

THE TILLYLOSS SCANDAL

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The Tillyloss scandal by J. M. Barrie

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J. M. BARRIE

**THE TILLYLOSS
SCANDAL**

The Tillyloss Scandal

BY

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CONTENTS.

A TILLYLOSS SCANDAL.

CHAPTER.

I.—In which we approach Haggart hat in hand.....	5
II.—Containing the circumstances which led to the Departure of Haggart.....	14
III.—Shows how Haggart sat on a dyke looking at his own funeral.....	28
IV.—The Wanderings of Haggart.....	44
V.—The Return of Haggart.....	59
VI.—In which a birth is recorded.....	73
HOW GAVIN BIRSE PUT IT TO MAG LOWNIE.....	88
DITE DEUCHARS.....	97

LIFE IN A COUNTRY MANSE.

I.—Janet.....	106
II.—Janet's Curiosity.....	115
III.—Teacher M'Queen.....	123
IV.—The Post.....	131
V.—A Wedding in the Smiddy.....	138
VI.—The Minister's Gown.....	147

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	PAGE.
THE CAPTAIN OF THE SCHOOL.....	152
A POWERFUL DRUG.....	158
EVERY MAN HIS OWN DOCTOR	167
SHUTTING A MAP. A NOTE OF WARNING.....	177
AN INVALID IN LODGINGS.....	186
THE MYSTERY OF TIME-TABLES.....	194
MENDING THE CLOCK.....	200
THE BIGGEST BOX IN THE WORLD.....	210
THE COMING DRAMATIST.....	220

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

A TILLYLOSS SCANDAL.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH WE APPROACH HAGGART, HAT IN
HAND.

ACCORDING to those who have thought the thing over, it would defy the face of clay to set forth this prodigious affair of Tillyloss, the upshot of which was that Tammas Haggart became a humorist. It happened so far back as the Long Year, so called by reason of disease in the potato crop ; and doubtless the house, which still stands, derides romance to those who cavil at an outside stair. Furthermore, the many who only knew Haggart in his later years, whether personally or through written matter or from Thrums folk who have traveled, will not readily admit that he may once have been an every-day man. There is also against me the vexing practice of the farmer of Lookaboutyou, who never passes Tillyloss, if there is a friend of mine within earshot, without saying :

"Grave-stane or no grave-stane, Tammas Haggart would have been a humorist."

Lookaboutyou thus implies that he knew Haggart for a man of parts when the rest of us were blind, and it is tantalizing beyond ordinary to see his word accepted in this matter by people who would not pay him for a drill of potatoes without first stepping it to make sure of the length.

I have it from Tammas Haggart that until the extraordinary incident occurred which I propose telling as he dropped it into my mouth he was such a man as myself. True, he was occasionally persuaded by persons of Lookaboutyou's stamp to gloss over this admission, as incredible on the face of it, but that was in his last years, when he had become something of a show, and was in a puzzle about himself. Of the several reasons he gave me in proof of a non-humorous period in his life the following seem worthy of especial attention :—

First, that for some years after his marriage he had never thought of himself as more nicely put together than other men. He could not say for certain whether he had ever thought of himself at all, his loom taking up so much of his time.

Second, that Chirsty was able to aggravate him by saying that if which was which she would have married James Pitbladdo.

Third, that he was held of little account

by the neighbors, who spoke of his living "above Luanan's shoppy," but never localized the shop as "below Haggart's house."

Fourth, that while on his wanderings he experienced certain novel and singular sensations in his inside, which were probably his humor trying to force a passage.

Fifth, that in the great scene which ended his wanderings, his humor burst its banks like a dam, and had flowed in burns ever since.

During nearly forty years we contrived now and again to harness Tammias to his story, but often he would stop at the difficulty of realizing the man he must have been in his pre-humorous days, and remark, in his sarcastic way, that the one Haggart could not fathom the other. Thus our questionings sometimes ended in silence, when we all looked in trouble at the fire and then went home. As for starting him on the story when he was not in the vein, it was like breasting the brae against a high wind.

When the events happened I was only a lad. I cannot send my mind back to the time when I could pass Haggart without the side-glance nearly all Thrums offered to his reputation, and he is best pictured hunkering at Tillygloss, one of a row of his admirers. After eight o'clock it was the pleasant custom of the weavers to sit in the open against a house or dyke, their knees near their chins

and their ears ready for Haggart. Then his face would be contracted in pain as some strange idea bothered him and he searched for its humorous aspect. Perhaps ten minutes afterwards his face would expand, he would slap his knees, and we knew that the struggle was over. It was one of his ways, disliked at the time, yet admired on reflection, not to take us into the secret of his laughter; but he usually ended by looking whimsically in the direction of the burying-ground, when we were perfectly aware of the source of the joke, and those of us nudged each other who were not scared. Until the spell was broken we might sit thus for the space of a quarter of an hour, none speaking, yet in the completest sympathy, because we were all thinking of the same thing, and that a grave-stone.

Tillyloss is three broken rows of houses in the east end of Thrums, with gardens between them, nearly every one of which used to contain a pig-sty. There are other ways of getting into the gardens than by windows, for those who are sharp at knowing a gate when it looks like something else. Three or four other houses stand in odd corners, blocking the narrow road, which dodges through Tillyloss like a hunted animal. Starting from the west end of the suburb, as Tillyloss will be called as soon as we can say the word without smirking, the road