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THE frowsy chamber-maid of the "Red Lion" had just finished washing the front door steps. She rose from her stooping posture, and, being of slovenly habit, flung the water from her pail, straight out, without moving from where she stood. The smooth round arch of the falling water glistened for a moment in mid-air. John Gourlay, standing in front of his new house at the head of the brae, could hear the swash of it when it fell. The morning was of perfect stillness.

The hands of the clock across "the Square" were pointing to the hour of eight. They were yellow in the sun.

Blowsalinda, of the Red Lion, picked up the big bass that usually lay within the porch and, carrying it clumsily against her breast, moved off round the corner of the public house, her petticoat gaping behind. Half-way she met the ostler with whom she stopped in amorous dalliance. He said something to her, and she laughed loudly and vacantly. The silly *tee-hee* echoed up the street.

A moment later a cloud of dust drifting round the corner, and floating white in the still air, shewed that she was pounding the bass against the end of the house.