The clansmen were with him," said Evan. "Aye, but be cautious." "We shall bend his bow, then break it," replied the young M'Gregor; "and then — then for my uncle's blood." "He is good at the sword," said the third M'Gregor; "but this (showing his dirk) will stretch him on the sward." "Strike him not behind," said the young chief; "hew him down in front; he deserves honorable wounds, for he is brave, though an enemy."

They had been concealed by a rising knoll from being seen from the cottage, which they now reached. Knocking loudly at the door, after some delay they were answered by the appearance of a little, thick-set, gray-eyed, oldish looking man, with long arms and a black, bushy beard, hung with gray threads, as if he had been employed in weaving the coarse linen of the country and the time. But as he had none of the muscular symptoms of prodigious strength which Calum Dhu was reported to possess, and which had often proved so fatal to their clan, they could not suppose this to be their redoubted foeman; and to the querulous question of what they wanted, uttered in the impatient tone of one who has been interrupted in some necessary worldly employment, they replied by inquiring if Calum Dhu was at home.

"Na; he's gane to the fishing; but an ye hae one message frae our chief about the coming of the red M'Gregors, and will trust me with it, Calum will get it frae me. Ye may as well tell me as him; he stays lang when he gaes out, for he's a keen fisher."

"We were only wanting to try the bending of his bow," said the disappointed young chief, "which we have heard no man can do save himself."

"Hoo! gin that is a', ye might hae tell'd it at first, an' no keepit me sae lang frae my loom," said the old man. "But stop,"—and giving his shoulders an impatient shrug, which to a keen observer would have passed for one of satisfaction, triumph, and determination, he went into the house and quickly returned, bringing out a strong bow and a sheaf of arrows, and flung them carelessly on the ground, saying, "Ye'll be for trying your strength at a flight?" pointing to the arrows. "I hae seen Calum send an arrow over the highest point o' that hill like a glance o' lightning; and when the M'Gregors were coming raging up the glen, like red deevils as they are, mony o' their best warriors fell at the farthest entry o' the pass, every man o' them wi' a hole in his breast and his fellow at his back."

He had taken a long arrow out of the sheaf, and stood playing with it in his hand while speaking, seemingly ready to give it to the first man who should bend the bow. The M'Gregors were tall, muscular men, in the prime of youth and manhood. The young chief took up the bow, and after examining its unbending strength, laying all his might to it, strained till the blood rushed to his face, and his temples throbbed almost to bursting — but in vain; the string remained slack as ever. Evan and the other M'Gregors were alike unsuccessful; they might as well have tried to root up the gnarled oaks of their native mountains.

"There is not a man," cried the young chief of M'Gregor, greatly chagrined at the absence of Calum Dhu, and his own clansmen's vain attempts to bend the bow,—"there is not a man in your clan can bend that bow; and if Calum Dhu were here, he should not bend it!" Here he bit his lip, and suppressed the rest of the sentence, for the third M'Gregor gave him a glance of caution.

"Ha!" said the old man, still playing with the long arrow in his hand, and without seeming to observe the latter part of the M'Gregor's speech. "If Calum was here, he would bend it as easily as ye wad bend that rush; and gin ony o' the M'Gregors were in sight, he wad drive this lang arrow through them as easily as ye wad drive your dirk through my old plaid, and the feather wad come out at the other side, wet wi' their heart's bluid. Sometimes even the man behind is wounded, if they are ony way thick in their battle. I once saw a pair o' them stretched on the heather, pinned together with ane of Calum's lang arrows."

This was spoken with the cool composure and