

By evening on the third day the clansmen were assembled, and a brief council of war was held. What punishment should be meted out to Colkitto?

"Let his life answer for it if he go not immediately forth and quit the boundaries of Athole," said young Murray, and claimed the honour and peril of bearing the message. "And if I return not within an hour," he added, "I know I shall be well avenged." A great hoarse shout was his assurance that he had judged correctly.

Macdonald received the message with an affectation of extreme politeness, astonishment and pain.

"What!" he cried in a voice of reproach, "am I no better than a thieving Campbell that they send me a message like this? What would my cousin Antrim say? What would Huntly say? How would the Marquis of Montrose look at it? Nay, I ask you what would the king think of the Atholmen if he knew this? Go back, sir, go back and tell them I am here on his Majesty's business."

"They have already heard that from your own lips," returned Murray curtly.

"Body o' me, do they think then I am a dealer in fables?" rejoined Colkitto, his tone suddenly hardening. "Or is it their notion that I and my men came by hill and bog, in wet and hunger, just for the frolic of the thing, and are ready to skip off again at the waving of a hand, like jugglers at a fair? They put me to the need of taking possession of this Castle for the king, without leave given, as you'd say, a thing that went clean against my stomach; and now they would have me prove a