

ON THE BAURHEID CAUR.

IT could not be said that the gentleman *entered* the tramcar, at least in the conventional way. That was his intention, and had it not been that the conductor was upstairs, he might have achieved his object, with official assistance. As it was his struggles attracted the attention of two willing and wholly disinterested citizens, who, pushing from behind, projected him on to the footboard where he lay for a moment, slightly bewildered but radiantly happy. How much that state of happiness had cost in coin of the realm I cannot guess, but there are people who would say it was worth it.

Slowly he rose to his feet. It was clear he had designs on the upper deck. He placed one foot on the first step, and then, using the handrail as a lever, endeavoured to get his second foot to follow. This was not such a simple matter as it looked, for no sooner had he got foot No. 2 up than foot No. 1 would slip down. Once, after a supreme effort, he managed to get both feet up and actually to get them up two steps, but his luck was out; down he came in a slither.

It was at this point that we discovered in him a fellow-countryman. An Englishman would have said, "Well, I'm blowed!" Our friend, as he picked himself up, said, "Noo that's queer; I've heard o' roomatics, but I never heard o' them comin' on as quick as that." Of course he took longer to utter this penetrating phrase than you have taken to read it, but the

meaning was the same. Furthermore, by this time he was addressing an audience, having by a miraculous recovery, placed himself in a position where he was facing the inside passengers.

He was a little man, with a round dumpling-like face, and, contrary to the custom of people in his condition, was not incommoded by parcel or package of any kind. Perhaps it was as well; I question if his fingers would have closed on anything as tiny as a bit of string. There he stood, gripping perilously by either side of the doorway. I should not say "he stood." He swayed rather, like some hapless voyager in a rolling sea. And as he swayed he spoke.

His first remark took us at once completely into his confidence. "Roomatics" he said: "noo wha wad ever think that Peter Simpson wad hae roomatics?"

He surveyed himself quizzically, and then looked up as if expecting some consolatory reply. No answering sound came forth to cheer his lonely heart! "So ye're no' gaun to speak to me," he continued: "weel, ye can dae the ither thing—see!" A pause, during which he endeavoured to release a hand to get into his pocket. "Thae stairs is awfu' nerrow; ye wad need to be a monkey to clim' them. I hope it's no' lumbago I've got. I just felt kin' o' weak i' the back like. It's me that kens a' aboot lumbago. My guid brither had it last year. Ye could ha' heard him at Glesca Cross. They ironed his back wi' flet irons, jist like a shurt. The only thing they didna dae was to sterch'm an' pit'm through a mangle. Ay, lumbago's the boy, I'm tellin' ye."

"Tut, tut, my good man, it's not lumbago."

The words were spoken by a benevolent looking P.S.A. kind of gentleman. It was, to say the least of it, an unfortunate remark. Orators at any time dislike being interrupted, imposing, as it does, a certain mental strain. And there are conditions where mental strains are resented. In this case too there was the added difficulty of spotting the interrupter. This the dumpling-faced gent failed to do. He looked round the crowded interior interrogatively, wearing a puzzled expression. Finally, and in despair, he landed on a pale ascetic-looking youth whose anatomy was partly concealed behind the figure of a stout lady.

“ O it's no' lumbago, is it no' ? ”

The words were spat out rather than spoken. He continued: “ An' whit dae you ken about lumbago?—does onybody in this caur ken onything about lumbago? Naw!—an' whit's mair; there's nae fear o' you takkin' lumbago, my laddie; it wadna bide wi' ye; it needs mair than banes to feed on. Here, Maw! (this to the stout lady), “ dinna lean sae heavy on the laddie; ye'll tak' the creese oot his troosers.”

I have seen many withering glances in my time; never such an one as Maw projected on that son of Bacchus. It was at this stage that our friend had resort to a tactic which properly belongs to childhood's happy days. Quick as ever dentist drew a tooth, he shot his tongue out in the face of the indignant lady. The gesture was, to say the least of it, indelicate. It proved to be a danger signal too, for just at that moment Fate appeared in the shape of the conductor.

It was a bloodless struggle. In fact, it was no struggle at all. Before our friend had time to put his tongue in his cheek, where I am sure he intended it to be, he

was jerked from behind and literally deposited on the street. We heard one feeble plaint as of a "voice off"—"Here, mister, it's Baurheid I'm gaun tae."

"Well, you can walk for a chynge" replied the conductor as he rang the car on.

"It's an awfu' thing drink," said an auld wife in the corner. "Ay! is't a tuppenny or a three-ha'penny yin ye want?" asked the conductor.