

Daily Eagle

GOURLAY BROTHERS.

In a quiet street off one of the quiet squares in the vicinity of Holborn there is a tall, gloomy house, with narrow, dark windows and a massive double door that still bears a brass plate with the words "Gourlay Brothers" engraved thereon.

The lower part of the house was used as an office, but the blinds were rarely drawn up, the doors seldom swung back to the energetic push of customers, the long passage echoed no hurried footsteps, and Eli Haggart, the clerk, was to all appearance the latest man in London, till one came to know his masters.

They always took the same route; at 11 they might be seen passing along the sunny side of Cannon street, at 1:20 they entered the same restaurant and sat at the same table for luncheon. Wet or dry, shade or sun, summer or winter, every working day for thirty years they had gone through the same routine, always excepting the month of September, when they took their annual holiday.

They were elderly men—John, tall, thin, melancholy looking, with light gray eyes, scanty hair and whiskers and a general expression of drabness pervading his whole face and faultlessly neat attire. Roger was shorter, rounder, more cheerful and generally warmer in color. His prevailing hue was brown, keen reddish eyes that must have been merry once, crisp white hair that had not quite transmuted to silver, a clean shaven ruddy face, and brown hands full of dents and dimples. John was the elder, still he looked up to Roger with grave respect, consulted him on every subject, and never, either in or out of business, took any step without his approval. And Roger was no less deferential, without any profession of affection or display of feeling, the Gourlay Brothers dwelt together in closest friendship and love; their life was a long harmony, and during all the years of their partnership no shadow had fallen between them, and their public life was as harmonious as their private intercourse. In business they were successful, every speculation they made prospered, everything they touched turned to gold; and as their whole lives were spent in getting, not spending, they were believed, and with reason, to be immensely wealthy.

"Cold, hard, stern, enterprising," men called them; with an acuteness of vision and a steadiness of purpose only to be acquired by long and close application to business. Reserved in manner, simple in their taste, economical in their habit, the Gourlay brothers were the last men in the world to be suspected of sentiment, their lives the least likely to contain even the germs of a romance. And yet they had not been always mere business machines; the sole aim and end of their existence had not always been money. In early years they had had brighter dreams, nobler ambition.

At school John had distinguished himself, and his brief university career gave promise of a brilliant future. Roger had been a bright, ardent boy, with a taste for music that was almost a passion, and a talent little sort of genius. With his deep earnestness, intense steadiness of purpose, and clear, vigorous intellect, John could scarcely have failed to make a distinguished lawyer. Roger was a born artist, with a restless, lofty ambition. Life seemed very bright for the brothers; there was nothing to prevent and everything to assist each in following his inclination. But in the very dawn of their career their father died, and they were suddenly reduced from affluence to actual poverty. Nothing remained but the wreck of a magnificent fortune but the bitter experience that always accompanies such reverses. Fine friends failed them, flatterers looked coldly on their distress, those who had most frequently partaken of their lavish hospitality passed on the other side. Not a friend remained in their adversity but one, and he had indeed the will but not the power to help them. The boys left college and turned their thoughts to business. It was hopeless to attempt to follow up their professions with an invalid mother and idolized only sister depending on them for support. John secured a situation as a clerk in the office of Bernard Russell, an old friend of his father's. They moved to cheap lodgings, and for several years plodded on wearily, the only gleam of sunshine in their altered home being the occasional visits of Alice Russell to their sister Maude Gourlay and Alice had been school fellows and friends; they usually spent their vacations together, and Alice felt the misfortune that had fallen on their family as if it had overtaken her own. But she could do nothing except pay them flying visits, send trilling gifts of fruit and flowers, and write pretty, sympathetic notes to Maude.

A few years of hardship and poverty told on Mrs. Gourlay's always feeble frame; still for her daughter's sake she clung to life with a strange tenacity; but when Maude's lover, who had gone to Australia to make his fortune, returned, not wealthy but sufficiently so to claim his bride in her altered circumstances, Mrs. Gourlay could not have any other object to live for. Maude's marriage was hastened, and the very day after the ceremony the poor, weary, broken hearted mother died. George Leslie took his wife back with him to Sydney, and John and Roger Gourlay were literally alone in the world.

As if in bitter mockery of their loss and loneliness, immediately after their mother's death the brothers inherited a small fortune. But it was too late for John to go back to his studies, too late for Roger to return to his piano; they had fallen into the groove of business, and John at least was seized with a feverish eagerness to turn his small fortune into a large one and become wealthy. So they went into business on their own account as Gourlay Brothers, with the firm resolution of retrieving the position their father had lost, and a very few years saw them established in Whitaker street and fairly on the high road to fortune. Then one quiet summer evening as they sat over their dessert John opened his heart to his brother and told him of his hopes, dreams and ambitions for the future.

"You will be surprised, and I trust pleased, to hear Roger, that I love Alice Russell," he said, laying his hand on his brother's arm; "I can hardly remember the time when she was not dearer to me than all the world besides. The bitterest part of our misfortune to me was that it separated me from her; the only thing that has sustained me through our long struggle was the hope of some day winning her; nothing else can ever compensate me for the ruin of all my hopes and glorious ambitions. I once dreamed of being famous, Roger; for her sake I put that behind me, and have grubbed for gold like a miser. We, Gourlay Brothers, are on the high road to fortune; I may aspire to the hand of Alice now!"

"Surely, John," and the young brother's voice was husky and his hand shook as he took up his glass; "I drink to your success."

"Thanks, brother. I should have told you all this before, I should have confided in you, but I feared troubling you on my account; you would have seen a thousand shadows on my path, you would have been more unhappy than I was myself. And now I want you to promise that I shall make no difference between us. We shall be Gourlay Brothers still!"

Roger stretched his hand across the table and John grasped it heartily.

"Gourlay Brothers to the end of this chapter, old fellow; and may you be as happy as you deserve. God bless you, John!"

John's face became a shade or two paler with emotion, and he walked up and down the room a few times; then he stood behind his brother's chair.

"Roger, you will think me very weak, very nervous, but I dare not speak to Alice myself. I could not endure a refusal from her. I have never given her the most distant hint of my feelings. I have not the slightest reason to suppose that she regards me as other than a mere acquaintance, at most as Maude's brother. Roger, we have always been friends as well as brothers—stand by me in this; you are less shy and more accustomed to women; see Alice for me; ask her to be my wife."

"John, you are mad! You do not mean it!"

"I do; it is my only chance. Plead for my happiness, brother, as I would plead for yours; I am a man of few words, but I feel deeply. A refusal from her lips would kill me; I could bear it from you."

"As you will, John; I'll do my best," and Roger leaned his head on his hand and shaded his face from the light. "I'll call on Alice to-morrow."

The next day was the longest of John Gourlay's life; a bright, warm, happy day, that made people, even in the city, look glad and cheerful. He went about his business as usual, ate his luncheon and walked home leisurely. Roger was standing at the window watching for him, and he kept his back to him when he entered the room.

"Well," John said gently, "Well, Roger, have you seen her?"

"Yes, I've seen her," and Roger glared round suddenly; "John, old fellow, its no use!"

"Brother!" and he lifted his hand as if to ward off a blow.

"Its no use," Roger went on in a hard voice; she does not love you. She loves some one else. Be that man, John, and bear it, for there's no hope."

Twenty-five years passed by—a quarter of a century of changes and chances—and still the Gourlay Brothers held the even tenor of their way. They were rich beyond their wishes or desires, and not altogether unhappy in their solitary friendship. Alice Russell seemed to have drifted completely out of their lives; her name was never mentioned, and whether she was married or dead they did not know.

One morning about the middle of September they were walking along the King's road at Brighton, whither they had gone for their annual holiday. Roger entered a shop to purchase something and John stood outside looking drearily at the passersby. Suddenly he started and advanced a step as a lady in an invalid chair was wheeled by. Chancing to look up, she met his glance with a smile of recognition. "Mr. Gourlay, it surely is—it must be. I am so glad to see you!"

"And I to meet you," John said, with a courteous bow. "I have not the pleasure of knowing you."

"My name—I am Alice Russell still," she said frankly. At that moment Roger appeared. For an instant the blood rushed to Alice's pale cheek as she tried to stammer out some words of greeting. Roger was no less confused, and the expression of both faces was a revelation to John Gourlay. He felt as if the world had suddenly drifted away from him and he was left solitary in some unknown infinite space. But there was nothing of this in his voice as he asked Alice for her address and permission to call upon her in the afternoon, then taking his brother by the arm he led him away, and they continued their walk without exchanging a single word about the strange encounter.

In the afternoon John called at Miss Russell's hotel, and in a few moments he found himself seated beside her in a pleasant sitting room overlooking the sea.

"Alice," he said, plunging into the subject at once, "do you remember a conversation you had with my brother a long time ago?"

"Yes, I remember, Mr. Gourlay," she replied, sadly.

"He made a request for me then which it was not in your power to grant. I am come to make a similar one for him now. Roger loves you, Alice. He has loved you all these long weary years, though you will at least believe I did not know it then."

"Poor Roger," Alice, said softly.

"You care about him; you will make him happy even at this late hour? Tell me, Alice, that you love my brother!"

"Yes, Mr. Gourlay, I do. Why should I deny it? I have loved him always though I did not know that he cared about me, and if the little life that is left me can make him happier, I will devote it to him gladly, proudly—poor Roger! You see I am too old for pretenses, Mr. Gourlay, and I fear I am dying; therefore I tell you all."

"Dying, Alice? No, not you will live many years yet, I hope, to make my dear brother happy—brave, loyal hearted Roger! Let me send him to you now, and Alice, for my old and long affection's sake make him happy. He deserves it, and that is the only way I can ever help to repay the devotion of his life."

"I love him," Alice replied simply; "I cannot do any more."

In their lodgings John Gourlay found his brother pacing restlessly up and down.

"Roger, I have found out your secret; and here," he said, laying both his hands on his shoulders; loyal, faithful friend, go to her; she loves you; she is waiting for you."

"Poor Alice! how she must have suffered!"

"How we all have suffered! but it's nearly over now, Roger—the grief, pain, regret. It's all clear and bright. Roger, dear friend, can you forgive me?"

"Forgive you, John? say rather can you forgive me?"

"True to the last!" John murmured, as he wrung his brother's hand. "No, Roger, go to her; she is waiting for you. She loves you—loves you, Roger! Good-by, and may you both be happy!"

Late that evening when Roger Gourlay returned home, full of deep, quiet gladness, he found his brother sitting in an easy chair near the window apparently asleep. The full moon shone down on his pale face and showed a smile on his lips; his hands were clasped on an open book that rested on his knee. The attitude was lifelike, but at the very first glance Roger felt that his brother was dead. The doctors said he had died of disease of the heart. Perhaps they were right. More people die of that malady than the world knows of.—Atlanta Constitution.

Labouchere's Glass of Champagne.

When at Frankfurt I had the honor of serving under the late Sir Alexander Malet, and certainly a more kindly chief was not to be found in the service. His legation was accredited to several of the minor courts, and at one of them I was even more appreciated than my chief. This was why, occasionally there was a ball at the court, which we were expected to attend. At my first ball supper I found myself at a table next to a grandee, gorgeous in stars and ribbons. The wine came to pour out champagne. Now, I detest this wine, so I shook my head. The grandee nudged me and said: "Let him pour it out." This I did, and he explained to me that the potentate whose hospitality we were enjoying never gave his guests more than one glass, so you see, if I had not done this, I should have been the action to the lord. After this there was to be quite a struggle to get near me and send me a glass.—London Truth.

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