

of hills. "How softly the mountains dream in the evening sun," he said, as if lost in admiration. "Sir, there is a scene fit for one of our own Highland bards to celebrate in his best fashion. Saw you ever aught fairer than the red glint of yonder heather? 'Tis of a richer hue than we get on our wind-blown hills of the sea. And look you aloft, crest after crest ablaze as with fire. And think of this, somewhere below is Argyle, with three thousand well-fed men, their weapons of the best, advancing while the king's friends bicker. I tell you, Murray, this business lies heavy on my heart. Here are you and the rest of them at my throat, every man of you itching to get his dirk in first—and why?"

"Is there need to ask?" returned Murray.

"A fair reply," said Colkitto. "Well, God be praised, I have not yet learned to deny my king. No, sir, I am not of the clan of Peter. Tell them that, Murray, tell them that, and ask them, if it please you, what it would profit them to spike my chopped head on the fore-front of Blair Castle for Athole daws to peck at? Fie, fie, the thought of our quarrelling fills me with shame."

"You may end it all by delivering up this Castle you have seized," said Murray.

Colkitto's eyes twinkled. "Murray," says he, "when the claymores are flashing, by Heaven I could wish no better man than yourself by my side, for it's through the fire or die with you. 'Tis a pretty gift, and I honour you for it. But concerning the surrender of this Castle, you may have found