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CHAPTER 11

DEFIANCE

HE could not be prevented from taking possession ; but he had not supped when the outraged Atholemen resolved to make a great feast for the eagles. It seemed unnatural for king's friends to arm against king's friends, but the pride and presumption of Colkitto were more than Highland chiefs could bear. Let the offender and his wretched Irish look to it if the sword had to be drawn.

By midnight the nearer glens were in a tumult of preparation. Before the second day ended the clansmen from Tilt to Tay, from Glengarry to Glenfalloch were hurrying to the rendezvous. Women and children must ply the sickle and replace stone upon stone the razed wall, and pull heather for the thatching, and tend what cattle escaped the marauding Campbells ; ay, and bethink them the while of the wail of new-made widows and orphans. Yet for all the loss and agony of war feminine hands were eager in making ready ; and many a Lochaber axe, many a dirk and claymore owed its sweet edge to the militant zeal of a woman.