

The sword-point of the older man, struck upward from a well-delivered thrust, has reached his opponent's forehead, glancing off. Both seconds have interposed. Blood is streaming across his eye from the cut, and he wipes it impatiently away.

"It is nothing—a bare scratch!" he says. But the sight of the blood has broken the spell the boy was under, and he goes sick, and runs, hesitating now and again, and half-turning back. Then presently the swords begin anew, and he is half-sorry for himself, not to be there to see. . . . Yes, he will have a man's courage, and go back, come of it what may!

The seconds had looked at one another as the two principals held back with dropped points, Sir Oliver still brushing away the blood-drops as they came.

"I tell you, it is a scratch," he repeated. "Give me a handkerchief." He wound one, handed to him by his second, round his head. It served to stop the blood from reaching his eye, and left his sight clear. Then the other second said to Colonel Mainwaring: "Do we proceed? How is that?" And then, as they spoke together aside: "We have the technical right to stop this, I believe."

"It is at least a moot point," said Colonel Mainwaring.

"Listen to me, Mainwaring," said the other. "If the quarrel were some slight word spoken at cards or dice—or about some gay wench upon the town—I should say that Honour was satisfied, but . . ."

"But in the matter of a man's daughter, you would say, of course it is different. That is so. But there is no wish to withdraw, on my side. Nevertheless, if Mr. Mauleverer is satisfied, I have no doubt Sir Oliver will be content."

"Can we not stop it of our own right? It is a bad business." The speaker left the impression that his own co-operation was against his will.