

A TILLYLOSS SCANDAL.

BY J. M. BARRIE. (Concluded.)

THE PERSON TO SPEAK TO Haggart, the non-humorist, was James Spens, the last to see him at the foot of Tillyloss, and Sanders passed him on the burgling-ground brae. Both were ordinary persons, and they never distinguished themselves again.

It was not his grave that made Haggart a humorist, but the gravestone. Two years earlier he had erected a tombstone to the memory of his relatives, but it had never struck him that he would some day be able to read his own fate on it. The grave is to the right of the entrance to the cemetery, and almost exactly under the favorite seat known as the Flower, and being at the bend of the path it comes suddenly into view. Haggart walked eagerly along the path, an ordinary man upon the whole; then all at once... He looked... He looked again. This is what he read:—

This Stone was Erected by Thomas Haggart, To the Memory of Peter Haggart, Father of the said Thomas, who departed this Life, Jan. 7, 1825. Also here lie Jean Linn, or Haggart, Mother of the said Thomas, Died 1828. Also Jean Haggart, Sister of the said Thomas, Died 1829. Also Andrew Haggart, Brother of the said Thomas, Died 1831. Also the said Thomas himself, Died 1834.

Haggart sat down on the grave. In Thrums common folk were doing common things—waving, feeding the hens, mopping porridge, carting peats. Haggart sat on the grave. In Thrums they were thinking of their webs, of their dinner, of well-scrubbed floors, of their liver affairs.

But Haggart sat on the grave, and a get began to boil. He had told us what happened. Down in his inside something was roaring, and every moment the noise increased. He breathed with difficulty. He was as a barrel swelling but held in by hoops of iron. He rose to his feet, for his tongue was hot and there was a hissing in his throat, and the iron hoops pressed more and more tightly. Suddenly the hissing ceased, and he stood as still as salt. The roaring far down died away. All at once he was tilted to the side, the hoops burst, and he began to laugh. The pot was boiling. Haggart was a humorist. As soon as he realized what had happened Haggart returned to Tillyloss. The first to see him was Tibbie Robbie, the first to speak to him was William Lamb, the first to notice the change was Snecky Eohart.

I only undertook to tell how Haggart became a humorist, and here therefore my story ends. I have shown how a lamp was lit in Thrums, but not how it burned. Perhaps if I followed Haggart to his end, as I should like to do, to the time when the lamp flickered and a room in the Tenement grew dark, some who have smiled at an old man's tale would leave a tear behind them to a weaver's memory. "Na," Haggart often said, "we winna touch the gravestone. It'll come in handy some day."

His humor, appetizing from the first, ripened with the years. For a time this was his comment on the tombstone:—"Lads, lads, what a do we're preparing for posterity." Later in his life he said, "It's almost cruel to cheat future generations in this way." His hair was white before he said, "I dinna ken but what I should do the honest thing, and have the date rubbed out."

THE END.

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CHAPTER I. On a certain Saturday in June, year of our Lord 1880, between the hours of sunrise and sunset, the town of W—, in a State which shall be nameless, received two shocks.

Small affairs, concerning small people, could never have thrown W— into such a state of excitement, for she was a large and wealthy town, and understood what was due to herself.

She possessed many factories, and sometimes a man came to his death among the ponderous machinery. Not long since one "hand" had stabbed another, fatally; and, still later, a factory girl had committed suicide.

These things created a ripple, nothing more. It would ill become a town, boasting its aristocracy and "style" to grow frenzied over the woes of such common people. But W— possessed a goodly number of wealthy families, and some blue blood. These were worthy of consideration, and upon these calamity had fallen. Let us read an extract or two from the W—Argus, a newspaper of much enterprise and exceeding veracity:—

"MONSTROUS DIAMOND ROBBERY—BOLD BURGLARY.

"This day we are startled by the news of a robbery in our midst, the like of which it has never been our fate to chronicle.

"When the servants at Wardour Place arose this morning, they found confusion reigning in the library, desks forced open, papers strewn about, and furniture disarranged. One of the long windows had been opened by forcing the shutters, and then cutting out a pane of glass, after which the bolts were easily drawn.

"Miss Wardour was at once aroused, and further examination disclosed the fact that her dressing room had been invaded, and every box, trunk and drawer searched. The beautiful little affair, which has the appearance of a miniature combined desk and bookcase, but which contains a small safe that Miss Wardour believed burglar-proof, had been forced, and the jewels so widely known as the 'Wardour diamonds,' stolen. Quite a large sum of money, and some papers of value, were also taken.

"Most of our readers are familiar with the history of the Wardour diamonds, and know that they represented a fortune. The burglary was effected without noise, not a sound disturbing Miss Wardour, or any of her servants, some of whom are light sleepers, and they have not a single clue by which to trace the robbers.

"Miss Wardour bears the loss with great calmness. Of course every effort will be made to recover the jewels, and capture the thieves. It is rumored that Mr. Jasper Lamotte, in behalf of Miss Wardour, will visit the city at once, and set the detectives at work.

This was shock number one for the public of W—.

Miss Constance Wardour, of Wardour Place, was a lady of distinction. She possessed the oldest name, the bluest blood, the fairest face, and the longest purse, to be found in W—; and, the Argus had said truly, the Wardour diamonds represented a fortune, and not a small one.

Emmeline Wardour, the great grandmother of Miss Constance, was a belle and heiress. Her fondness for rare jewels amounted to a mania, and she spent enormous sums in collecting rare gems. At her death she bequeathed to her daughter a collection such as is owned by few ladies in private life. She also bequeathed to her daughter her mania. This daughter, after whom Constance was named, added to her mother's store of precious stones, from time to time, and when, one fine day, a bank, in which she had deposited some thousands of her dollars, failed, and she found herself a loser, she brought her craze to a climax, by converting all her money into diamonds, set and unset.

At her death, her granddaughter, Constance, inherited these treasures, in addition to a handsome fortune from her mother; and, although the original collection made by Emmeline Wardour contained a variety of rare stones, opals, amethysts, pearls, cameos, etc., besides the many fine diamonds, they all came to be classed under the head of the "Wardour diamonds."

It is small wonder that W— stood aghast at the thought of such robbery, and it is impossible to say when the talk, the wonderment, the conjectures, suggestions, theories, and general indignation would have ended, had not the second shock overborne the first. Once more let the Argus speak:—

"A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

"Yesterday afternoon, while the town was filled with the excitement caused by the Wardour robbery, Miss Sybil Lamotte, the beautiful daughter of our wealthy and highly respected citizen, Jasper Lamotte, Esq., eloped with John Burrill, who was, for a time, foreman in one of her father's mills. Burrill is known to be a divorced man, having a former wife and a child, living in W—; and his elopement with one of the aristocracy has filled the town with consternation.

"Mr. Lamotte, the father of the young lady, had not been from home two hours, in company with his wife, when his daughter fled. He was en route for the city, to procure the services of detectives, in the hope of recovering the War-

our diamonds; both his sons were absent from home as well. Mr. Lamotte has not yet returned, and is still ignorant of his daughter's flight."

Thus abruptly and reluctantly ends the second Argus bombshell, and this same last bombshell had been a very different thing to handle. It might have been made far more sensational, and the editor had sighed as he penned the cautiously worded lines: "It was a monstrous mesalliance, and a great deal could be said in disparagement of Mr. John Burrill;" but Mr. Lamotte was absent; the brothers Lamotte were absent, and until he was certain what steps they would take in this matter, it were wise to err on the safe side. Sybil was an only daughter. Parents are sometimes prone to forgive much; it might be best to "let Mr. Burrill off easy."

Thus to himself reasoned the editor, and, having bridled his pen, much against his will, he set free his tongue, and in the bosom of his family discussed very freely of Mr. John Burrill. "My dear, it's unendurable," he announced to the little woman opposite, with the nod of a Solomon. "It's perfectly incomprehensible, how such a girl could do it. Why, he's a braggart and a bully. He drinks in our public saloons, and handles a woman's name as he does his beer glass. The factory men say that he has boasted openly that he meant to marry Miss Lamotte, or Miss Wardour, he couldn't decide which. By the by, it's rather odd that those two young ladies should meet with such dissimilar misfortunes on the same day."

Mrs. Editor, a small woman, who, from constantly hearing, and absorbing into the vacuum of her own mind, the words of wisdom falling from the mouth of her husband, had acquired an expression of being always ready and willing to be convinced, looked up from her teapot and propounded the following:—"What do you suppose she eloped with him for?"

"Maria, I believe I have told you frequently that there is no such word as 'suppose.' I don't suppose anything about it. It's enough to make one believe in witchcraft. Miss Sybil Lamotte held her head above us; above plenty more, who were the peers of Mr. John Burrill. Last year, as everybody knows, she refused Robert Crofton, who is handsome, rich, and upright in character. This spring, they say, she jilted Raymond Vandeyk, and people who ought to know, say that they were engaged. Why, Ray Vandeyk comes of the best old Dutch stock, and his fortune is something worth while. I wonder what young Vandeyk will say to this, and how that high-stepping old lady, his mother, will fancy having her son thrown over for John Burrill. I wish I knew how Jasper Lamotte would take it."

So, in many a household, tongues wagged fast and furious; misfortune had smitten the mighty ones of W—, and brought them within range of the gossiping tongues of their social inferiors; and, while the village oracles improve their opportunities, and old women hatch theories, the like of which was never heard on earth, let us make the acquaintance of some of the "mighty ones."

CHAPTER II.

Wardour Place, the home of Miss Constance Wardour, and the scene of the "great Diamond robbery," lies a little east from the town, away from the clamor of its mills, and the contamination of its canalle.

It is a beautiful old place, built upon a slight elevation, surrounded by stately old trees, with a wide sweep of well-kept lawn, bordered with rose thickets, and dotted here and there with great clumps of tall syringas, white lilacs, azaleas, and a variety of ornamental trees and flowering shrubs.

The mansion stands some distance from the road, and is reached by a broad, sweeping drive and two footpaths that approach from opposite directions.

In the rear are orchard and gardens, and beyond this grassy slope that curves down to meet the river, that is ever hurrying toward to seize the great mill wheels and set them sweeping round and round.

The mansion itself is a large, roomy edifice, built by a master architect. It at once impresses one with a sense of its true purpose: a home, stately, but not stiff, abounding in comfort and aristocratic ease; a place of serene repose and inborn refinement. Such, Wardour Place was intended to be; such, it has been and is.

Miss Constance Wardour, mistress of the domain and last of the race, is alone in her favorite morning room. It is two hours since the discovery of the robbery, and during those two hours confusion has reigned supreme. Everybody except Miss Wardour, has seemingly run wild. But Miss Wardour has kept her head, and has prevented the servants from giving the alarm upon the highway, and thus filling her house with a promiscuous mob. She has compelled them to comport themselves like rational beings; has ordered the library and dressing room to be closed, and left untouched until the proper officer shall have made proper investigations; and then she has ordered her maid to serve her with a cup of strong coffee in the morning room; and, considering the glittering wealth she has just been bereaved of, Miss Wardour looks very calm and unruffled, and sips her coffee with a relish.

Presently the door opens, and a lady

enters, a very fat lady, with a most complexion, restless, inquisitive, but good-humored gray eyes, and plenty of dark curly hair, combed low about her ears. This is Mrs. Honor Aliston, a distant relative of Miss Wardour's, who has found a most delightful home with that young lady, ever since the death of Grandmamma Wardour, for Constance Wardour has been an orphan since her childhood.

Mrs. Aliston comes forward, rather rolls forward, and sinking, with a grunt of satisfaction, into the largest chair at hand, fixes two gray eyes upon the heiress, which that young lady, perceiving, says: "Well?"

"Don't say 'well' to me. I've just come down from the mansard," gasped the widow Aliston.

"From the mansard?"

"Yes," fanning herself briskly with the pages of an uncut magazine.

Constance laughs musically. "Why, Aunt Honor, you didn't expect to see the robbers running across the country, did you?"

"Not I," disdainfully. "I wanted to see how long it took the news to get to—Mapleton."

"Oh!" indifferently.

"And—they're coming."

"So soon!"

"So soon! and the sheriff, or constable, or coroner—who is it that make these investigations? He's coming, at any rate, whoever he is, with a mob at his heels. Who did you send for, Con?"

"For Mr. O'Meara, of course, and—I would like to see Ray Vandeyk."

"What for?"

Constance laughed. "Oh, I am fond of Ray, you know, and I think he could offer some unique suggestions; besides—dear me, auntie!" breaking off suddenly, "I wish this farce was at an end."

Mrs. Aliston's gray eyes twinkled. "Why, child, you may be thankful it's so worse. Suppose—"

"Hush, Aunt Honor. 'Walls have ears,' you know. I have half a mind to take Mr. Lamotte into my—"

"Constance Wardour, what are you thinking about? 'Take Mr. Lamotte!' that means Frank Lamotte and Madame Lamotte, and that means all the rest."

"I said 'half a mind,' auntie. I don't think the notion will ever get its growth. I think we will see the end of this affair through our own spectacles; but—hear that noise! Are they bringing a legion of people? Auntie, I don't believe you have had a cup of coffee yet."

"Don't you? Well, I have, my child. Let's go out and meet those people. They will bring all the dirt that lay loose on the highway on the soles of their boots. Con," turning suddenly, "you don't look solemn enough."

Without heeding this last remark, Constance Wardour throws open the door, and passes out and down the hall to meet the party just entering.

There is Mr. Soames, the mayor of W—, very bustling and important; Corliss, the constable, exceedingly shrewd in his own opinion, and looking on this occasion as wise as an owl; Thomas Craig, Esq., sub-editor of the Argus; and some lesser lights, who, on one pretext and another, hope to gain admittance and satiate their curiosity.

"Really, Miss Wardour," begins the bustling mayor, "really, this is a sad affair! Must have given you a terrible fright, and then the loss—but we will find them. Of course your jewels, such valuables, can't be kept hid from sharp detectives—a Corliss, what had we better do first?" for Mayor Soames, like many another mayor, is about as capable of fulfilling his duties as an average ten-year-old.

Corliss, however, comes gallantly to the rescue. He is equal to any emergency; there is nothing, if you take his word as proof, that Corliss is not equal to.

"First," says Corliss, "I think we had better—ahem—investigate."

"To be sure—investigate, of course—Miss Wardour, you have—"

"Closed up the disturbed rooms," interrupts Constance, promptly. "Yes, sir; I fear you will find little there to assist you. Nelly, throw open the library."

The servant, thus commanded, took from her mistress's hand a key, unlocked the library door and throws it open; and then the farce began.

If there is anything in all our dispensations of law and order that is calculated to strike astonishment to the heart and mind of a foreigner; it is our off-hand way of conducting a police investigation. In other countries, to be a magistrate, a notary, means to be in some degree qualified for the position; to be a constable, means to possess a moderate allowance of mother wit, and a small measure of "muscular christianity;" and to discover a crime, means to follow it up with a thorough and systematic investigation. Such is not our mode. With us, to hold office, means to get a salary; and to conduct an investigation, means to mander through some sort of farce, which gives the criminal time to make good his escape, and to permit the newspapers to seize upon and publish every item, to detail every clue, as fast as discovered; all this being in favor of the law-breakers, and detrimental to the conscientious officers of justice.

In France, they complain of too much red tape in the police department. Let them supply us out of their superabundance; we have too little.

While Corliss "investigates," the mayor delivers an impromptu oration; and Mr. Craig, of the Argus, takes notes, according to his own light.

Out of his inner consciousness, the Argus man evokes an idea, which Corliss is not slow to adopt and use as his own.

"I suppose they will have a detective down as soon as possible," says Mr. Craig, as Corliss lays one ruthless hand on an overturned chair. "If I were you, Corliss, I would leave everything exactly as I find it for the benefit of whoever works up the case."

Corliss slowly lowers the chair to its former position, and turns upon Craig a look of offended dignity.

"Why, what did you suppose I intended to do?"

(To be Continued.)

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