

silently, that somebody would come and come quickly. Why did he tarry? or would he never come?

Turning with a heavy heart the Athole commander walked slowly back. He would fain have avoided this conflict with Colkitto, a man of great and desperate deeds. His hesitation was due to no lack of courage, for among many brave men there did not breathe a braver than the Tutor of Struan, chief of the martial clan of Dundonachie or Robertson. But he thought of blazing Athole homesteads, ay, and worse, of a king's cause trampled in the dust because the king's adherents could not pocket their pride and keep their temper.

Meanwhile a momentous event was happening at the Castle. In the very moment when Struan stood gazing south in an anxiety verging on despair, a challenge from one of Colkitto's sentries suddenly broke the silence. At that, two figures drew up in the darkness, hastily whispering together. The next instant, answering the sentry's challenge with an assurance of peace, one of them advanced, requesting to be told whether Alastair Macdonald and the men of Antrim lay in the Castle.

"Who is it that asks?" demanded the sentry, keeping his musket levelled.

"One who craves a private word with the commander if he be within," replied the stranger in a low voice.

Thereupon an Irish officer, stepping forward, answered: "There be many men in Athole this night who would fain have that same private word."