

Kent, and gave me a ring and a message, bidding me carry both with me to St. Germain's."

My lord looked slowly round the table; then at Sir John. And it startled some to see that he had compassion in his face.

"Sir John," he said—after, as it seemed, weighing the words he was about to speak, "you are in such a position, it were barbarous to insult you. But you must needs, as you have accused me before His Majesty and these gentlemen, hear me state, also before them, that there is not a word of truth in what you say."

Sir John stared at him and breathed hard. "*Mon dieu!*" he exclaimed at length. And his voice sounded sincere.

"I was not at Ashford on the 10th of June," the Duke continued with dignity, "or on any day in that month. I never saw you there, and I gave you no ring."

"*Mon dieu!*" Sir John muttered again; and, his gaze fallen, he seemed to be unable to take his eyes off the other.

Now it is certain that whatever the majority of those present thought of this—and the demeanour of the two men was so steadfast that even Lord Marlborough's acumen was at fault—the King's main anxiety was to be rid of the matter, and with some impatience he tried to put a stop to it at this point. "Is it worth while to carry this farther, my lords?" he said, fretfully. "We know our friends. We know our enemies also. This is a story *pour rire*, and deserving only of contempt."

But Sir John at that cried out, protesting bitterly and fiercely, and recalling the King's promise, and the Duke being no less urgent—though as some thought a little unseasonably for his own interests—that the matter be sifted to the bottom, the King had no option but to let it go on. "Very well," he said ungraciously, "if he will have his witness let him." And then, with one of those