

A Tillyloss Scandal

By J. M. BARRIE

Author of "The Little Minister," "Auld Licht Idylls," "A Window in Thrums," Etc., Etc.

(Continued)

Haggart answered, but after a pause, as if he had forgotten the price, which scarcely seems natural. However, I do not say that he was never in London, and certainly his curious adventures in it are still retailed, especially one with an ignorant policeman who could not tell him which was the road to Thrums, and another with the doorkeeper of the House of Parliament, who, on being asked by Haggart "How much was to pay?" foolishly answered "What you please."

But though I heartily approve the feeling in Thrums against those carping critics who would slice bits off the statue which we may be said to have reared to Haggart's memory, some of the stories now fondly cherished are undoubtedly mythical. For instance, whatever Look-about-you may say, I do not believe that Haggart once flung a clod of earth at the Pope. It is perfectly true that some such story got abroad, but if contented with Haggart it was only because Christy had her own reasons for wanting him to stand well with the Auld Licht minister. Often Haggart was said in his own presence to have had adventures in such places as were suddenly discovered by us in the newspapers, places that had acquired a public interest, say, because of a murder; and then he neither agreed that he had been there nor allowed that he had not. Thus it is reasonable to believe that his less discriminating admirers splashed out of Haggart's corn-field into some other body's without noticing that they had crossed the dyke. His silence at those times a little aggravating to his chronicler now, but I would be the first to defend against detractors. Unquestionably the length of time during which Haggart would put his under lip over the upper one, and so shut the door on words, was one of the grandest proofs of his humor. However plentiful the water in the dam may be, there are occasions when it is handy to let down the sluice.

I more readily grant that certain of the Haggart stories may have been plucked from the wrong fields, because there still remain a sufficient number of authenticated ones to fill the mind with rapture. A statistician could tell how far they would reach round the world, supposing they were represented by a brick apiece, or how long they would take to pass through a doorway on each other's heels. We never attempted to count them. Being only average men we could not conveniently carry beyond a certain number of the stories about with us, and thus many would doubtless now be lost were it not that some of us loaded ourselves with one lot and others with another. Each had his favorites, and Haggart supplied us with the article we wanted, just as if he and we were on opposite sides of a counter. Thus when we discuss him now we may have new things to tell of his: nay, even the descendants of Haggart are worth listening to on Haggart, for the stories have been passed on from father to son.

Some enjoyed most his reminiscences of how he felt each time he had to cut another button.

"Lads," he said, "I wasna unlike a doctor. Ye mind Doctor Skene saying as how the young doctors at the college grew faint like at first when they saw Hood gushing, but by and by they became so mighty hardy that they could off with a leg as cool as though they were just hacking steaks?"

"Ay, he said that."

"Weel, that was my sensations. When I cut off the first button it was like sticking the knife into myself, and I did it in the dark because I hadna the heart to look on. Ay, the next button was a stiff job, too, but after that I grew what ye may call hard-hearted, and it's scarce going beyond the truth to say that time came when I had a positive pleasure in sending the siller flying. I dinna ken, thinking the thing out calmly now, but what I was like a wild beast drunk with blood."

"What was the most ye ever spent in a week?"

"I could tell ye that, but I would

rather ye wanted to ken what was the most I ever spent in a night."

"How muckle?"

"Try a guess."

"Twa shillings?"

"Twa shillings!" cried Haggart, with a contempt that would have been severe had the coins been pennies; "Say, sax shillings is nearer the mark."

"In one night?"

"Ay, in one single night."

"Ye must have lost some of it?"

"Not a bawbee. Ah, T'nowhead, man, ye little ken how the money goes in grand towns. Them as lives like lords must spend like lords."

"That's reasonable enough, but I would like to hear the price of ilka thing ye got that night?"

"And I could tell ye. What do ye say to a shilling and saxpence for a bed?"

"I say it was an intake."

"Of course it was, but I didna grudge it."

"Ye didna?"

"No, I didna. It was in Edinburgh, and my last night in the place, and also my last button, so I thinks to myself 'I'll have one tremendous memorable night, and then I'll go home. Lads, I was a sort of wearying for Christy."

"Ay, but there's four shillings and saxpence to account for yet."

"There is so. Saxpence of it goes for a glass of whisky in the smoking-room. Lads, that smoking-room was a sight utterly baffling imagination. There was no chairs in it except great muckle soft ones, a hantle softer than a chaff bed, and in ilka chair some nobleman or other with his feet up in the air. Ay, I a sort of slipped the first time I tried a chair, but I wasna to be beat, for thinks I, 'Lads ye may be, but I have paid one and sax for my bed as weel as you, and this night I'll be a lord too!' Keeping the one and sax before me made me bold, and soon I was sprawling in a chair with my legs sticking over the arm with the best of them. Ay, it wasna so much enjoyable as awe-inspiring."

"That just brings ye up to twa shillings."

"Weel, there was another one and sax for breakfast."

"Astounding!"

"Oh, a haver, of course, but we got as muckle as we liked, and I assure ye it's amazing how much ye can eat, when ye ken ye have to pay for it at any rate. Then there was ninepence for a luncheon."

"What's that?"

"I didna ken myself when I heard them speaking about it, but it turned out to be a grand name for a rabbit."

"Man, is there rabbits in Edinburgh?"

"Next there was threepence of a present to the waiter-loon, and I finished up with a shilling's worth of sangwiohes."

"Na, that's just five and saxpence."

Haggart, however, would not always tell how the remaining sixpence went. At first he admitted having squandered it on the theater, but after he was landed

by Christy in the Auld Licht kirk he withdrew this reminiscence, and put another sixpence-worth in the smoking-room in its place.

As a convincing proof of the size of Edinburgh, Haggart could tell us how he lost his first lodgings in it. They were next house to a shop which had a great show of vegetables on a board at the door, and Haggart trusted to this shop as a landmark. When he returned to the street, however, there were green-grocery shops everywhere, and after asking at a number of doors if it was here he lived, he gave up the search. This experience has been paralleled in later days by a Tilliedrum minister, who went for a holiday to London, and forgot the name of the hotel he was staying at; so he telegraphed to Tilliedrum to his wife, asking her to tell him what address he had given here when he wrote, and she telegraphed back to him to come home at once.

Like all the great towns Haggart visited, Edinburgh proved to be running with low characters, with whom, as well as with the flower of the place—for he was received everywhere—he had many strange adventures. His affair with the ballie would make a long story itself, if told in full as he told it; also what he did to the piper; how he climbed up the Castle rocks for a wager; why he once marched indignantly out of a church in the middle of the singing; the circumstances in which he cut off his sixth button; his heroic defense of a lady who had been attacked by a footpad; his adventures with the soldier who was in love and had a silver snuffbox; his odd meeting with James Stewart, lawful king of Great Britain and Ireland. With this personage, between whom and a throne there only stood the constables, Haggart of Thrums hobnobbed on equal terms. The way they met was this. Haggart was desirous of the sensation of driving in a carriage, but grudging much outlay on an experience that would soon be over. He accordingly opened the door of a street vehicle and stepped in, when the driver was not looking. They had a pleasant drive along famous Princes street and would probably have gone farther had not Haggart become aware that someone was hanging on behind. In his indignation he called the driver's attention to this, which led to his own eviction. The hanger-on proved to be no other than the hapless monarch, with whom Haggart subsequently broke a button. For a king, James Stewart, who disguised his royal person in corduroys, was as Haggart

allowed, very ill in order. The spite of the authorities had crushed that once proud spirit, and darkened his intellect, and he took his friend to a gambling house, where he nodded to the proprietor. "Whether they were in company, with designs on my buttons," Haggart has said, "I'm not in a position to say, but I bear no ill-will to them. They treated me most honorable. Ay, the king, as we may call him if we speak in a low voice, advises me strong to gamble a button at one go, for, says he, 'You're sure to win.' Lads, it's no for me to say a word against him, but I thought I saw him wink to the proprietor lad, and so I says in a loud voice, says I, 'I'll gamble half-a-crown first, and if I win, then I'll put down a button.' The proprietor sort of nods to the king at that, and I plunks down my half-crown. Weel, lads I won five shillings in a clink."

"Ay, but they were just waiting for your guinea."

"It may have been so, Andrew, but we have no proof of that; for, ye see, as soon as I got the five shillings and had buttoned it up in my pouch, I says, 'I'll be stepping home now,' I says, and away I goes. Ye canna say but what they treated me honorable."

"They had looked thravn?"

"Ou, they did; but a man's face is his own to twist it as he pleases."

"And ye never saw the king again?"

"Ay, I met him after that in a close. I gave the aristocratic crittur saxpence."

"I'll tell ye what, Tammas Haggart; if he was proclaimed king, he would very likely send for ye to the palace and make ye a knight."

"Man, Sneaky, I put him through his catechism on that very subject, but he had no hope. Ye canna think how complete despondent he was."

"Ye're sure he was a genuine Pretender?"

"Na faags! But when ye're traveling it doesna do to let on what ye think, and I own it's a kind of satisfaction to me now to picture myself diddling a king out of five shillings."

"It's a satisfaction to everybody in Thrums, Tammas, and more particular to Tillyloss."

"Ay, Tilly has the credit of it in a manner of speaking. And it was just touch and go that I didna do a thing with the siller as would have commemorated that adventure among future ages."

"Ay, man?"

"I had the notion to get bawbees for the money, namely, one hundred and thirty-two bawbees, for of course I didna count the saxpence. Well, what was I to do with them?"

"Put the whole lot in the kirk-plate the first Sabbath day after ye came back to Thrums?"

"Na, na. My idea was to present a bawbee to a hundred and thirty-two folk in Thrums, so as they could keep it round their necks or in a drawer as a memento of one of their humble fellow-townsmen."

"No humble, surely?"

"Maybe no, but when ye do a thing in a big public way it's the proper custom to speak of yersel' as a pair crittur, and leave the other speakers to tell the truth about ye."

"It's a pity ye didna carry out that notion."

"Na, it's no, for I had a better one after, the which I did carry out."

"Ye?"

"Ay, I bocht a brooch to Christy with the siller."

"Ho, ho, that's whaur she got the brooch?"

"It is so, and though I dinna want to boast, nobody having less need to do so, I can tell ye it was the biggest brooch in Edinburgh at the price."

Edinburgh was only a corner in Haggart's field of corn, and from it I have not pulled half-a-dozen stalks. He was in various other great centers of adventure, and even in wandering between them he had experiences such as would have been a load for any ordinary man's back. Once he turned showman, when the actors were paid in the pennies flung at them by admirers in the audience. Haggart made for himself a long blood-red nose which proved such an irresistible target for moneyed sportsmen that the other players complained to the management. He sailed up canals swarming with monsters of the deep. He proved such an agreeable companion at farms that sometimes he had to escape in the night. He rescued a child from drowning and cowed a tiger by the power of the

human eye, exactly as these things are done in a book which belonged to Christy. He had eleven guineas with him when he set out, and without a notebook he could tell how every penny of the money was spent. Prices, indeed, he remembered better than anything.

I might as well attempt to walk up the wall of a house as to cut my way through Haggart's corn-field. Before arriving at the field I thought to get through it by taking the buttons one by one, but here I am at the end of a chapter, and scarcely any of the corn is behind me. I now see that no biographer will ever be able to treat Haggart on the grand scale he demands; for humility will force those who knew him in his prime to draw back scared from the attempt, while younger admirers have not the shadow of his personality to warn them of their responsibility. For my own part, I publicly back out of the field and sit down on the doctor's dyke awaiting Haggart's return to Thrums.

(To be Continued.)

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