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IN every little Scotch community there is a distinct type known as "the bodie." "What does he do, that man?" you may ask, and the answer will be, "Really, I could hardly tell ye what he does—he's juist a bodie!" The "bodie" may be a gentleman of independent means (a hundred a year from the Funds) fussing about in spats and light check breeches; or he may be a jobbing gardener; but he is equally a "bodie." The chief occupation of his idle hours (and his hours are chiefly idle) is the discussion of his neighbour's affairs. He is generally an "auld residenter"; great, therefore, at the redding up of pedigrees. He can tell you exactly, for instance, how it is that young Pin-oe's taking geyly to the dram: for his grandfather, it seems, was a terrible man for the drink—on, just terrible—why, he went to bed with a full jar of whiskey once, and when he left it, he was dead, and it was empty. So ye see, that's the reason o't.

The genus "bodie" is divided into two species: the "harmless bodies" and the "nesty bodies." The bodies of Barbie mostly belonged to the second variety. Johnny Coe, and Tam Wylie, and the baker, were decent enough fellows in their way, but the others were the sons of scandal. Gourlay spoke of them as a "whenee damned auld wives."—But Gourlay, to be sure, was not an impartial witness.

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The Bend o' the Brae was the favourite stance of the bodies; here they foregathered every day to pass judgment on the town's affairs. And, indeed, the place had many things to recommend it. Among the chief it was within an easy distance of the Red Lion, farther up the street, to which it was really very convenient to adjourn nows and nans. Standing at the Bend o' the Brae, too, you could look along two roads to the left and right, or down upon the Cross beneath, and the three low streets that guttered away from it. Or you might turn and look up Main Street, and past the side of the Square, to the House with the Green Shutters, the highest in the town. The Bend o' the Brae, you will gather, was a fine post for observation. It had one drawback, true; if Gourlay turned to the right in his gig he disappeared in a moment, and you could never be sure where he was off to. But even that afforded matter for pleasing speculation which often lasted half an hour.

It was about nine o'clock when Gourlay and Gilmour quarrelled in the yard, and that was the hour when the bodies foregathered for their morning dram.

"Good moorning, Mr. Wylie!" said the Provost.—When the Provost wished you good morning, with a heavy civic eye, you felt sure it was going to be good.

"Mornin', Provost, mornin'! Fine weather for the fields," said Tam, casting a critical glance at the blue dome in which a soft white-bosomed cloud floated high above the town. "If this weather hauds, it'll be a blessing for us poor farming bodies."

Tam was a wealthy old hunks, but it suited his hu-

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mour to refer to himself constantly as "a poor farming bodie." And he dressed in accordance with his humour. His clean old crab-apple face was always grinning at you from over a white-sleeved moleskin waistcoat, as if he had been no better than a breaker of road-mettle.

"Faith aye!" said the Provost, cunning and quick—"fodder should be cheap"—and he shot the covetous glimmer of a bargain-making eye at Mr. Wylie.

Tam drew himself up. He saw what was coming.

"We're needin' some hay for the burgh horse," said the Provost. "Ye'll be willing to sell at fifty shillings the ton, since it's like to be so plentiful."

"Oh," said Tam solemnly, "that's on-possible! Gourlay's seeking the three pound! And where he leads we maun a' gang. Gourlay sets the tune and Barbie dances till't."

That was quite untrue so far as the speaker was concerned. It took a clever man to make Tam Wylie dance to his piping. But Thomas, the knave, knew that he could always take a rise out the Provost by cracking up the Gourlays, and that to do it now was the best way of fobbing him off about the hay.

"Gourlay!" muttered the Provost in disgust. And Tam winked at the baker.

"Losh!" said Sandy Toddle, "yonder's the Free Kirk Minister going past the Cross! Where'll *he* be off till, at this hour of the day? He's not often up so soon."

"They say he sits late studying," said Johnny Coe.

"H'mph, studying!" grunted Tam Brodie, a big heavy wall-cheeked man, whose little side-glancing eyes seemed always alert for scandal amid the massive inso-

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lence of his smooth face. "I see few signs of studying in *him*. He's noathing but a stink wi' a skin on't."

T. Brodie was a very important man, look you, and wrote "Leather Mercht." above his door, though he cobbled with his own hands. He was a staunch Conservative, and down on the Dissenters.

"What road'th he taking?" lisped Deacon Allardyce, craning past Brodie's big shoulder to get a look.

"He's stoppit to speak to Widow Wallace. What will he be saying to *her*?"

"She's a greedy bodie that Mrs. Wallace; I wouldna wonder but she's spiering him for bawbees."

"Will he take the Skeighan Road, I wonder?"

"Or the Fechars?"

"He's a great man for gathering gowans and other sic trash. He's maybe for a dander up the burn juist. They say he's a great botanical man."

"Aye," said Brodie, "paidling in a burn's the ploy for him. He's a weanly gowk."

"A-a-ah!" protested the baker, who was a Burnso-maniac, "there's waur than a walk by the bank o' a bonny burn. Ye ken what Mossgiel said:

" 'The Muse nae poet ever fand her,
Till by himsel he learned to wander,
Adown some trottin burn's meander,
And no thick lang;
Oh sweet, to muse and pensive ponder
A heartfelt sang.' "

Poetical quotations however made the Provost uncomfortable. "Aye," he said drily in his throat; "verra good, baker, verra good! — Whose yellow

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doag's that? I never saw the beast about the town before!"

"Nor me either. It's a perfect stranger!"

"It's like a herd's doag!"

"Man, you're right! That's just what it will be. The morn's Fleekie lamb fair, and some herd or other'll be in about the town."

"He'll be drinking in some public house, I'se warrant, and the doag will have lost him."

"Imph, that'll be the way o't."

"I'm demned if he hasn't taken the Skeighan Road!" said Sandy Toddle, who had kept his eye on the minister.—Toddle's accent was a varying quality. When he remembered he had been a packman in England it was exceedingly fine. But he often forgot.

"The Skeighan Road! The Skeighan Road! Who'll he be going to see in that airt? Will it be Templandmuir?"

"Gosh, it canna be Templandmuir. He was there no later than yestreen!"

"Here's a man coming down the brae!" announced Johnny Coe in a solemn voice, as if a man "coming down the brae" was something unusual. In a moment every head was turned to the hill.

"What's yon he's carrying on his shouther?" pondered Brodie.

"It looks like a boax," said the Provost, slowly, bending every effort of eye and mind to discover what it really was. He was giving his profoundest cogitations to the "boax."

"It *is* a boax! But who is it though? I canna make him out."

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“Dod, I canna tell either; his head’s so bent with his burden!”

At last the man, laying his “boax” on the ground, stood up to ease his spine, so that his face was visible.

“Losh, it’s Jock Gilmour, the orra man at Gourlay’s! What’ll *he* be doing out on the street at this hour of the day? I thoct he was always busy on the premises! Will Gourlay be sending him off with something to somebody? But no; that canna be. He would have sent it with the carts.”

“I’ll wager ye,” cried Johnny Coe quickly, speaking more loudly than usual in the animation of discovery, “I’ll wager ye Gourlay has quarrelled him and put him to the door!”

“Man, you’re right! That’ll just be it, that’ll just be it! Aye; aye; faith aye; and you’ll be his kist he’s carrying! Man, you’re right, Mr. Coe; you have just put your finger on’t. We’ll hear news *this* morning.”

They edged forward to the middle of the road, the Provost in front, to meet Gilmour coming down.

“Ye’ve a heavy burden this morning, John,” said the Provost graciously.

“No wonder, sir,” said Gilmour with big-eyed solemnity, and set down the chest; “it’s no wonder, seeing that I’m carrying my a-all.”

“Aye, man, John. How’s that na?”

To be the centre of interest and the object of gracious condescension was balm to the wounded feelings of Gilmour. Gourlay had lowered him, but this reception restored him to his own good opinion. He was usually called “Jock” (except by his mother, to whom, of course, he was “oor Johnny”) but the best mer-

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chants in the town were addressing him as "John." It was a great occasion. Gilmour expanded in gossip beneath its influence benign.

He welcomed, too, this first and fine opportunity of venting his wrath on the Gourlays.

"Oh, I just telled Gourlay what I thocht of him, and took the door ahint me. I let him have it hot and hardy, I can tell ye. He'll no' forget *me* in a hurry"—Gilmour bawled angrily, and nodded his head significantly, and glared fiercely, to show what good cause he had given Gourlay to remember him—"he'll no forget *me* for a month of Sundays."

"Aye, man, John, what did ye say till him?"

"Na, man, what did he say to you?"

"Wath he angry, Dyohn?"

"How did the thing begin?"

"Tell us, man, John."

"What was it a-all about, John?"

"Was Mrs. Gourlay there?"

Bewildered by this pelt of questions Gilmour answered the last that hit his ear. "There, aye; faith, she was there. It was her was the cause o't."

"D'ye tell me that, John? Man, you surprise me. I would have thocht the thowless trauchle * hadna the smeddum left to interfere."

"Oh, it was yon boy of hers. He's aye swaggerin' aboot, interferin' wi' folk at their wark—he follows his faither's example in that, for as the auld cock craws the young ane learns—and his mither's that daft aboot him that ye daurna give a look! He came in my road when I was sweeping out the close, and some o' the dirty

* *Trauchle*, a poor trollop who trails about; *smeddum*, grit.

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jaups splashed about his shins; but was I to blame for that?—ye maun walk wide o' a whalebone besom if ye dinna want to be splashed. Afore I kenned where I was, he up wi' a dirty washing-clout and slashed me in the face wi't! I hit him a thud in the ear—as wha wadna? Out come his mither like a fury, skirling about *her* hoose, and *her* servants, and *her* weans. 'Your servant!' says I, 'your servant! You're a nice-looking trollop to talk about servants,' says I."

"Did ye really, John?"

"Man, that wath bauld o' ye."

"And what did *she* say?"

"Oh, she just kept skirling! And then, to be sure, Gourlay must come out and interfere! But I telled him to his face what I thoct of *him*! 'The best Gourlay that ever dirtied leather,' says I, 's no gaun to make dirt of me,' says I."

"Aye man, Dyohn!" lisped Deacon Allardyce, with bright and eagerly enquiring eyes. "And what did he thay to that, na? *That* wath a dig for him! I'the war-rant he wath angry."

"Angry? He foamed at the mouth! But I up and says to him, 'I have had enough o' you,' says I, 'you and your Hoose wi' the Green Shutters,' says I, 'you're no fit to have a decent servant,' says I. 'Pay *me my* wages and I'll be redd o' ye,' says I. And wi' that I flang my kist on my shouther and slapped the gate ahint me."

"And *did* he pay ye your wages?" Tam Wylie probed him slily, with a sideward glimmer in his eye.

"Ah, well, no; not exactly," said Gilmour drawing in. "But I'll get them right enough for a' that. He'll

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no get the better o' *me*." Having grounded unpleasantly on the question of the wages he thought it best to be off ere the bloom was dashed from his importance, so he shouldered his chest and went. The bodies watched him down the street.

"He's a lying brose, that," said the baker. "We a' ken what Gourlay is. He would have flung Gilmour out by the scruff o' the neck, if he had daured to set his tongue against him!"

"Faith, that's so," said Tam Wylie and Johnny Coe together.

But the others were divided between their perception of the fact and their wish to believe that Gourlay had received a thrust or two. At other times they would have been the first to scoff at Gilmour's swagger. Now their animus against Gourlay prompted them to back it up.

"Oh, I'm not so sure of tha-at, baker," cried the Provost, in the false loud voice of a man defending a position which he knows to be unsound. "I'm no so sure of that, at a-all. A-a-ah, mind ye," he drawled persuasively, "he's a hardy fallow, that Gilmour. I've no doubt he gie'd Gourlay a good dig or two. Let us howp they will do him good."

For many reasons intimâte to the Scot's character, envious scandal is rampant in petty towns such as Barbie. To go back to the beginning, the Scot, as pundits will tell you, is an individualist. His religion alone is enough to make him so. For it is a scheme of personal salvation significantly described once by the Reverend Mr. Struthers of Barbie. "At the Day of Judgment, my frehnds," said Mr. Struthers; "at the Day of Judg-

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ment every herring must hang by his own tail!" Self-dependence was never more luridly expressed. History, climate, social conditions, and the national beverage have all combined (the pundits go on) to make the Scot an individualist, fighting for his own hand. The better for him if it be so; from that he gets the grit that tells.

From their individualism, however, comes inevitably a keen spirit of competition (the more so because Scotch democracy gives fine chances to *compété*), and from their keen spirit of competition comes, inevitably again, an envious belittlement of rivals. If a man's success offends your individuality, to say everything you can against him is a recognised weapon of the fight. It takes him down a bit. And (inversely) elevates his rival.

It is in a small place like Barbie that such malignity is most virulent, because in a small place like Barbie every man knows everything to his neighbour's detriment. He can redd up his rival's pedigree, for example, and lower his pride (if need be) by detailing the disgraces of his kin. "I have grand news the day!" a big-hearted Scot will exclaim (and when their hearts are big they are big to hypertrophy)—"I have grand news the day! Man, Jock Goudie has won the C. B."—"Jock Goudie," an envious bodie will pucker as if he had never heard the name; "Jock Goudie? Wha's *he* for a Goudie? Oh aye, let me see now. He's a brother o'—eh, a brother o'—eh (tit-tit-titting on his brow)—oh, just a brother o' Dru'cken Will Goudie o' Auchterwheeze! Oo-oooh I ken *him* fine. His grannie keepit a sweetie-shop in Strathbungo."—There you have the "nesty" Scotsman.

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Even if Gourlay had been a placable and inoffensive man, then, the malignants of the petty burgh (it was scarce bigger than a village) would have fastened on his character, simply because he was above them. No man has a keener eye for behaviour than the Scot (especially when spite wings his intuition), and Gourlay's thickness of wit, and pride of place, would in any case have drawn their sneers. So, too, on lower grounds, would his wife's sluttishness. But his repressiveness added a hundred-fold to their hate of him. That was the particular cause, which acting on their general tendency to belittle a too-successful rival, made their spite almost monstrous against him. Not a man among them but had felt the weight of his tongue—for edge it had none. He walked among them like the dirt below his feet. There was no give and take in the man; he could be verra jocose with the lairds, to be sure, but he never dropped in to the Red Lion for a crack and a dram with the town-folk; he just glowered as if he could devour them! And who was he, I should like to know? His grandfather had been noathing but a common carrier!

Hate was the greater on both sides because it was often impotent. Gourlay frequently suspected offence, and seethed because he had no idea how to meet it—except by driving slowly down the brae in his new gig and never letting on when the Provost called to him. That was a wipe in the eye for the Provost! The “bodies,” on their part, could rarely get near enough Gourlay to pierce his armour; he kept them off him by his brutal dourness. For it was not only pride and arrogance, but a consciousness, also, that he was no match for

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them at their own game, that kept Gourlay away from their society. They were adepts at the under stroke and they would have given him many a dig if he had only come amongst them. But, oh, no; not he; he was the big man; he never gave a body a chance! Or if you did venture a bit jibe when you met him, he glowered you off the face of the earth with thae black e'en of his. Oh, how they longed to get at him! It was not the least of the evils caused by Gourlay's black pride that it perverted a dozen characters. The "bodies" of Barbie may have been decent enough men in their own way, but against him their malevolence was monstrous. It shewed itself in an insane desire to seize on every scrap of gossip they might twist against him. That was why the Provost lowered municipal dignity to gossip in the street with a discharged servant. As the baker said afterwards, it was absurd for a man in his "poscetion." But it was done with the sole desire of hearing something that might tell against Gourlay. Even Countesses, we are told, gossip with malicious maids, about other Countesses. Spite is a great leveller.

"Shall we adjourn?" said Brodie, when they had watched Jock Gilmour out of sight. He pointed across his shoulder to the Red Lion.

"Better noat just now," said the Provost, nodding in slow authority; "better noat just now! I'm very anxious to see Gourlay about yon matter we were speaking of, doan't ye undersfa-and? But I'm determined not to go to his house! On the other hand if we go into the Red Lion the now, we may miss him on the street. We'll noat have loang to wait, though; he'll be down the town directly, to look at the horses he has at the

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gerse out the Fechars Road. But *I'm* talling ye, I simply will noat go to his house—to put up with a wheen damned insults!” he puffed in angry recollection.

“To tell the truth,” said Wylie, “I don’t like to call upon Gourlay, either. I’m aware of his eyes on my back when I slink beaten through his gate—and I feel that my hurdies are wanting in dignity!”

“Huh!” spluttered Brodie, “that never affects me. I come stunting out in a bleeze of wrath and slam the yett ahint me!”

“Oh, well,” said the Deacon, “that’th one way of being dignified.”

“I’m afraid,” said Sandy Toddle, “that he won’t be in a very good key to consider our request this morning, after his quarrel with Gilmour.”

“No,” said the Provost, “he’ll be blazing angry! It’s most unfoartunate. But we maun try to get his consent be his temper what it will. It’s a matter of importance to the town, doan’t ye see, and if he refuses, we simply can-noat proceed wi’ the improvement.”

“It was Gilmour’s jibe at the House wi’ the Green Shutters that would anger him the most—for it’s the perfect god of his idolatry. Eh, sirs, he has wasted an awful money upon yon house!”

“Wasted’s the word!” said Brodie with a blatant laugh. “Wasted’s the word! They say he has verra little lying cash! And I shouldna be surprised at all. For, ye see, Gibson the builder diddled him owre the building o’t.”

“Oh, I’se warrant Cunning Johnny would get the better of an ass like Gourlay. But how in particular, Mr. Brodie? Have ye heard ainy details?”

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“I’ve been on the track o’ the thing for a while back, but it was only yestreen I had the proofs o’t. It was Robin Wabster that telled me. He’s a jouking bodie, Robin, and he was ahint a dyke up the Skeighan Road when Gibson and Gourlay foregathered—they stoppit just forenenst him! Gourlay began to curse at the size of Gibson’s bill, but Cunning Johnny kenned the way to get round him brawly. ‘Mr. Gourlay,’ says he, ‘there’s not a thing in your house that a man in your poseition can afford to be without—and ye needn’t expect the best house in Barbie for an oald song!’ And Gourlay was pacified at once! It appeared frae their crack, however, that Gibson has diddled him tremendous. ‘Verra well then,’ Robin heard Gourlay cry, ‘you must allow me a while ere I pay that!’ I wager, for a’ sae muckle as he’s made of late, that his balance at the bank’s a sma’ yin.”

“More thyow than thubstanth,” said the Deacon.

“Well, I’m sure!” said the Provost, “he needn’t have built such a gra-and house to put a slut of a wife like yon in!”

“I was surprised,” said Sandy Toddle, “to hear about her firing up. I wouldn’t have thought she had the spirit, or that Gourlay would have come to her support!”

“Oh,” said the Provost, “it wasn’t her he was thinking of! It was his own pride, the brute. He leads the woman the life of a doag. I’m surprised that he ever married her!”

“I ken fine how he married her,” said Johnny Coe. “I was acquaint wi’ her father, auld Tenshillingland owre at Fechars—a grand farmer he was, wi’ land o’ his

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nain, and a gey pickle bawbees. It was the bawbees, and not the woman, that Gourlay went after! It was *her* money, as ye ken, that set him on his feet, and made him such a big man. He never cared a preen for *her*, and then when she proved a dirty trollop, he couldna endure her look! That's what makes him so sore upon her now. And yet I mind her a braw lass, too," said Johnny the sentimentalist, "a braw lass she was," he mused, "wi' fine, brown glossy hair, I mind, and,—ochonee! ochonee!—as daft as a yett in a windy day. She had a cousin, Jenny Wabster, that dwelt in Tenshillinland than, and mony a summer nicht up the Fechars Road, when ye smelled the honey-suckle in the gloaming, I have heard the two o' them tee-heeing owre the lads thegither, skirling in the dark and lauching to themselves. They were of the glaikit kind ye can always hear loang before ye see. Jock Allan (that has done so well in Embro) was a herd at Tenshillinland than, and he likit her, and I think she likit him, but Gourlay came wi' his gig and whisked her away. She doesna lauch sae muckle now, puir bodie! But a braw lass she——"

"It's you maun speak to Gourlay, Deacon," said the Provost, brushing aside the reminiscent Coe.

"How can it be that, Provost? It'th *your* place, surely. You're the head of the town!"

When Gourlay was to be approached there was always a competition for who should be hindmost.

"Yass, but you know perfectly well, Deacon, that I cannot thole the look of him. I simply cannot thole the look! And he knows it too. The thing'll gang smash at the outset—*I'm* talling ye, now—it'll go smash

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at the outset if it's left to me.—And than, ye see, you have a better way of approaching folk!”

“Ith that tho?” said the Deacon drily. He shot a suspicious glance to see if the Provost was guying him.

“Oh, it must be left to you, Deacon,” said the baker and Tam Wylie in a breath.

“Certainly, it maun be left to the Deacon,” assented Johnny Coe, when he saw how the others were giving their opinion.

“Tho be it, then,” snapped the Deacon.

“Here he comes,” said Sandy Toddle.

Gourlay came down the street towards them, his chest big, his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat. He had the power of staring steadily at those whom he approached without the slightest sign of recognition or intelligence appearing in his eyes. As he marched down upon the bodies he fixed them with a wide-open glower that was devoid of every expression but courageous steadiness. It gave a kind of fierce vacaney to his look.

The Deacon limped forward on his thin shanks to the middle of the road.

“It'th a fine morning, Mr. Gourlay,” he simpered.

“There's noathing wrong with the morning,” grunted Gourlay, as if there was something wrong with the Deacon.

“We wath wanting to thee ye on a very important matter, Mithter Gourlay,” lisped the Deacon, smiling up at the big man's face, with his head on one side, and rubbing his fingers in front of him. “It'th a matter of the common good, you thee; and we all agreed

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that we should speak to *you*, ath the foremost merchant of the town!"

Allardyce meant his compliment to fetch Gourlay. But Gourlay knew his Allardyce and was cautious. It was well to be on your guard when the Deacon was complimentary. When his language was most flowery there was sure to be a serpent hidden in it somewhere. He would lisp out an innocent remark and toddle away, and Gourlay would think nothing of the matter till a week afterwards, perhaps, when something would flash a light—then "Damn him, did he mean '*that*'?" he would seethe, starting back and staring at the "*that*" while his fingers strangled the air in place of the Deacon.

He glowered at the Deacon now till the Deacon blinked.

"You thee, Mr. Gourlay," Allardyce shuffled uneasily, "it's for your own benefit just ath much ath ourth. We were thinking of you ath well ath of ourthelves! Oh, yeth, oh, yeth!"

"Aye, man!" said Gourlay, "that was kind of ye! I'll be the first man in Barbie to get ainy benefit from the fools that mismanage our affairs."

The gravel grated beneath the Provost's foot. The atmosphere was becoming electric, and the Deacon hastened to the point.

"You thee, there'th a fine natural supply of water—a perfect reservore the Provost sayth—on the brae-face just above *your* garden, Mr. Gourlay. Now, it would be easy to lead that water down and along through all the gardenth on the high side of Main Street—and, 'deed, it might feed a pump at the Cross, too, to supply the lower portionth o' the town. It would really be a

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grai-ait convenience.—Every man on the high side o' Main Street would have a running spout at his own back door! If your garden didna run tho far back, Mr. Gourlay, and ye hadna tho muckle land about your place"—*that* should fetch him, thought the Deacon!—"if it werena for that, Mr. Gourlay, we could easily lead the water round to the other gardenth without interfering with your property. But, ath it ith, we simply cannoat move without ye. The water must come through your garden, if it comes at a-all."

"The most o' you important men live on the high side o' Main Street," birred Gourlay. "Is it the poor folk at the Cross, or your ain bits o' back doors that you're thinking o'?"

"Oh—oh, Mr. Gourlay!" protested Allardyce, head flung back, and palms in air, to keep the thought of self-interest away, "oh—oh, Mr. Gourlay! We're thinking of noathing but the common good, I do assure ye."

"Aye, man! You're dis-in-ter-ested!" said Gourlay, but he stumbled on the big word and spoiled the sneer. That angered him, and, "it's likely," he rapped out, "that I'll allow the land round *my* house to be howked and trenched and made a mudhole of, to oblige a when things like you!"

"Oh—oh, but think of the convenience to uth—eh—eh—I mean to the common good," said Allardyce.

"I howked wells for myself," snapped Gourlay. "Let others do the like."

"Oh, but we haven't all the enterprithe of you, Mr. Gourlay. You'll surely accommodate the town!"

"I'll see the town damned first," said Gourlay, and passed on his steady way.