

THE BATHING O' THE STICK LEG.

To gang doon to the saut watter for a week, at least once in the year, is what the humblest Glasgow working-man commonly aspires to, and very generally accomplishes. He views it as a sort of necessity of the family's well-being and existence, and, in concert with his wife, he usually lays by something for the occasion, and prepares for its advent weeks before its actual date.

The preparation for this annual "Fair" holiday-time is commonly a rather acute experience to the average working-man, in the way of a grand new hat for the wife, and any

amount of new hats, boots, and pinafores for the weans. As for the guidman himself, he is more easily disposed of. His forty-year-auld waddin' hat is often brought forth to the light of day, and specially black-leaded for the important occasion, and, with that on his head, an auld-fashioned carpet-bag in his hand, and the wife and weans by his side, his condition *en route* for the Broomielaw is not to be lightly sneezed at.

Now, auld Geordie Shuttle and his worthy spouse, Mattie, had made up their minds to "gang doon the watter"—a necessity which was rendered more needful in view of Geordie's stick leg, which had been fu' o' the rheumatics all the preceding winter, and which wanted sea-bathing and a change of air very much; at least, so Geordie declared, and Mattie accepted the position of affairs as a rare guid chance for her an' the weans getting a week at the coast.

It was an awfu' business getting a' thing ready for the jaunt. A wife o' fourteen stane in wecht, six or eight weans, a perambulator, three carpet-bags, and half-a-dizen o' umbrellas is nae wee joke to get flitted doon to the Broomielaw.

The Shuttle family got there all right, however.

And now that the family were really at the sea-side, it was no more than was their right, not to say their bounden duty, to take the fullest advantages of the benefits it offered to their physical health and well-being.

This mental conviction affected the individual members of the Shuttle family in different ways.

In the case of the family juveniles it meant, so far as opportunity would allow of, the search for "wulks," mussels, and cockles along the exposed fore-shore.

In worthy Mattie's case it very much resolved itself into a splendid opportunity of showing off her grand new bonnet—a magnificent article, specially purchased and trimmed for the occasion.

Relative to Geordie, he wisely seized on the opportunity

it offered him of trying the much-vaunted effects of saut watter bathing for the rheumatics in his ailing stick leg. It was his one oddly weak point, this careful nursing of his locomotive appendage. He had worn it so long that he regarded it as virtually part and parcel of his body corporate. And thus viewing it, what was more natural than that he should now and again feel "stoonds" of pain gaun through it when he incautiously set it down on a bit of broken glass, or that a twinge o' the rheumatics should fasten on't as often as the cauld east winds blew?

Next morning found Geordie down at the shore, placidly sitting on a bit of wave-worn rock, his leg of wood inserted in the cool sea.

Before setting forth on his bathing expedition he had strongly advised, and indeed insisted on Mattie hersel' gaun' doun to the shore along wi' the family, and getting them all to partake freely of the salt water.

"An' as for yersel', Mattie," he added, "if ye're wice ye'll drink weel o't as weel's the rest, for there's no' a better medicine than saut watter, I'm telt. It's an uncommonly halesome drink, everybody says; an' if I was you, Mattie, I wadna spare it, wi' the chance o't for the liftin'."

"No, no; I'll no spare't, seein' that it's sae cheap. I'll stick by the saut-watter bottle, Mister Shuttle, an' you'll stick by the grand wee doctor wi' the stoot body and the braid bannet—the gill-stoup! Thank you, Mister Shuttle, thank you, very kindly! You're a maist mindfu', considerate, an' feelin' husband. If my second man's half as guid to me as ye've aye been, I'll bury him wi' tears in my twa e'en."

"Oh, hang you!" exclaimed the wroth husband, and crushing his hat down on his head, he set off in a hurry for the shore.

The spot that Geordie selected for the "lubrification" of his wooden limb was a good couple of miles west along the shore.

He was alone among the rocks, if we except the limpets

that stuck to them, and the white-feathered sea-gulls that flew about the shore.

What a delicious pleasure it was to bathe his stick leg in the cool salt sea! It was like rubbin't wi' saft treacle.

For a full half-hour he sat thus, ruminating to himself, and wondering how his auld cronies in the Calton o' Glesca were getting on. If they saw him down here, perched on the rocks, and with his ailing leg of wood plankit in the sea, what would they say to it, he wondered. Here he had seclusion, however, and that was a great mercy, especially to a man who had ways of his own, as he had, and who was determined to act up to them.

But no! perfect seclusion was not to be had even here. For was not yon a human being—a veritable man in a hat—coming dodging along the shore in his direction, stick in hand, and with a book under his arm?

It was; and, anticipatory of his visit, Geordie drew up his leg of wood, wet from the sea waves, and composedly awaited his approach.

Nearer and nearer the stranger came, twirling his yellow cane in the air, and looking generally as if he was happy with himself and his surroundings, and owned besides a good half of the land round about.

Geordie glanced inquisitively in his direction, and saw in that brief glance that the stranger wore a broad-brimmed Quaker's hat, looked through a pair of very noticeable blue goggles, and had generally the abstracted air of a man of deep thought and study.

"Good morning, friend. I give thee grateful salutation," remarked the tall, impressive-looking stranger.

"Ay, it's a gran' mornin'—as fresh as mussels," returned our canny hero.

"Hast thou been taking thy morning bath, friend, as I have just been doing?" continued the speaker, twirling a damp towel in the air.

"I hast," learnedly answered Geordie, "to the length o' my left leg only."

"Ah! anything special the matter with the limb?"

"I'm sair fash't wi' the rheumatics in't," frankly answered Geordie, with perfect sincerity.

"Indeed! a bad complaint—a very trying trouble indeed. Have you tried anything special for its cure, may I kindly ask?"

"Naething mair special than rowin't carefully up in warm flannel at nicht an' stovin't wi' the heat o' the fire."

"Won't do, my friend—won't do. You should get a gill of good old brandy and rub the ailing limb with it night and morning."

"I wad much prefer to tak' it inwardly an' syne blaw my breath on't, if it cam' to the same thing in the end."

"Ha, ha, ha! now, now, friend! now, now!"

"But, waur than that," added Geordie, with sincere feeling, "I met wi' an accident yae nicht about three months since—or rather, my left leg did."

"Oh, I'm truly sorry for that, friend."

"An' so am I—deeply and painfully sorry," chimed in Geordie, with a bit quiet laugh.

"And pray, friend, how did it happen?"

"Ye see, I was comin' hame frae Maggie Glen's public-house yae nicht, up bye in the auld Calton o' Glesca, ye ken, wi' a wee drap in the corner o' my left e'e—no' very much, ye ken; only aboot fowrpence worth, aff and on——"

"Fourpence worth! Yes, proceed."

"Weel, I wasna mair nor ten yairds frae my ain door-cheek when I put my fit down on a bit orange skin, or something like it, an' doun I cam' wi' my left leg aneath me, gien't an ugly thraw. I thocht sma' on't at the moment, but next mornin' it pained me much. It was swall't badly, an' was a' oot in a red rash."

"Inflammation," thrust in the stranger. "It should

have been leeched at once, to draw away the inflamed blood."

"Bluid, did ye say?" questioned Geordie. "Weel, I never gaed the length o' threepin' there was bluid in't, but I've worn't sae lang noo that I'll mainteen there's distinct feelin' in't, deny't wha likes."

"What! no blood in a man's leg?" put in the stranger, very pompously; "why, there's not a limb of the human body secretes more blood than do the legs."

"But stop! stop! let me explain," thrust in Geordie, who now saw that the stranger was totally unaware of his stick leg; "let me explain."

"One moment, friend," blandly interposed the stranger. "Kindly let *me* first explain. You see, I know a little, just a little, of the practical pathology of the case. Observe, a man falls with his right leg under him——"

"But it's my left leg that's the bother," thrust in Geordie.

"Exactly," acquiesced the bland stranger. "A man falls, I now say, with his left leg under him——"

"Ye're pu'in' the richt cork noo."

"He rises slightly lame," continued the stranger, "and hobbles off, thinking little, perhaps, of the accident. Next morning the limb is swollen, and great pain ensues. And why? Why, because the sinews have been unduly strained, the blood is arrested in its flow, the——"

"Ye will hae bluid in't, I see, richt or wrang," murmured Geordie, half aloud.

"The blood is arrested in its flow, I was remarking; swelling sets rapidly in as a natural consequence of the checked circulation, and pain, hot and incessant, is the certain result. Logical deduction: apply leeches to draw away the coagulated blood, and hot fomentations to ease the pain and lay the swelling—and there you are!"

"Quite so, sir; quite so. Looks a' very fine in theory, I admit; but I canna for the life o' me see hoo a' this learned

rigmarole about strained sinews, checked circulation, and coagulated bluid fits in wi' the reed o' the widd?" replied Geordie, holding up his stick leg for the first time within six inches of the stranger's astonished eyes and nose.

The reed of the wood! Was it possible?

The stranger fell back about three feet in dire dismay, exclaiming—

"Great St. Mungo! have I actually been all the time considering the pathology of a wooden leg?"

"That's so," acceded Geordie, tossing up his game leg in mid-air once more, to the imminent danger of the stranger's blue goggles. "There it is—a teuch auld bit o' weel-seasoned widd. I'll tak' my affy-davy there's feelin' in't—rale, genuine human feelin'; but as for bluid, pathology here or pathology there, there's no' a single drap o' bluid in't frae end to end. It whites easily to the knife, like the heft o' a schule-laddie's whup. But cheese the bluid! there's no' a single drap in't."

The stranger was, if possible, still more flabbergasted than before.

"Good-bye, friend," he quickly said, turning on his heels; "there are lunatics abroad, I fear."

"Ditto wi' dots!" Geordie cried after him; "I jist pairted wi' yin wearin' blue specks this very moment. Guid-bye!"