

"I have something to say to you first," said Beaujeu. Jack turned again to stare at him and Beaujeu sipped his wine again. "It is right that you should know. The bullies who assailed you in Mistress Charlbury's house were there unknown to her."

"'Unknown to her'?" Jack muttered. "She was innocent?"

"Innocent—since you choose the word," said Beaujeu with a sneer.

"And how can you know it?"

"Because it was on my motion that Sherborne sent the bullies," said Beaujeu quietly.

"You?" cried Jack, starting back. "You? And you've posed as my friend."

"Endeavour to believe that I am," says Beaujeu in his passionless voice. "I would now give my right hand that I had not done it."

"But why—why? What end did you gain?"

"I was fool enough to believe Mistress Charlbury a common woman," says Beaujeu in the same level tone. "I thought her unworthy of you. I desired that you should break with her. Thinking like a mean knave, I acted as a mean knave."

Jack stood a moment with wrinkled brow, puzzling it out, then flushing started forward. "You—you—" he cried fiercely, and lifted his hand to strike.

Beaujeu sat quite still: "It is merely your right," he said calmly, looking into the angry bloodshot eyes.

Jack's hand fell: "God, Beaujeu, how could you do it?" he cried. "Do you know what I called her? And she—she— My God, I must see her, and—"

"And your cousin Nell?" Beaujeu asked quietly.

Jack stared at him a moment, then stumbled to a chair and pressed his hands to his head: "What can I do?" he muttered to himself.

"You can go to your cousin," said Beaujeu, "I do not think your 'Delila' hurt Mistress Charlbury deeply. She did not love you." Jack looked up, dazed. "I have had to tell