

"A Dream of Hearts,"

BY OLIVE TILLY.

Illustrated by the Authoress.

I WAS climbing up a mountain-side, and being weary, sat down to rest awhile. The sun was just setting.

Below me a blue mist was creeping slowly over the valleys, and the tops of the neighbouring hills were tinged with a pink glow.

Far away, through a gap in the hills, I could see the ocean into which the sun was slowly sinking.

As I watched the hills and valleys, all seemed to fade into mist, and the sky became a mass of pink and grey clouds.

I watched intently and then it seemed that, through the mist, I could see the forms of many people and, while I wondered whence they came, the mist rolled away and I saw that the forms were all those of women.

Some were fierce and terrible, some sullen, with faces darkened by despair, while the faces of others were still and expressionless, even as though they wore masks.

And, as I looked, I saw that they had no hearts, but their breasts were rent and scarred as though their hearts had been torn from them.

I watch them amazed!

Then, through the clouds, an angel ap-

peared, and he flew towards me.

As he neared me I noticed that he was black—black garments, black wings, and a dark, cruel face.

In his left hand he held what seemed to be a blood-red girdle, floating behind him till it was lost in the clouds, and, in his right, a spear with a crimson spot in the centre.

Onward he flew until he touched the mountain path by which I sat.

Then, with horror, I saw that the girdle was made of hearts human hearts!—and the spot on his spear was a bleeding heart! They were all those of women; some, those nearest his hand, were torn and bleeding; all were scarred and wounded.

I grew cold with terror, for I fancied that it was the angel Death who stood before me, and I thought that he must want my heart.

But the black angel read my thoughts and laughed—such a cruel laugh.

"Fear not," he said, "I am not Death. He is an angel of mercy, whilst I"—and again he laughed—"I am he who plays with women's love. I tear out their hearts and they lose them for ever. When they pass from this world, they pass without the hope of winning them again. What do I give in

