

quarrel was your quarrel; none of mine. And the girl is your girl; none of mine. And the sword is none of mine that made such a brisk end of the matter but now. I have seen you through to the edge of my undertaking. And in truth—listen to me, Raydon!—I should make a sorry business at the best of this telling of a tale in the teeth of its welcome. Get you to it, and get you through it, the best you may. Say your worst of the old dog's obstinacy. I couldn't but admire him, too. It may be you will absolve yourself better than I could do it for you."

"You cannot blame me!" Sir Oliver's speech had a touch of resentment, or at least of suspicion of something he might resent.

"Blame you? Not I, man! How should I blame you? Every man has a right to his chances in love, and every woman knows her own pleasure best. This girl of yours must answer her share of the blame. But the old fellow was in the right of it—an old game-cock! He could but eat the meal you and his daughter dished up for him. We'll drink to his memory when this has blown over. Tell her the best you may; and then get away somewhere abroad, and keep away till old Ralph's forgotten. Take her with you—that's my advice. Farewell!"

Sir Oliver said nothing in reply. He waited in sullen silence till the sound of the horse's hoofs died in the distance, then gathered his hat and gloves and whip from where he had laid them while washing. The immovable groom came back, obsequious. His master handed him the gloves and whip, and asked, as he stood stroking a gentle finger over his cut forehead, "Is that door open?" It was a door that would have led through to the dream-fountain, had he still been dreaming. If only it could be there, and reaffirm the dream-world! No harm in walking through to see.