

were indeed few. But they were better than many generations of inglorious safety. He was born for the desperate hope, the dazzling, impossible deed ; and destiny was infinitely kind.

Cardinal de Retz, a judge deeply learned in human nature, set him beside the ancient heroes of Plutarch. The bulk of the Atholmen never heard and could not appreciate that high comparison ; but they knew their leader and he was here—the first soldier of the realm, or dividing that honour with Cromwell ; the captain whose unfailing discernment, resource, rapidity, and daring not once nor twice astonished and confounded men by working miracles. In the hazards of war he was the peer of Alexander. He, too, had the genius and the magnetism of valour ; he, too, accepted with lightsome carelessness (apparently) the odds against him, and justified his confidence.

The task now was one which my lord alone of all men in Scotland or Britain could attempt, and he accomplished it as if it were a holiday frolic. The day was scarcely an hour old when belligerents were mingling like brothers. A little while, indeed, the Highlanders eyed the Ulstermen darkly, hand furtively on hilt ; a little while Murray and the rest glowered truculently on Colkitto, and Colkitto paid amply in kind according to habit, chin in air, chest puffed out defiantly. It needed but the smallest indiscretion to make a thousand blades leap furiously for blood.

But the master-spirit, the genius of tact and reconciliation was at work, and every fighting cock