

"We waste time," said Struan impatiently.

"Proclaim it from all your hilltops," assented Colkitto. "Yet even in our present haste I take leave to submit that a man would as soon have his beard pulled as his valour doubted. I will not weary you by saying what I expected. Let it suffice that for my present coming I have the authority of his Excellency the Marquis of Montrose. And since what must be done were better done quickly, in the name of his Majesty King Charles I hereby summon to my aid all lieges capable of bearing arms. Will the Thane of Struan, who, I perceive, commands here, have the goodness to bring in his men with all convenient speed and instruct the other gentlemen now with us to do likewise? And God save the King!"

At that the bonnets were doffed, but they were instantly replaced and, as it seemed, drawn more tightly over darkening brows.

"The call comes unexpectedly," said Struan. "You will deem it no incivility if I consult for a moment with my friends here before answering."

"None," returned Colkitto; "none whatever," and he turned aside indifferently whistling a bar of an Irish air.

"It is something of an undertaking," said the Tutor, when the hasty conference was over. "And it would greatly aid us all with our men if you were pleased to exhibit his Majesty's commission."

"Why?" replied Colkitto, colouring darkly. "We are back to our doubts again. You, Struan, and the friends about you need no word of mine to remind