

Then he rose abruptly.

"He cannot receive Viaticum; and he will not be able to make his confession. I should shrive him at once, sir, and anoint him."

"At once?" whispered Chris.

"The sooner the better," said the doctor; "there is no telling."

Chris rose swiftly from his knees, and made a sharp sign to Morris. Then he sank down once more, looking round, and lifted the purple stole from the floor where he had laid it the evening before; and even as he did so his soul revolted.

He looked up at Beatrice. Would not she understand the unchivalry of the act? But the will in her eyes compelled him.—Yes, yes! Who could set a limit to mercy?

He slipped the strip over his shoulders, and again bent down over his brother, with one arm across the motionless body. Beatrice and Sir James were on their knees by now. Nicholas was busy with Morris at the further end of the room. The doctor was gone.

There was a profound silence now outside as the priest bent lower and lower till his lips almost touched the ear of the dying man; and every word of the broken abrupt sentences was audible to all in the room.

"Ralph—Ralph—dear brother. You are at the point of death. I must shrive you. You have sinned very deeply against God and man. I shall anoint you afterwards. Make an act of sorrow in your heart for all your sins; it will stand for confession. Think of Jesu's love, and of His death on the bitter cross—the wounds that He bore for us in love. Give me a sign if you can that you repent."