

"Your Excellency," rejoined Colkitto significantly, "he who draws first blood hath eve the advantage. Besides, these men of Athole have misused the king's officer most scurvily and shamefully."

"You shall see them make amends," said Montrose promptly. "By my faith, Macdonald, you shall see them make amends in such manner as a cavalier of your distinction has a right to expect."

With the glance of genius he had divined two things, Colkitto's vanity and Colkitto's ferocity; and he knew how to manage both.

"In token of your readiness for events evacuate the Castle and draw up outside. There await further directions. Meanwhile I will myself go forth with Inchbrakie and do a little scouting."

"Your Excellency has neither eaten nor drunk after a most toilsome journey," said Colkitto. "Be pleased to have some rough snatch of breakfast such as my poor cooks can furnish."

"I trow your cooks are well enough," returned Montrose smiling. "But in truth we breakfasted an hour ago on a bannock and a draught of goat's milk furnished of his charity by a shepherd among the hills. Hark you how they come. We must make haste. I can hear the clash of blades in their pibroch. Come, Pate."

"They may mistake your Excellency," said Colkitto in some concern. "I pray you let me send a bodyguard."

"Nay, nay," answered Montrose. "The sight of pikes and swords would but incite these rabid fighters the more. Hast any faith in astrology,