

The streets of Inverary and the hillsides of the west ring with the boasting of it to-day."

"It is true," returned Struan sorrowfully, yet with a certain impressive dignity, "that our hereditary foemen, coming upon us in overwhelming force, robbed and despoiled us as you say. We are even now, as your eyes may tell you, trying to repair the loss, to replace our broken roofs, rebuild our tumbled walls, and provide food against the coming of winter. Sir, we have wives and children to house and feed, and do you come making a gibe of our misfortunes?"

A murmur of angry approval rose at these words. Colkitto was quick to take his cue.

"Thane of Struan," he said, bowing magnificently, "I make no gibe of aught so natural and so entirely honourable. Tut, think you Alastair Macdonald knows nothing of the things that hang at men's heart-strings in war time? But your friend, the Murray here, took me somewhat sharply, besides seeing fit to blow a bit on my courage, a poor thing it may be in some folk's eyes, but dear to me as the breath of my nostrils."

"No one doubts your courage," returned Struan soothingly. "Do we not all know that the Judas of Argyle has cause both to regret and curse it? Be assured no man in Athole calls it in question or means you any discourtesy."

"I am as yet but a novice in Athole manners," returned Colkitto. "But truly in my view 'tis a somewhat odd civility that would spit you out of kindness."