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THERE is nothing worse for a weakling than a small success. The strong man tosses it beneath his feet, as a step to rise higher on. He squeezes it into its proper place as a layer in the life he is building. If his memory dwells on it for a moment it is only because of its valuable results, not because in itself it is a theme for vanity. And if he be higher than strong he values not it, but the exercise of getting it, viewing his actual achievement, he is apt to reflect: "Is this pitiful thing, then, all that I toiled for?" Finer natures often experience a keen depression and sense of littleness in the pause that follows a success. But the fool is so swollen by thought of his victory that he is unfit for all healthy work till somebody jags him and lets the gas out. He never forgets the great thing he fancies he did thirty years ago, and expects the world never to forget it either. The more of a weakling he is, and the more incapable of repeating his former triumph, the more he thinks of it; and the more he thinks of it the more it satisfies his meagre soul and prevents him essaying another brave venture in the world. His petty achievement ruins him. The memory of it never leaves him, but swells to a huge balloon that lifts him off his feet and carries him heavens-high—till it lands him on a dunghill. Even from that proud eminence he oft cock-a-doodles his former triumph to the world. "Man, you wouldn't think to see

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me here that I once held a great position! Thirty year back, I did a big thing. It was like this, ye see." And then follows a recital of his faded glories—generally ending with a hint that a drink would be very acceptable.

Even such a weakling was young Gourlay. His success in Edinburgh, petty as it was, turned his head, and became one of the many causes working to destroy him. All that summer at Barbie he swaggered and drank on the strength of it.

On the morning after his return he clothed himself in fine raiment (he was always well-dressed till the end came), and sallied forth to dominate the town. As he swaggered past the Cross, smoking a cigarette, he seemed to be conscious that the very walls of the houses watched him with unusual eyes, as if even they felt that yon was John Gourlay whom they had known as a boy, proud wearer now of the academic wreath, the conquering hero returned to his home. So Gourlay figured them. He, the disconsidered, had shed a lustre on the ancient walls. They were tributaries to his new importance—somehow their attitude was different from what it had ever been before. It was only his self-conscious bigness, of course, that made even inanimate things seem the feeders of his greatness. As Gourlay, always alive to obscure emotions which he could never express in words, mused for a moment over the strange new feeling that had come to him, a gowsterous voice hailed him from the Black Bull door. He turned, and Peter Wylie, hearty and keen like his father, stood him a drink in honour of his victory—which was already buzzed about the town.

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Drucken Wabster's wife had seen to that. "Ou," she cried, "his mother's daft about it, the silly auld thing; she can speak o' noathing else. Though Gourlay gies her very little to come and go on, she slipped him a whole sovereign this morning, to keep his pouch! Think o' that, kimmers; heard ye ever sic extravagance! I saw her doin'd wi' my own eyes. It's aince wud and aye waur\* wi' her, I'm thinking. But the wastefu' wife's the waefu' widow, she should keep in mind. She's far owre browdened upon yon boy. I'm sure I howp good may come o't, but—" and with an ominous shake of the head she ended the Websterian harangue.

When Peter Wylie left him Gourlay lit a cigarette and stood at the Cross, waiting for the praises yet to be. The Deacon toddled forward on his thin shanks.

"Man Dyohn, you're won hame, I thee! Aye man! And how are ye?"

Gourlay surveyed him with insolent, indolent eyes. "Oh, I'm all rai-ight, Deacon," he swaggered, "how are ye-ow?" and he sent a puff of tobacco-smoke down through his nostrils.

"I declare!" said the Deacon. "I never thaw onybody thmoke like that before! That'll be one of the thingth ye learn at College, no doubt."

"Ya-as," yawned Gourlay; "it gives you the full flavour of the we-eed."

The Deacon glimmered over him with his eyes. "The weed," said he. "Jutht tho! Impshm. The weed."

Then worthy Mister Allardyce tried another opening. "But, dear me!" he cried, "I'm forgetting entirely. I

\* "*Aince wud and aye waur*": silly for once and silly for always.

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must congratulate ye! Ye've been doing wonderth, they tell me, up in Embro."

"Just a little bit," swaggered Gourlay, right hand on outshot hip, left hand flaunting a cigarette in air most delicate, tobacco-smoke curling from his lofty nose. He looked down his face at the Deacon. "Just a little bit, Mr. Allardyce, just a little bit. I tossed the thing off in a twinkling."

"Aye man, Dyohn," said the Deacon with great solicitude, "but you maunna work that brain o' yours too hard, though. A heid like yours doesna come through the hatter's hand ilka day o' the week; you mutht be careful not to put too great a thtrain on't. Aye, aye; often the best machine's the easiest broken and the warst to mend. You should take a rest and enjoy yourself. But there! what need I be telling *you* that? A College-bred man like you kenth far better about it than a thilly auld country bodie! You'll be meaning to have a grand holiday and lots o' fun—a dram now and then, eh? and mony a rattle in the auld man's gig?"

At this assault on his weak place Gourlay threw away his important manner with the end of his cigarette. He could never maintain the lofty pose for more than five minutes at a time.

"You're *right*, Deacon," he said, nodding his head with splurging sincerity. "I mean to have a dem'd good holiday. One's glad to get back to the old place after six months in Edinburgh."

"Atweel," said the Deacon. "But, man, have you tried the new whiskey at the Black Bull—I thaw ye in wi' Pate Wylie? It'th extr'ornar gude—thaft as the thang o' a mavis on a night at e'en, and fiery as a High-

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land charge.”—It was not in character for the Deacon to say such a thing, but whiskey makes the meanest of Scots poetical. He elevates the manner to the matter, and attains the perfect style.—“But no doubt,” the cunning old pryer went on, with a smiling suavity in his voice, “but no doubt a man who knowth Edinburgh tho well as you, will have a favourite blend of hith own. I notice that University men have a fine taste in thpirits.”

“I generally prefer ‘Kinblythmont’s Cure,’” said Gourlay with the air of a connoisseur. “But ‘Anderson’s Sting o’ Delight’ ’s very good, and so’s ‘Balsillie’s Brig o’ the Mains.’”

“Aye,” said the Deacon. “Aye, aye! ‘Brig o’ the Mains’ ith what Jock Allan drinks. He’ll pree noathing else. I dare thay you thee a great deal of him in Embro.”

“Oh, every week,” swaggered Gourlay. “We’re always together, he and I.”

“Always thegither!” said the Deacon.

It was not true that Allan and Gourlay were together at all times. Allan was kind to Jean Richmond’s son (in his own ruinous way) but not to the extent of being burdened with the cub half a dozen times a week. Gourlay was merely boasting—as young blades are apt to do of acquaintance with older roisterers. They think it makes them seem men of the world. And in his desire to vaunt his comradeship with Allan, John failed to see that Allardyce was scooping him out like an oyster.

“Aye man,” resumed the Deacon; “he’s a hearty fellow, Jock. No doubt you have the great threes?”

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“Sprees!” gurgled Gourlay, and flung back his head with a laugh. “I should think we have. There was a great foy at Allan’s the night before I left Edinburgh. Tarmillan was there—d’ye know, yon’s the finest fellow I ever met in my life!—and Bauldy Logan—he’s another great chap. Then there was Armstrong and Gillespie—great friends of mine—and damned clever fellows they are, too, I can tell you. Besides us three there were half a dozen more from the College. You should have heard the talk! And every man-jack was as drunk as a lord. The last thing I remember is some of us students dancing round a lamp-post while Logan whistled a jig.”

Though Gourlay the elder hated the Deacon, he had never warned his son to avoid him. To have said “Allardyce is dangerous” would have been to pay the old malignant too great a compliment; it would have been beneath John Gourlay to admit that a thing like Allardyce could harm him and his. Young Gourlay, therefore, when once set a-going by the Deacon’s deft management, blurted everything without a hanker. Even so, however, he felt that he had gone too far. He glanced anxiously at his companion. “Mum’s the word about this, of course,” he said with a wink. “It would never do for this to be known about the ‘Green Shutters.’”

“Oh, I’m ath thound ath a bell, Dyohn, I’m ath thound ath a bell,” said the Deacon. “Aye man! You jutht bear out what I have alwayth underthood about the men o’ brainth. They’re the heartiest deviltth after a’. Burns, that the baker raves so muckle o’, was jutht another o’ the thame. Jutht another o’ the thame! We’ll be hearing o’ you boys—Pate Wylie and you and a

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when mair—having rare ploys in Barbie through the thummer.”

“ Oh, we’ll kick up a bit of a dust,” Gourlay sniggered, well-pleased. Had not the Deacon ranked him in the robustious great company of Burns! “ I say, Deacon, come in and have a nip.”

“ There’s your faither,” grinned the Deacon.

“ Eh? What?” cried Gourlay in alarm, and started round, to see his father and the Rev. Mr. Struthers advancing up the Fechars Road. “ Eh—eh—Deacon—I—I’ll see you again about the nip.”

“ Jutht tho!” grinned the Deacon. “ We’ll postpone the drink to a more convenient opportunity.”

He toddled away, having no desire that old Gourlay should find him talking to his son. If Gourlay suspected him of pulling the young fellow’s leg, likely as not he would give an exhibition of his dem’d unpleasant manners!

Gourlay and the minister came straight towards the student. Of the Rev. Mr. Struthers it may be said with truth that he would have cut a remarkable figure in any society. He had big splay feet, short stout legs, and a body of such bulging bulosity, that all the droppings of his spoon—which were many—were caught on the round of his black waistcoat, which always looked as if it had just been spattered by a grey shower. His eye-brows were bushy and white, and the hairs slanting up and out rendered the meagre brow even narrower than it was. His complexion, more especially in cold weather, was a dark crimson. The purply colour of his face was intensified by the pure whiteness of the side whiskers projecting stiffly by his ears, and in mid-week, when he was

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unshaven, his redness revealed more plainly, in turn, the short gleaming stubble that lay like rime on his chin. His eyes goggled, and his manner at all times was that of a staring and earnest self-importance. "Puffy Importance" was one of his nicknames.

Struthers was a man of lowly stock who, after a ten years' desperate battle with his heavy brains, succeeded at the long last of it in passing the examinations required for the ministry. The influence of a wealthy patron then presented him to Barbic. Because he had taken so long to get through the University himself, he constantly magnified the place in his conversation, partly to excuse his own slowness in getting through it, partly that the greater glory might redound on him who had conquered it at last, and issued from its portals a fat and prosperous alumnus. Stupid men who have mastered a system, not by intuition but by a plodding effort of slow years, always exaggerate its importance—did it not take them ten years to understand it?—whoso has passed the system, then, is to their minds one of a close corporation, of a select and intellectual few, and entitled to pose before the uninitiate. Because their stupidity made the thing difficult, their vanity leads them to exalt it. Woe to him that shall scoff at any detail! To Struthers the *Senatus Academicus* was an august assemblage worthy of the Roman *Curia*, and each petty academic rule was a law sacrosanct and holy. He was forever talking of the "Univairsity." "Mind ye," he would say, "it takes a loang time to understand even the workings of the Univairsity—the *Senatus* and such-like; it's not for everyone to criticise." He implied, of course, that he had a right to criticise, having passed tri-



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umphant through the mighty test. This vanity of his was fed by a peculiar vanity of some Scots peasants, who like to discuss Divinity Halls, and so on, because to talk of these things shews that they, too, are intelligent men, and know the awful intellectual ordeal required of a "Meenister." When a peasant says "He went through his Arts course in three years, and got a kirk<sup>e</sup> the moment he was licensed," he wants you to see that he's a smart man himself, and knows what he's talking of. There were several men in Barbie who liked to talk in that way, and among them Puffy Importance, when graciously inclined, found ready listeners to his pompous blether about the "Univairsity." But what he liked best of all was to stop a newly-returned student in full view of the people, and talk learnedly of his courses—dear me, aye—of his courses, and his matriculations, and his lectures, and his graduations, and his thingumbobs. That was why he bore down upon our great essayist.

"Allow me to congratulate you, John," he said, with heavy solemnity—for Struthers always made a congregation of his listener, and droned as if mounted for a sermon. "Ye have done excellently well this Session; ye have indeed. Ex-cellently well! Ex-cellently well!"

Gourlay blushed and thanked him.

"Tell me now," said the cleric, "do you mean to take your Arts course in three years or four? A loang Arts course is a grand thing for a clairgyman. Even if he spends half a dozen years on't he won't be wasting his time!"

Gourlay glanced at his father. "I mean to try't in three," he said. His father had threatened him that he

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must get through his Arts in three years—without deigning, of course, to give any reason for the threat.

“We-ell,” said Mr. Struthers, gazing down the Fechar Road, as if visioning great things, “it will require a strenuous and devoted application—a strenuous and devoted application—even from the man of abeility you have shown yourself to be. Tell me now,” he went on, “have ye heard ainything of the new Professor of Exegesis? D’ye know how he’s doing?”

Young Gourlay knew nothing of the new Professor of Exegesis, but he answered, “Very well, I believe,” at a venture.

“Oh, he’s sure to do well, he’s sure to do well! He’s one of the best men we have in the Church. I have just finished his book on the Ephesians. It’s most profound! It has taken me a whole year to master it.” (“Garvie on the Ephesians” is a book of a hundred and eighty pages.) “And, by the way,” said the parson, stooping to Scotch in his ministerial jocoseness, “how’s auld Tam, in whose class you were a prize-winner? He was appointed to the Professoriate the same year that I obtained my license. I remember to have heard him deliver a lecture on German philosophy, and I thought it excellently good. But perhaps,” he added, with solemn and pondering brows, “perhaps he was a little too fond of Hegel.—Yess, I am inclined to think that he was a little too fond of Hegel.” Mrs. Eccles, listening from the Blaek Bull door, wondered if Hegel was a drink.

“He’s very popular.” said young Gourlay.

“Oh, he’s sure to be popular, he merits the very greatest popple-arity. And he would express himself as

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being excellently well pleased with your theme? What did he say of it, may I venture to enquire?"

Beneath the pressure of his father's presence young Gourlay did not dare to splurge. "He seemed to think there was something in it," he answered, modestly enough.

"Oh, he would be sure to think there was something in it," said the minister, staring, and wagging his pow. "Not a doubt of tha-at, not a doubt of tha-at! There must have been something in it, to obtain the palm of victory in the face of such prodigious competeection. It's the see-lect intellect of Scotland that goes to the Univairsity, and only the ee-lect of the see-elect win the palm. And it's an augury of great good for the future. Abeelity to write is a splendid thing for the Church. Good-bye, John, and allow me to express once moar my great satisfaction that a pareeshioner of mine is a la-ad of such brilliant promise!"

Though the elder Gourlay disconsidered the Church, and thought little of Mr. Struthers, he swelled with pride to think that the minister should stop his offspring in the Main Street of Barbie, to congratulate him on his prospects. They were close to the Emporium; and with the tail of his eye he could see Wilson peeping from the door, and listening to every word. This would be a hair in Wilson's neck! There were no clerical compliments for *his* son! The tables were turned at last.

His father had a generous impulse to John for the bright triumph he had won the Gourlays. He fumbled in his trouser-pocket, and passed him a sovereign.

"I'm kind o' hard-up," he said with grim jocosity, "but there's a pound to keep your pouch.—No nonsense

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now!" he shot at the youth with a loaded eye. "That's just for use if you happen to be in company. A Gourlay maun spend as much as the rest o' folk."

"Yes, faither," said the youngster, and Gourlay went away.

That grimly-jocose reference to his poverty was a feature of Gourlay's talk now, when he spoke of money to his family. It excused the smallness of his doles, yet led them to believe that he was only joking, that he had plenty of money if he would only consent to shell it out. And that was what he wished them to believe. His pride would not allow him to confess, even to his nearest, that he was a failure in business, and hampered with financial trouble. Thus his manner of warning them to be careful had the very opposite effect. "He has heaps o' cash," thought the son, as he watched the father up the street; "there's no need for a fellow to be mean."

Flattered (as he fondly imagined) by the Deacon, flattered by the minister, tipped by his mother, tipped by his father, hale-fellow-well-met with Pate Wylie—Lord, but young Gourlay was the fine fellow! Symptoms of swell-head set in with alarming rapidity. He had a wild tendency to splurge. And, that he might show in a single afternoon all the crass stupidity of which he was capable, he immediately allowed himself a veiled insult towards the daughters of the ex-Provost. They were really nice girls, in spite of their parentage, and, as they came down the street, they glanced with shy kindness at the student, from under their broad-brimmed hats. Gourlay raised his in answer to their nod. But the moment after, and in their hearing, he yelled blatantly to Swipecy Broon, to come on

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and have a drink of beer. Swikey was a sweep now, for Brown the ragman had added chimney-cleaning to his other occupations—plurality of professions, you observe, being one of the features of the life of Barbic. When Swikey turned out of the Fleckie Road, he was as black as the ace of spades, a most disreputable phiz. And when Gourlay yelled his loud welcome to that grimy object, what he wanted to convey to the two girls was: “Ho, ho, my pretty misses; I’m on bowing terms with you, and yet when I might go up and speak to ye, I prefer to go off and drink with a sweep, d’ye see? That shows what I think o’ ye!” All that summer John took an oblique revenge on those who had disconsidered the Gourlays—but would have liked to make up to him now when they thought he was going to do well—he took a paltry revenge by patently rejecting their advances and consorting instead, and in their presence, with the lowest of low company. Thus he vented a spite which he had long cherished against them for their former neglect of Janet and him. For, though the Gourlay children had been welcome at well-to-do houses in the country, their father’s unpopularity had cut them off from the social life of the town. When the Provost gave his grand spree on Hogmanay there was never an invitation for the Gourlay youngsters. The slight had rankled in the boy’s mind. Now, however, some of the local bigwigs had an opinion (with very little to support it) that he was going to be a successful man, and they shewed a disposition to be friendly. John, with a rankling memory of their former coldness, flouted every overture, by letting them see plainly that he preferred to their company—that of Swikey Broom, Jock McCraw,

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and every ragamuffin of the town. It was a kind of back-handed stroke at them. That was the paltry form which his father's pride took in him. He did not see that he was harming himself rather than his father's enemies. Harm himself he did, for you could not associate with Jock McCraw and the like, without drinking in every howff you came across.

When the bodies assembled next day for their "morning," the Deacon was able to inform them that young Gourlay was back from the College, dafter than ever, and that he had pulled his leg as far as he wanted it. "Oh," he said, "I played him like a kitten wi' a cork and found out ainything and everything I wished. I dithcovered that he's in wi' Jock Allan and that crowd—I edged the conversation round on purpoth! Unless he wath blowing his trump—which I greatly doubt—they're as thick as thieveth. Ye ken what that meanth. He'll turn hith wee finger to the ceiling oftener than he puts hith forefinger to the pen, I'm thinking. It theemth he drinkth enormuth! He took a gey nip last thummer, and this thummer I wager he takes mair o't. He avowed his plain intention! 'I mean to kick up a bit of a dust,' thays he. Oh, but he's the splurge!"

"Aye, aye," said Sandy Toddle; "thae students are a gey squad. Especially the young ministers."

"Ou," said Tam Wylie, "dinna be hard on the ministers. Ministers are just like the rest o' folk. They mind me o' last year's early tatties. They're grand when they're gude, but the feck o' them's frostit."

"Aye," said the Deacon, "and young Gourlay's frostit in the shaw already. I doubt it'll be a poor ingathering."

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“Weel, weel,” said Tam Wylie, “the mair’s the pity o’ that, Deacon.”

“Oh, it’th a grai-ait pity,” said the Deacon, and he bowed his body solemnly with outspread hands. “No doubt it’th a grai-ait pity!” and he wagged his head from side to side, the picture of a poignant woe.

“I saw him in the Black Bull yestreen,” said Brodie, who had been silent hitherto in utter scorn of the lad they were speaking of—too disgusted to open his mouth. “He was standing drinks to a crowd that were puffing him up about that prize o’ his.”

“It’s alwayth the numskull hath the most conceit,” said the Deacon.

“And yet there must be something in him too, to get that prize,” mused the ex-Provost.

“A little ability’s a dangerous thing,” said Johnny Coe, who could think at times. “To be safe you should be a genius winged and flying, or a crawling thing that never leaves the earth. It’s the half-and-half that hell gapes for. And owre they flap.”

But nobody understood him. “Drink and vanity’ll soon make end of *him*,” said Brodie curtly, and snubbed the philosopher.

Before the summer holiday was over (it lasts six months in Scotland) young Gourlay was a habit-and-repute tippler. His shrinking abhorrence from the scholastic life of Edinburgh flung him with all the greater abandon into the conviviality he had learned to know at home. His mother (who always seemed to sit up now, after Janet and Gourlay were in bed) often let him in during the small hours, and, as he hurried past her in the lobby, he would hold his breath lest she

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should smell it. "You're unco late, dear," she would say wearily, but no other reproach did she utter. "I was taking a walk," he would answer thickly; "there's a fine moon!" It was true that when his terrible depression seized him, he was sometimes tempted to seek the rapture and peace of a moonlight walk upon the Fleckie Road. In his crude clay there was a vein of poetry; he could be alone in the country, and not lonely; had he lived in a green quiet place, he might have learned the solace of nature for the wounded when eve sheds her spiritual dews. But the mean pleasures to be found at the Cross satisfied his nature, and stopped him midway to that soothing beauty of the woods and streams, which might have brought healing and a wise quiescence. His success—such as it was—had gained him a circle—such as it was—and the assertive nature proper to his father's son gave him a kind of lead amongst them. Yet even his henchmen saw through his swaggering. Swipecy Broon turned on him one night, and threatened to split his mouth, and he went as white as the wall behind him.

Among his other follies, he assumed the pose of a man who could an he would, who had it in him to do great things, if he would only set about them. In this, he was partly playing up to a foolish opinion of his more ignorant associates; it was they who suggested the pose to him. "Devilish clever!" he heard them whisper one night as he stood in the door of a tavern; "he could do it if he liked, only he's too fond o' the fun." Young Gourlay flushed where he stood in the darkness, flushed with pleasure at the criticism of his character which was, nevertheless, a compliment to his wits. He felt that he



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must play up at once to the character assigned him. "Ho, ho, my lads!" he cried, entering with a splurge, "let's make a night o't. I should be working for my degree to-night, but I suppose I can get it easy enough when the time comes." "What did I tell ye?" said McCraw, nudging an elbow—and Gourlay saw the nudge. Here at last he had found the sweet seduction of a proper pose—that of a *grand homme manqué*, of a man who would be a genius were it not for the excess of his qualities. Would he continue to appear a genius, then he must continue to display that excess which—so he wished them to believe—alone prevented his brilliant achievements. It was all a curious vicious inversion. "You could do great things if you didn't drink," crooned the fools. "See how I drink," Gourlay seemed to answer—"that is why I don't do great things. But, mind you, I could do them, were it not for this." Thus every glass he tossed off seemed to hint in a roundabout way at the glorious heights he might attain if he didn't drink it. His very roystering became a pose, and his vanity made him royster the more, to make the pose more convincing.