

cordingly, insomuch that, as he stood beside Sir John, his stern set face, and steadfast bearing, made an impression not unfavourable at the set out.

Nor when bidden by the King to speak and say what he knew, did he fall below the expectations which his appearance had created, though this was probably due in some measure to my lord's self-control, who neither by word nor sign betrayed the astonishment he felt, when a man to whom for years past he had only spoken casually, and once in six months as it were, proceeded to recount with the utmost fullness and particularity every detail of the journey, which, as he said, they two had taken together to Ashford. At what time they started, where they lay, by what road they travelled—at all Smith was pat. Nor did he stop there; but went on to relate with the same ease and exactness the heads of talk that had passed between Sir John and his companion at the inn.

Nor was it possible that a story so told, with minutiae, with date, and place, and circumstances, should fall on ears totally deaf. The men who listened were statesmen, versed in deceptions and acquainted with affairs—men who knew Oates and had heard Dangerfield; yet, as they listened, they shut their eyes and reopened them, to assure themselves that this was not a dream! Before his appearance, even Lord Portland, whose distrust of English loyalty was notorious, had been inclined to ridicule Sir John's story as a desperate card played for life; and this, even in teeth of my lord's disorder, so incredible did it appear that one of the King's principal Ministers should stoop to a thing so foolish. Now, it was a sign pregnant of meaning that no one looked at his neighbour, but all gazed either at the witness or at the table before them. And some who knew my lord best, and had the most affection for him, felt the air heavy, and the stillness of the room oppressive,