

He heard the story in more detail, and when Count Victor had finished, ran into an adjoining room to survey the coast from a window there. He came back with a less troubled vision.

"At least they're gone now," said he in a voice that still had some perplexity. "I wish I knew who it was you struck. Would it be Black Andy of Arroquhar now? If it's Andy, the gang will be crying 'Loch Sloy!' about the house in a couple of nights; if it was a common man of the tribe, there might be no more about it, for we're too close on the Duke's gallows to be meddled with noisily; that's the first advantage I ever found in my neighbourhood."

"He was a man of a long habit of body," said Count Victor, "and he fell with a grunt."

"Then it was not Andy. Andy is like a hogshead—a blob of creesh with a turnip on the top—and he would fall with a curse."

"Name of a pipe! I know him; he debated the last few yards of the way with me, and I gave him De Chenier's mace in the jaw."

"Sir?"

"I put him slightly out of countenance with the butt and trigger-guard of my pistol. Again I must apologise, dear Baron, for so unceremonious and ill-tempered an approach to your hospitality. You will confess it is a sort of country the foibles of whose people one has to grow accustomed to, and Bethune gave me no guidance for such an emergency as banditti on the fringe of Argyll's notoriously humdrum Court."

"Odd!" repeated Doom. "Will you step this way?" He led Count Victor to the window that commanded the coast, and their heads together filled the narrow space as they looked out. It was a wondrous afternoon. The sun swung low in a majestic sky, whose clouds of gold and purple seemed to the gaze of Montaignon a continuation of the actual hills of wood and heather whereof they were the culmination. He saw, it seemed to him,