

steadily. "The fire's gaining, and in that wind, and with everything as dry as tinder, there won't be a thing left of the Old Hall in the morning."

She ran to the telephone call, but something appeared to have gone wrong with it, for she was unable to obtain any answer to her call.

She guessed that someone more vindictive than the rest had cut the wire. Every minute was precious, every minute gave fresh impetus and power to the dread force which can work such havoc in a little space.

Strangely enough, it was Tibbie who took the initiative, who behaved as if the place were hers. Alison, white and dry-eyed, stood still, quietly looking on, apparently unaware that the moment was desperate.

In the midst Madge came flying downstairs half-dressed, and the frightened women servants, each one more helpless than another, huddled together, weeping in company, and bewailing the event of the night. Tibbie managed to get hold of a young groom, and to dispatch him on a horse for aid in the town, and then she began very quietly but efficiently to direct the efforts of the servants to save some of the more valuable contents of the house. There were not very many. A house of similar size inhabited by people of refinement and good taste would undoubtedly have been filled with good pictures and bric-à-brac worth making stupendous efforts to save. The silver and the personal belongings were really the most valuable assets of the house, the pictures being of little account. As for the furniture, though it had cost a great deal of money, it was cumbersome and uninteresting. Presently, through the open windows of the library, Tibbie stepped out and spoke to the men gathered there with menace still on their faces.

"It's the master we want, the man who has destroyed us in Birtley," one said. "Let him coom out and face it like a man. 'E won't, well, let 'im stop an' burn."

"Birtley men, you have taken leave of your senses,"