

"He is gone, Steve," he said. "Let us speak well of the dead, whatever his faults. This misguided young man had a grudge against you and me, a grudge which must have caused him many an hour of bitterness. He was a connection of yours."

"A connection?" Steve lifted his head in astonishment. He knew well that his mother had been French, but to hear that through her he was related to this Jules Lapon was astounding.

"Yes, a connection," said Mr. Mainwaring. "Listen, lad. Your father is the eldest son of a wealthy man living in England, a proud gentleman who had his own aims and views for his son. He had arranged, when I was only a boy, that I should marry the daughter of his old friend. I travelled, and in due course spent some months in France. There I met your mother and married her, much to my father's indignation. He disowned me after settling a sum of money on me so that I should not starve. As to your mother's parents, they were pleased with our union, I believe, but not so a Monsieur Lapon, your mother's cousin, and father of this unfortunate Jules. He was older than I, and for years had been the accepted suitor. My marriage to your mother raised his hate and anger, and for years he attempted to do me an injury. He sailed for Canada, for he was a poor man, while I made for America. There he discovered me, and before he died he set his son on my track. There, my boy, the mystery is explained. Had this Monsieur Lapon