

the response. "No, no. My orders are to let no man from without pass in alive ; and my present humour is to obey."

"In faith then, sir," was the good-natured rejoinder, "we have no wish to put you to any such test of duty as your words imply. We are poor fellows who would live. Nevertheless it is important to all within this Castle that we be admitted."

"Thou hast the virtue of persistence," said the officer. "But first tell me are there any behind?"

"In warlike force we are even as you see us," was the reply. "Two against a garrison of valiant men proved in war."

"And you would win with a compliment," laughed the officer drily. Then turning he ordered up a sergeant and file of men. "Disarm these two," he said, "and lead them in to the general. And you," he told another man, "go forward at once and apprise him of their coming. Say they have tidings of importance which they would commit to himself alone."

Meanwhile the strangers, having exchanged a look of intelligence, quietly delivered up their arms.

"I am glad to see so zealous an officer on guard," said he who appeared to be leader. "We surrender our arms and hold ourselves prisoners at your command."

Thus disarmed and guarded they were led forward. Colkitto, with an improvised council of war, awaited their coming in a great circle of flaring