

"Begad, they would have had a happy meeting," says Mr. Wharton.

And out of the shadow spoke M. de Beaujeu. "Eh, gentlemen, an old man's fancy. This Thomas Dane—who has heard of him in seven years? Certainly he is dead."

"Oh, you think so?" says Wharton grinning.

Beaujeu shrugged his shoulders: "Who can doubt?"

"Not I, begad, if you say so," laughed Wharton. "Faith you ought to know!"

But Beaujeu struck in, drowning the last words. "Also, also—surely in your English law an outlaw cannot inherit, eh, master attorney?"

Master Smallpiece scratched his nose. "You make a point, sir," says he, "you ——"

"Gad, Beaujeu, do you think I want my cousin's land?" cried Jack.

"Sure he makes a point too, Beaujeu," says Mr. Healy.

"I do not think so, Mr. Dane," Beaujeu said. "But in fact, if he is dead, the acres should stay in the family."

"And how do I know that he is dead?"

"I met Mr. Dane when he came to Flanders," says Beaujeu quietly. "He went to the wars—he vanished. I have not heard of him in seven years. I conceive, Master Attorney, your English courts would readily pronounce him dead?"

"I apprehend, sir, I apprehend, if properly approached," says Master Smallpiece with dignity.

"Courts pronounce?" cried Jack. "What do I care for that? If he is alive——"

"I knew Mr. Dane well," says Beaujeu sharply. "If he were alive, he would scorn to take what your father had held . . . Eh, do you wonder?" and he gave a shrug and a sneer.

Master Smallpiece coughed. "*De mortuis, gentlemen, de mortuis*. You are acquaint with the Roman adage? Mr. Dane I should be much honoured by your command to bring the cause to court."

"Oh curse the cause! Curse the estates!" cried Jack.