

Father O'Hagan made a quick gesture of impatience and dissent. A righteous anger burned within him ; his old heart was hot, and he felt moved to take the cowardly cur by the throat and shake the very life out of him. But he controlled himself, and there was scarcely a tremor in his voice as he spoke,—

"I infer from your words that you do not regard your obligations to Kitty as binding ?"

"Since you drive me to bay, I will be honest, Father O'Hagan, and tell you frankly I don't. If she doesn't worry or harass me I'll do what I can for her, but I will not be forced or badgered by her, or you, or anybody."

Lyndon threw aside the cloak of respect he had worn throughout the interview, and stood revealed in his true light—a coward and a scoundrel at heart. The nervous colour rose pink in Father O'Hagan's thin cheeks, and he clenched his hands at his side. The hot temper of his youth came back to him again, and he had difficulty in commanding his voice.

"Perhaps you will find it less easy than you imagine to rid yourself of these responsibilities," he said, calmly and coldly. "Have you ever heard of Scots Law ?"

"I don't know what you mean," said Lyndon, rudely.

"I hardly expected you would. You are not a person of much resource or of wide knowledge. But I am surprised that you did not take a little more trouble, since you have been so grossly selfish all through, to safeguard yourself. Let me enlighten you. According to Scots Law it is sufficient if two persons in Scotland declare themselves to be husband and wife before two witnesses—nothing but death can part them. This is the position in which you now stand, Mr.