

spirits of peevishness, which stood in strange contrast with his wonted magnanimity, he added, to the Duke of Shrewsbury, "It is your own choice, my lord. Don't blame me."

The querulous words bore a meaning which all recognised; and some at the table started, and resumed the calculation how they should trim their sails in a certain event. But nothing ever became the Duke better than the manner in which he received that insinuation. "Be it so, sir," he said with spirit. "My choice and desire is that Sir John have as full a share of justice as I claim for myself, and as fair a hearing. Less than that were inconsistent with your Majesty's prerogative, and my honour."

The King's only answer was a sulky and careless nod. On which Sir William Trumball, after whispering to the prisoner, went out, and after a brief delay, which seemed to many at the table long enough, returned with Matthew Smith.

CHAPTER XLV

THAT the villain expected nothing so little as to see the man he was preparing to ruin, I can well believe; and equally that the ordeal, sudden and unforeseen, tried even his iron composure. I have heard that after glancing once at the Duke he averted his eyes; and thenceforth looked and addressed himself entirely to the end of the table where the King stood. But, this apart, it could not be denied that he played his part to a marvel. Known to more than one as a ruffling blade about town, who had grown sober but not less dangerous with age and the change of times, he had still saved some rags and tatters of a gentleman's reputation; and he dressed himself ac-