

"You refuse, then?" said the other haughtily. "Be it so. I can but report your answer. Have the goodness then, if you please, to grant me free conduct through your lines."

Colkitto looked at him in a kind of uncertainty, as if swaying between anger and amusement. "Murray," says he then in a low voice, "is it to be blows?"

"I can only say that I have delivered my message and got my answer," was the reply.

Colkitto put on an air of grievance, like one mightily misused. "Why, now, look you," he cried, "if I am obliged to defend the king's cause where I thought a thousand swords would be leaping to his aid, I call all here present to witness that my hands are clean of the crime of seeking bloodshed. You force me, Murray. Take note that I am forced."

"I will faithfully report what you tell me," Murray answered. "And now I crave permission to return to my friends."

Colkitto was silent a moment, his gaze concentrated and dangerous. It was little his habit to stand upon ceremony with those who were against him. His first impulse was to deal according to his wont with this audacious youngster, who was to the hardened man of war as the stripling David to Goliath. But for once policy mastered passion.

"Being in need of air I will myself see you forth," he said, with well-feigned friendliness. "I am a sea-bird, Murray; a sea-bird that pants for a whiff of wind."

Outside he stood a little while gazing at the circle