

they had learnt during those hours that all sounds from within came that way. There was a trumpet-note or two, short and brazen ; a tramp of feet for a moment, the throb of drums ; then silence again ; then the noise of moving footsteps that came and went in an instant. And as the sound came, Ralph stirred.

He swayed slowly over on to his back ; his breath came in little groans that died to silence again as he subsided, and his arm drew out and lay on the bedclothes. Chris could see his face now in sharp profile against Beatrice's dark skirt, white and sharp ; the skin was tightly stretched over the nose and cheekbones, his long thin lips were slightly open, there was a painful frown on his forehead, and his eyes squinted terribly at the ceiling.

A contraction seized the priest's throat as he watched ; the face was at once so august and so pitiable.

The lips began to move again, as they had moved during the night ; it seemed as if the dying man were talking and listening. The eyelids twitched a little ; and once he made a movement as if to rise up. Chris was down on his knees in a moment, holding him tenderly down ; he felt the thin hands come up and fumble with his own, and noticed lines deepen between the flickering eyelids. Then the hands lay quiet.

Chris lifted his eyes and saw his father's face and Beatrice's watching. Something of the augustness of the dying man seemed to rest on the grey bearded lips and solemn eyes that looked down. Beatrice's face was steady and tender, and as the priest's eyes met hers, she nodded.

" Yes, speak to him," she said.

Chris threw a hand across the bed and rested it on the wooden frame, and then lowered himself softly till his mouth was at the other's ear.