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WITH the sudden start of a man roused from a day-dream Gourlay turned from the green gate and entered the yard. Jock Gilmour, the "orra" man, was washing down the legs of a horse beside the trough. It was Gourlay's own cob, which he used for driving round the countryside. It was a black—Gourlay "made a point" of driving with a black. "The brown for sturdiness, the black for speed," he would say, making a maxim of his whim to give it the sanction of a higher law.

Gilmour was in a wild temper because he had been forced to get up at five o'clock in order to turn several hundred cheeses, to prevent them bulging out of shape owing to the heat, and so becoming cracked and spoiled. He did not raise his head at his master's approach. And his head being bent, the eye was attracted to a patent leather collar which he wore, glazed with black and red stripes. It is a collar much affected by ploughmen, because a dip in the horse-trough once a month suffices for its washing. Between the striped collar and his hair (as he stooped) the sunburned redness of his neck struck the eye vividly—the cropped fair hairs on it shewing whitish on the red skin.

The horse quivered as the cold water swashed about its legs, and turned playfully to bite its groom. Gilmour, still stooping, dug his elbow up beneath its ribs. The animal wheeled in anger, but Gilmour ran to its

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head with most manful blasphemy and led it to the stable door. The off hind leg was still unwashed.

“Has the horse but the three legs?” said Gourlay suavely.

Gilmour brought the horse back to the trough, muttering sullenly.

“Were ye saying anything?” said Gourlay. “*Eih?*”

Gilmour sulked out and said nothing; and his master smiled grimly at the sudden redness that swelled his neck and ears to the verge of bursting.

A boy, standing in his shirt and trousers at an open window of the house above, had looked down at the scene with craning interest—big-eyed. He had been alive to every turn and phase of it—the horse’s quiver of delight and fear, his skittishness, the groom’s ill-temper, and Gourlay’s grinding will. Eh, but his father was a caution! How easy he had downed Jock Gilmour! The boy was afraid of his father himself, but he liked to see him send other folk to the right about. For he was John Gourlay, too.—Hokey, but his father could down them!

Mr. Gourlay passed on to the inner yard, which was close to the scullery door. The paved little court, within its high wooden walls, was curiously fresh and clean. A cock-pigeon strutted round, puffing his gleaming breast and *rooketty-cooing* in the sun. Large clear drops fell slowly from the spout of a wooden pump, and splashed upon a flat stone. The place seemed to enfold the stillness. There was a sense of inclusion and peace.

There is a distinct pleasure to the eye in a quiet brick court where everything is fresh and prim; in sunny weather you can lounge in a room and watch it through

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an open door, in a kind of lazy dream. The boy, standing at the window above to let the fresh air blow round his neck, was alive to that pleasure; he was intensely conscious of the pigeon swelling in its bravery, of the clean yard, the dripping pump, and the great stillness. His father on the step beneath had a different pleasure in the sight. The fresh indolence of morning was round him too, but it was more than that that kept him gazing in idle happiness. He was delighting in the sense of his own property around him, the most substantial pleasure possible to man. His feeling, deep though it was, was quite vague and inarticulate. If you had asked Gourlay what he was thinking of he could not have told you, even if he had been willing to answer you civilly—which is most unlikely. Yet his whole being, physical and mental (physical, indeed, rather than mental), was surcharged with the feeling that the fine buildings around him were his, that he had won them by his own effort and built them large and significant before the world. He was lapped in the thought of it.

All men are suffused with that quiet pride in looking at the houses and lands which they have won by their endeavours—in looking at the houses more than at the lands, for the house which a man has built seems to express his character and stand for him before the world, as a sign of his success. It is more personal than cold acres, stamped with an individuality. All men know that soothing pride in the contemplation of their own property. But in Gourlay's sense of property there was another element, an element peculiar to itself, which endowed it with its warmest glow. Con-

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scious always that he was at a disadvantage among his cleverer neighbours, who could achieve a civic eminence denied to him, he felt nevertheless that there was one means, a material means, by which he could hold his own and reassert himself; by the bravery of his business, namely, and all the appointments thereof—among which his dwelling was the chief. That was why he had spent so much money on the House. That was why he had such keen delight in surveying it. Every time he looked at the place he had a sense of triumph over what he knew in his bones to be an adverse public opinion. There was anger in his pleasure, and the pleasure that is mixed with anger often gives the keenest thrill. It is the delight of triumph in spite of opposition. Gourlay's house was a material expression of that delight, stood for it in stone and lime.

It was not that he reasoned deliberately when he built the house. But every improvement that he made—and he was always spending money on improvements—had for its secret motive a more or less vague desire to score off his rivals. “*That'll* be a slap in the face to the Provost!” he smiled, when he planted his great mound of shrubs. “There's noathing like *that* about the Provost's! Ha, ha!”

Encased as he was in his hard and insensitive nature he was not the man who in new surroundings would be quick to every whisper of opinion. But he had been born and bred in Barbie, and he knew his townsmen—oh, yes, he knew them. He knew they laughed because he had no gift of the gab, and could never be Provost, or Bailie, or Elder—or even Chairman of the Gasworks!

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Oh, verra well, verra well; let Connal and Brodie and Allardyce have the talk, and manage the town's affairs (he was damned if they should manage his!)—he, for his part, preferred the substantial reality. He could never aspire to the Provostship, but a man with a house like that, he was fain to think, could afford to do without it. Oh, yes; he was of opinion he could do without it! It had run him short of cash to build the place so big and braw, but, Lord! it was worth it. There wasn't a man in the town who had such accommodation!

And so, gradually, his dwelling had come to be a passion of Gourlay's life. It was a by-word in the place that if ever his ghost was seen, it would be haunting the House with the Green Shutters. Deacon Allardyce, trying to make a phrase with him, once quoted the saying in his presence. "Likely enough!" said Gourlay. "It's only reasonable I should prefer my own house to you rabble in the graveyard!"

Both in appearance and position the house was a worthy counterpart of its owner. It was a substantial two-story dwelling, planted firm and gawcey on a little natural terrace that projected a considerable distance into the Square. At the foot of the steep little bank shelving to the terrace ran a stone wall, of no great height, and the iron railings it uplifted were no higher than the sward within. Thus the whole house was bare to the view from the ground up, nothing in front to screen its admirable qualities. From each corner, behind, flanking walls went out to the right and left, and hid the yard and the granaries. In front of these walls the dwelling seemed to thrust itself out for notice. It took the eye of a stranger the moment he entered the

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Square—"Whose place is that?" was his natural question. A house that challenges regard in that way should have a gallant bravery in its look; if its aspect be mean, its assertive position but directs the eye to its infirmities. There is something pathetic about a tall, cold, barn-like house set high upon a brae; it cannot hide its naked shame; it thrusts its ugliness dumbly on your notice, a manifest blotch upon the world, a place for the winds to whistle round. But Gourlay's house was worthy its commanding station. A little dour and blunt in the outlines like Gourlay himself, it drew and satisfied your eye as he did.

And its position, "cockit up there on the brae," made it the theme of constant remark, to men because of the tyrant who owned it, and to women because of the poor woman who mismanaged its affairs. "'Deed, I don't wonder that gurly Gourlay, as they ca' him, has an ill temper," said the gossips gathered at the pump, with their big bare arms akimbo; "whatever led him to marry that dishelout of a woman clean beats *me!* I never could make head nor tail o't!" As for the men, they twisted every item about Gourlay and his domicile into fresh matter of assailment. "What's the news?" asked one, returning from a long absence—to whom the smith, after smoking in silence for five minutes, said, "Gourlay has got new rones!" "Ha—aye, man, Gourlay has got new rones!" buzzed the visitor, and then their eyes, diminished in mirth, twinkled at each other from out their ruddy wrinkles, as if wit had volleyed between them. In short, the House with the Green Shutters was on every tongue—and with a scoff in the voice if possible.