

traitor or a fool by yielding my advantage at the first taste of their displeasure. When was it Alastair Macdonald's way to slink off like a whipped hound from the hand of a ghillie? They must think well of him who expect him to show his heels so readily."

He smiled grimly, his hard black eyes bent on Murray. "There's another thing I must whisper in your ear," he went on. "That I never found a lodging more precisely and particularly to my taste than this beautiful Castle of Blair. Why, Murray, I tell you they understood things who built and plenished it. Look you, sir, here are elegancies for which a rough man of war like myself is much beholden at a time like this. Last night, while I supped at my ease in the great hall, my pipers made most comforting music for me. It wanted nothing but my friends to cap the happiness; and they would not break bread with me. Murray, I take that unkindly."

"I must remind you," was the reply, "that I brought a plain message, and am waiting for a plain answer."

"Why, and it's not every gospel that's as true as that," said Colkitto, taking his chin in his hand as if considering. "The message, as you say, is plain; impossible to mistake the message. But hark you, Murray," he went on, peering through drawn eyelids at his visitor. "As between message and answer, you'll mind the old saying that he that speaketh is one, and he that giveth ear is another. 'Tis a mighty difference, as the wren said to the eagle in comparing sizes. I will tell you a secret,