

count of them one day. But as to the present, and the Duke of Shrewsbury—with whom alone you have to deal—I will make a plain tale. This man has said that in '92 he was a go-between, for me and Lord Middleton. It is true; as you, sir, know, and my lords if they know it not already, must now know, to my shame. For the fact, Lord Middleton and I were relations, we met more than once at that time, we supped together before he went to France. I promised on my part to take care of his interests here, he in return offered to do me good offices there. As to the latter I told him I had offended too deeply to be forgiven; yet tacitly I left him to make my peace with the late King if he could. It was a folly and a poltroonery," the Duke continued, holding out his hands with a pathetic gesture. "It was, my lords, to take a lower place than the meanest Nonjuror who honourably gives up his cure. I see that, my lords; and have known it, and it has weighed on me for years. And now I pay for it. But for this"—and with the word my lord's voice grew full and round and he stood erect, one hand among the lace of his steinkirk tie and his eyes turned steadfastly on his accuser—"for this which that man, presuming on an old fault and using his knowledge of it, would foist on me, I know nothing of it! I know nothing of it. It is some base and damnable practice. At this moment and here I cannot refute it; but at the proper time and in another place I shall refute it. And now and here I say that as to it, I am not guilty—on my honour!"

As the last word rang through the room he sat down, looking round him with a kind of vague defiance. There was a silence, broken presently by the Lord Steward, who rose, his voice and manner betraying no little emotion. "His Grace is right, sir, I think," he said. "I believe with him that this is some evil practice; but it is plain that it has gone so far that it cannot stop here. I would suggest therefore that if your Majesty sees fit—"