

you all of the consequence of refusal when his Majesty's affairs are in danger."

"At least you will declare your plans," urged the Tutor. "In the present condition of things in Athole it behoves us to act with knowledge and caution."

"But not, I hope, with cowardice," was the retort.

"Cowardice!" repeated the Tutor. "That word sounds strangely in our ears. And indeed, like yourself, we like not to have our courage blown upon. Tell me this, Alastair Macdonald, when was the king in need and we held back? or the enemy attacking him and we stood with arms folded and swords sheathed? Do you come thinking to make us brave by calling us cowards? Sir, I take leave to tell you the plan is perilous."

Colkitto shrugged his shoulders. "I have fed on peril so long that I scarce know the taste of other fare," he said. "If it please you to have it so, be it so. You are all brave and pretty men in Athole here. Ah!" he cried all at once, "yonder come my bonnie Antrim lads. Since private talks and consultations are the fashion before cavaliers will adventure upon a little broil and spulzie, by your leave I too will confer with my friends. Till we meet again I wish you an hour of profitable meditation."

With that he made a sweeping bow, doffing his bonnet ironically, ordered his Badenoch pipers, who were Gordons, to strike up, and went off briskly to the tune of "Cock of the North."

In less than an hour he was back again, his