

## CHAPTER ONE

and tugging at the reins of a horse the feet of which struck sparks from the paved ground as they stressed painfully on edge to get weigh on the great waggon behind. The cart rolled through, then another, and another, till twelve of them had passed. Gourlay stood aside to watch them. All the horses were brown; "he makes a point of that," the neighbours would have told you. As each horse passed the gate the driver left its head, and took his place by the wheel, cracking his whip, with many a "hup horse; yean horse; woa lad; steady!"

In a dull little country town the passing of a single cart is an event, and a gig is followed with the eye till it disappears. Anything is welcome that breaks the long monotony of the hours, and suggests a topic for the evening's talk. "Any news?" a body will gravely enquire; "Ou aye," another will answer with equal gravity, "I saw Kennedy's gig going past in the forenoon." "Aye, man, where would *he* be off till? He's owre often in his gig, I'm thinking—" and then Kennedy and his affairs will last them till bedtime.

Thus the appearance of Gourlay's carts woke Barbie from its morning lethargy. The smith came out in his leather apron, shoving back, as he gazed, the grimy cap from his white-sweating brow; bowed old men stood in front of their doorways, leaning with one hand on short trembling staffs, while the slaver slid unheeded along the cutties which the left hand held to their toothless mouths; white-matched grannies were keeking past the jambs; an early urchin, standing wide-legged to stare, waved his cap and shouted, "Hooray!"—and all because John Gourlay's carts were setting off upon