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GOURLAY was hard up for money. Every day of his life taught him that he was nowhere in the stress of modern competition. The grand days—only a few years back, but seeming half a century away, so much had happened in between—the grand days when he was the only big man in the locality, and carried everything with a high hand, had disappeared for ever. Now all was bustle, hurry, and confusion, the getting and sending of telegrams, quick despatches by railway, the watching of markets at a distance, rapid combinations that bewildered Gourlay's duller mind. At first he was too obstinate to try the newer methods; when he did, he was too stupid to use them cleverly. When he plunged it was always at the wrong time, for he plunged at random, not knowing what to do. He had lost heavily of late both in grain and cheese, and the law-suit with Gibson had crippled him. It was well for him that property in Barbie had increased in value; the House with the Green Shutters was to prove the buttress of his fortune. Already he had borrowed considerably upon that security. He was now dressing to go to Skeighan and get more.

“Brodie, Gurney, and Yarrowby,” of Glasgow were the lawyers who financed him, and he had to sign some papers at Goudie's office ere he touched the cash.

He was meaning to drive of course; Gourlay was

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proud of his gig, and always kept a spanking roadster. "What a fine figure of a man!" you thought, as you saw him coming swiftly towards you, seated high on his driving cushion. That driving cushion was Gourlay's pedestal from which he looked down on Barbie for many a day.

A quick step, yet shambling, came along the lobby. There was a pause, as of one gathering heart for a venture; then a clumsy knock on the door.

"Come in," snapped Gourlay.

Peter Riney's queer little old face edged timorously into the room. He only opened the door the width of his face, and looked ready to bolt at a word.

"Tam's deid!" he blurted.

Gourlay gashed himself frightfully with his razor, and a big red blob stood out on his cheek.

"Deid!" he stared.

"Yes," stammered Peter. "He was right enough when Elshie gae him his feed this morning, but when I went in enow, to put the harness on, he was lying deid in the loose-box. The batts—it's like."

For a moment Gourlay stared with the open mouth of an angry surprise, forgetting to take down his razor.

"Aweel, Peter," he said at last, and Peter went away.

The loss of his pony touched Gourlay to the quick. He had been stolid and dour in his other misfortunes, had taken them as they came, calmly; he was not the man to whine and cry out against the angry heavens. He had neither the weakness, nor the width of nature, to indulge in the luxury of self-pity. But the sudden death of his gallant roadster, his proud pacer through the streets of Barbie, touched him with a sense of quite

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personal loss and bereavement. Coming on the heels of his other calamities it seemed to make them more poignant, more sinister, prompting the question if misfortune would never have an end.

"Damn it, I have enough to thole," Gourlay muttered; "surely there was no need for this to happen." And when he looked in the mirror to fasten his stock, and saw the dark strong clean-shaven face, he stared at it for a moment, with a curious compassion for the man before him, as for one who was being hardly used. The hard lips could never have framed the words, but the vague feeling in his heart, as he looked at the dark vision, was: "It's a pity of you, sir."

He put on his coat rapidly, and went out to the stable. An instinct prompted him to lock the door.

He entered the loose-box. A shaft of golden light, aswarm with motes, slanted in the quietness. Tam lay on the straw, his head far out, his neck unnaturally long, his limbs sprawling, rigid. What a spanker Tam had been! What gallant drives they had had together! When he first put Tam between the shafts five years ago, he had been driving his world before him, plenty of cash and a big way of doing.—Now Tam was dead, and his master netted in a mesh of care.

"I was always gude to the beasts at any rate," Gourlay muttered, as if pleading in his own defence.

For a long time he stared down at the sprawling carcass, musing. "Tam the powney," he said twice, nodding his head each time he said it; "Tam the powney"; and he turned away.

How was he to get to Skeighan? He plunged at his

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watch. The ten o'clock train had already gone, the express did not stop at Barbie; if he waited till one o'clock he would be late for his appointment. There was a brake, true, which ran to Skeighan every Tuesday. It was a downcome, though, for a man who had been proud of driving behind his own horseflesh to pack in among a crowd of the Barbie sprats. And if he went by the brake, he would be sure to rub shoulders with his stinging and detested foes. It was a fine day; like enough the whole jing-bang of them would be going with the brake to Skeighan. Gourlay, who shrank from nothing, shrank from the winks that would be sure to pass when they saw him, the haughty, the aloof, forced to creep among them check for jowl. Then his angry pride rushed towering to his aid. Was John Gourlay to turn tail for a wheen o' the Barbie dirt? Damn the fear o't! It was a public conveyance; he had the same right to use it as the rest o' folk!

The place of departure for the brake was the "Black Bull," at the Cross, nearly opposite to Wilson's. There were winks and stares and elbow-nudgings when the folk hanging round saw Gourlay coming forward; but he paid no heed. Gourlay, in spite of his mad violence when roused, was a man at all other times of a grave and orderly demeanour. He never splurged. Even his bluster was not bluster, for he never threatened the thing which he had not it in him to do. He walked quietly into the empty brake, and took his seat in the right-hand corner, at the top, close below the driver.

As he had expected, the Barbie bodies had mustered in strength for Skeighan. In a country brake it is the privilege of the important men to mount beside the

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driver, in order to take the air and show themselves off to an admiring world. On the dickey were ex-Provost Connal and Sandy Toddle, and between them the Deacon, tightly wedged. The Deacon was so thin (the bodie) that though he was wedged closely, he could turn and address himself to Tam Brodie, who was seated next the door.

The fun began when the horses were crawling up the first brae.

The Deacon turned with a wink to Brodie, and dropping a glance on the crown of Gourlay's hat, "Tum-muth" he lisped, "what a dirty place that ith!" pointing to a hovel by the wayside.

Brodie took the cue at once. His big face flushed with a malicious grin. "Aye," he bellowed, "the owner o' that maun be married to a dirty wife, I'm thinking!"

"It must be terrible," said the Deacon, "to be married to a dirty trollop."

"Terrible," laughed Brodie; "it's enough to give ainy man a gurry temper."

They had Gourlay on the hip at last. More than arrogance had kept him off from the bodies of the town; a consciousness also, that he was not their match in malicious innuendo. The direct attack he could meet superbly, downing his opponent with a coarse birr of the tongue; to the veiled gibe he was a quivering hulk, to be prodded at your ease. And now the malignants were around him (while he could not get away); talking *to* each other, indeed, but *at* him, while he must keep quiet in their midst.

At every brae they came to (and there were many braes) the bodies played their malicious game, shout-

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ing remarks along the brake, to each other's ears, to his comprehension.

The new house of Templandmuir was seen above the trees.

"What a splendid house Templandmuir has built!" cried the ex-Provost.

"Splendid!" echoed Brodie. "But a laird like the Templar has a right to a fine mansion such as that! He's no' like some merchants we ken o' who throw away money on a house for no other end but vanity. Many a man builds a grand house for a show-off, when he has verra little to support it. But the Templar's different. He has made a mint of money since he took the quarry in his own hand."

"He's verra thick wi' Wilson, I notice," piped the Deacon, turning with a grin, and a gleaming droop of the eye on the head of his tormented enemy. The Deacon's face was alive and quick with the excitement of the game, his face flushed with an eager grin, his eyes glittering. Decent folk in the brake behind, felt compunctious visitings when they saw him turn with the flushed grin, and the gleaming squint on the head of his enduring victim. "Now for another stab!" they thought.

"You may well say that," shouted Brodie. "Wilson has procured the whole of the Templar's carterage. Oh, Wilson has become a power! Yon new houses of his must be bringing in a braw penny.—I'm thinking, Mr. Connal, that Wilson ought to be the Provost!"

"Strange!" cried the former Head of the Town, "that *you* should have been thinking that! I've just been in the same mind o't. Wilson's by far and away

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the most progressive man we have. What a business he has built in two or three years!"

"He has that!" shouted Brodie. "He goes up the brae as fast as some other folk are going down't. And yet they tell me he got a verra poor welcome from some of us the first morning he appeared in Barbie!"

Gourlay gave no sign. Others would have shown by the moist glisten of self-pity in the eye, or the scowl of wrath, how much they were moved; but Gourlay stared calmly before him, his chin resting on the head of his staff, resolute, immobile, like a stone head at gaze in the desert. Only the larger fulness of his fine nostril betrayed the hell of wrath seething within him. And when they alighted in Skeighan an observant boy said to his mother, "I saw the marks of his chirted teeth through his jaw."

But they were still far from Skeighan, and Gourlay had much to thole.

"Did ye hear?" shouted Brodie, "that Wilson is sending his son to the College at Embro' in October?"

"D'ye tell me that?" said the Provost. "What a successful lad that has been! He's a credit to moar than Wilson, he's a credit to the whole town."

"Aye," yelled Brodie, "the money wasna wasted on *him!* It must be a terrible thing when a man has a splurging ass for his son, that never got a prize!"

The Provost began to get nervous. Brodie was going too far. It was all very well for Brodie who was at the far end of the waggonette, and out of danger; but if he provoked an outbreak, Gourlay would think nothing of tearing Provost and Deacon from their perch, and tossing them across the hedge.

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“What does Wilson mean to make of his son?” he enquired—a civil enough question surely.

“Oh, a minister. That’ll mean six or seven years at the University.”

“Indeed!” said the Provost. “That’ll cost an enormous siller!”

“Oh,” yelled Brodie, “but Wilson can afford it! It’s not everybody can! It’s all verra well to send your son to Skeighan High School, but when it comes to sending him to College, it’s time to think twice of what you’re doing—especially if you’ve little money left to come and go on.”

“Yeth,” lisped the Deacon, “if a man canna afford to College his son he had better put him in hith business—if he hath ainy business left to thpeak o’, that ith!”

The brake swung on through merry cornfields where reapers were at work, past happy brooks flashing to the sun, through the solemn hush of ancient and mysterious woods, beneath the great white-moving clouds and blue spaces of the sky. And amid the suave enveloping greatness of the world, the human pismires stung each other and were cruel, and full of hate and malice and a petty rage.

“Oh, damn it, enough of this!” said the baker at last.

“Enough of what?” blustered Brodie.

“Of you and your gibes,” said the baker with a wry mouth of disgust. “Damn it, man, leave folk alane!”

Gourlay turned to him quietly. “Thank you, baker,” he said slowly. “But don’t interfere on my behalf! John Gourla”—he dwelt on his name in ringing pride—“John Gourla can fight for his own hand—if so, there

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need, to be. And pay no heed to the thing before ye. The mair ye tramp on a dirt it spreads the wider!”

“Who was referring to *you*?” bellowed Brodie.

Gourlay looked over at him in the far corner of the brake, with the wide open glower that made people blink. Brodie blinked rapidly, trying to stare fiercely the while.

“Maybe ye werna referring to me,” said Gourlay slowly. “But if *I* had been in your end o’ the brake *ye* would have been in hell or this!”

He had said enough. There was silence in the brake till it reached Skeighan. But the evil was done. Enough had been said to influence Gourlay to the most disastrous resolution of his life.

“Get yourself ready for the College in October,” he ordered his son that evening.

“The College!” cried John, aghast.

“Yes! Is there ainything in that to gape at?” snapped his father, in sudden irritation at the boy’s amaze.

“But I don’t want to gang!” John whimpered as before.

“Want! What does it matter what *you* want? You should be damned glad of the chance! I mean to make ye a minister—they have plenty of money and little to do—a grand easy life o’t. MacCandlish tells me you’re a stupid ass, but have some little gift of words. You have every qualification!”

“It’s against *my* will,” John bawled angrily.

“*Your* will!” sneered his father.

To John the command was not only tyrannical, but treacherous. There had been nothing to warn him of

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a coming change, for Gourlay was too contemptuous of his wife and children to inform them how his business stood. John had been brought up to go into the business, and now, at the last moment he was undeceived, and ordered off to a new life, from which every instinct of his being shrank afraid. He was cursed with an imagination in excess of his brains, and in the haze of the future he saw two pictures with uncanny vividness—himself in bleak lodgings raising his head from Virgil, to wonder what they were doing at home to-night, and, contrasted with that loneliness, the others, his cronies, laughing along the country roads beneath the glimmer of the stars. They would be having the fine ploys while he was mewed up in Edinburgh. Must he leave loved Barbie and the House with the Green Shutters, must he still drudge at books which he loathed, must he venture on a new life where everything terrified his mind?

“It’s a shame!” he cried. “And I refuse to go. I don’t want to leave Barbie! I’m feared of Edinburgh” —and there he stopped in conscious impotence of speech. How could he explain his forebodings to a rock of a man like his father?

“No more o’t!” roared Gourlay, flinging out his hand. “Not another word! You go to College in October!”

“Aye man, Johnny,” said his mother, “think o’ the future that’s before ye!”

“Aye!” howled the youth in silly anger, “it’s like to be a braw future!”

“It’s the best future you can have!” growled his father.

For while rivalry, born of hate, was the propelling

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influence in Gourlay's mind, other reasons whispered that the course suggested by hate was a good one on its merits. His judgment, such as it was, supported the impulse of his blood. It told him that the old business would be a poor heritage for his son and that it would be well to look for another opening. The boy gave no sign of aggressive smartness to warrant a belief that he would ever pull the thing together. Better make him a minister. Surely there was enough money left about the House for tha-at! It was the best that could befall him.

Mrs. Gourlay, for her part, though sorry to lose her son, was so pleased at the thought of sending him to College, and making him a minister, that she ran on in foolish maternal gabble to the wife of Drucken Wabster. Mrs. Webster informed the gossips and they discussed the matter at the Cross.

"Dod," said Sandy Toddle, "Gourlay's better off than I supposed!"

"Huts!" said Brodie, "it's just a when bluff to blind folk!"

"It would fit him better," said the Doctor, "if he spent some money on his daughter. She ought to pass the winter in a warmer locality than Barbie. The lassie has a poor chest! I told Gourlay, but he only gave a grunt. And 'oh,' said Mrs. Gourlay, 'it would be a daft-like thing to send *her* away, when John maun be weel-provided for the College.' D'ye know, I'm beginning to think there's something seriously wrong with yon woman's health! She seemed anxious to consult me on her own account, but when I offered to sound her, she wouldn't hear of it—'Na,' she cried, 'I'll keep it

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to mysell!’—and put her arm across her breast as if to keep me off. I do think she’s hiding some complaint! Only a woman whose mind was weak with disease could have been so callous as yon about her lassie.”

“Oh, her mind’s weak enough,” said Sandy Toddle. “It was always that! But it’s only because Gourlay has tyraneezed her verra soul. I’m surprised, however, that *he* should be careless of the girl. He was aye said to be browdened upon *her*.”

“Men-folk are often like that about lassie-weans,” said Johnny Coe. “They like well enough to pet them when they’re wee, but when once they’re big they never look the road they’re on! They’re a’ very fine when they’re pets, but they’re no sae fine when they’re pretty misses.—And, to tell the truth, Janet Gourlay’s ainything but pretty!”

Old Bleach-the-boys, the bitter dominie (who rarely left the studies in political economy which he found a solace for his thwarted powers) happened to be at the Cross that evening. A brooding and taciturn man, he said nothing till others had their say. Then he shook his head.

“They’re making a great mistake,” he said gravely, “they’re making a great mistake! Yon boy’s the last youngster on earth who should go to College.”

“Aye man, dominie, he’s an infernal ass, is he noat?” they cried, and pressed for his judgment.

At last, partly in real pedantry, partly, with humorous intent to puzzle them, he delivered his astounding mind.

“The fault of young Gourlay,” quoth he, “is a sen-

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sory perceptiveness in gross excess of his intellectuality."

They blinked and tried to understand.

"Aye man, dominie!" said Sandy Toddle. "That means he's an infernal cuddy, dominie! Does it na, dominie?"

But Bleach-the-boys had said enough. "Aye," he said drily, "there's a when gey cuddies in Barbie!"—and he went back to his stuffy little room to study *The Wealth of Nations*.