

By the merest accident this man seeing the notice of my wife's death in the newspaper, and attracted by the name (her maiden name having been given) and knowing something of the eccentricities of French law, had instructed an attorney to ascertain whether there was anything to be got out of me.

"To make a long story short, the law maintained the claim on the ground that as I had no marriage settlement, one-half of all the property I acquired during my wife's life vested in her, and at her death (as she left no will) devolved upon her relations, however remote."

"Why you fairly astonish me," exclaimed Markham. "Your narrative sounds like a romance of the most improbable character. Surely if such laws exist, the people must wish to have them reformed?"

"You are mistaken," replied his friend. "It is true no such laws could exist in an English community, but in the Province of Quebec the population is mainly French. The civil law is based upon the old French laws and customs, and I imagine the French community would regard any attempt at reform as an encroachment on their guaranteed rights and privileges."