

and seemed to control himself with difficulty. At length, "I can substantiate nothing against three of those persons," he said; whereon some of those who listened breathed more freely.

"And that is all, sir, that you have to say?" said the King, ungraciously; and as if he desired only to cut short the scene.

"All," said Sir John firmly, "against those three persons. But as to the fourth, the Duke of Shrewsbury, who is not here——"

The King could not suppress an exclamation of contempt. "You may spare us that fable, sir," he said. "It would not deceive a child, much less one who holds the Duke high in his esteem."

Sir John drew himself to his full height, and looked along the table, his gloomy eyes threatening. "And yet that fable I can prove, sir," he said. "That I can substantiate, sir. To that I have a witness, and a witness above suspicion! If I prove that, sir, shall I have your Majesty's favour?"

"Perfectly," said the King, shrugging his shoulders, amid a general thrill and movement; for though rumours had gone abroad, by no means the whole of Sir John's case was known, even to some at the table. "Prove it! Prove that, sir, and not a hair of your head shall fall. You have my promise."

However, before Sir John could answer, Mr. Secretary Trumball rose in his place and intervened. "I crave your indulgence, sir," he said, "while, with your Majesty's permission, I call in the Duke of Shrewsbury, who is in waiting."

"In waiting," said the King, in a voice of surprise; nor was the surprise confined to him. "I thought that he was ill, Mr. Secretary."

"He is so ill, sir, as to be very unfit to be abroad," the Secretary answered. "Yet he came to be in readi-