharply, "have you no idea where Edmund is? They have been all through the house. We have searched everywhere we can think of. Is there anywhere in the tower, or any little den I have not thought about where he can have