

It was an awful moment for them all, when Alison, appearing on the threshold, fixed her eyes on the prostrate form on the stretcher which they were bearing across the sward.

Immediately the dazed look left her face, her features relaxed, her eyes became alert and watchful; Tibbie saw her draw herself up, as one might do, who wished to marshal all his forces for some insistent need.

Instinctively they stood aside, while Alison took possession of the situation, and once more became what nature had made her, a succourer of many. She directed them to the sitting-room of the cottage, stood by while they laid her husband on the sofa, then turned to her sister and said in a perfectly clear voice,

"See that Guy is fetched at once; now leave me."

They went out one by one, and the door was shut, while she was left kneeling by her husband's side.