

That during the long interval of seventeen years that separated the memorable meeting at Kensington, which I have ventured to describe, from the still more famous scene in the Queen's death-chamber, he took no part in public life has seemed to some a crime or the tacit avowal of one. How far these err, and how ill-qualified they are to follow the workings of that noble mind, will appear in the pages I have written; which show with clearness that the retirement on which so much stress has been laid, was due not to guilt, but to an appreciation of honour so delicate that a spot invisible to the common eye seemed to him a stain *non subito delanda*. After the avowal made before his colleagues—of the communications, I mean, with Lord Middleton—nothing would do but he must leave London at once and seek in the shades and retirement of Eyford that peace of mind and ease of body which had for the moment abandoned him.

He went: and for a time still retained office. Later, notwithstanding the most urgent and flattering instances on the King's part—which yet exist, honourable alike to the writer and the recipient—he persisted in his resolution to retire; and on the 12th of December, 1698, being at that time in very poor health, the consequence of a fall while hunting, he returned the Seals to the King. In the autumn of the following year he went abroad; but though he found in a private life—so far as the life of a man of his princely station could be called private—a happiness often denied to place men and favourites, he was not to be diverted when the time came from the post of danger. Were I writing an eulogium merely, I should here enumerate those great posts and offices which he so worthily filled at the time of Queen Anne's death, when as Lord Treasurer of England, Lord Chamberlain, and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland—an aggregation of honours I believe without precedent—he performed services and controlled events on the importance of which his enemies