

## *GEORDIE SHUTTLE UP THE LUM.*

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IN auld times the practical chimney-sweeper had a more difficult and much more stuffy job in Glasgow, and the west of Scotland generally, than he now has, in the sense that he commonly "soopit the lum" with a handbrush from the

inside by ascending the "lum" from the hearthstane upwards, as a sailor climbs the ship's mast.

Gradually as the city grew, and the old-fashioned tenements gave place to more commodious and fashionable buildings, the "sweep" mounted the roof for it, and with ball-brushes adapted to the change, he cleaned the chimney from the top downwards, as is now invariably the case.

The old practice died hard, however, as most established customs do, and up till a comparatively recent date it was not at all unusual, as the result of a former practice, for the "sweep" to send his sooty apprentice "up the lum," brush in hand, to the height of the first "bend," for the purpose of clearing down the soot which commonly lodged there after the ball-brush had done its work from the roof.

In this connection we have an amusing story to tell of auld Geordie Shuttle and his wife, Mattie, both of whom were sair putten-about yae Ne'er-Day morning by an incident connected with the annual "soopin' o' the lum."

"Is the 'sweep' trysted for the morn, Mattie?" asked Geordie, on a certain Hogmanay nicht as the clock was wearing round towards the fateful hour of twelve.

"At eight o'clock the morn's mornin' he's comin' here," answered Mattie, "when I hope to see the lum get a richt guid soopin' doon."

Mattie's trysted "first-fit" duly came at the back of twelve that nicht, or, rather, next morning, and the worthy domestic pair having immediately thereafter gone to bed for a bit four hours' dover o' sleep, they were at the hour arranged, knocked up by the said "sweep," along wi' his wee black-looking deil o' an apprentice, who was attired in an auld cast-off soldier's coat, and who carried the soot-bag and the brushes liker a born imp of the lower Plutonian regions than anything else one could easily fancy.

Inside the tick of two seconds Mattie, truth to tell, had jumped from the warm embrace o' the blankets to her feet,

and in two seconds more she was followed by Geordie, who took the floor in his cowl, his stockings, and his stick-leg.

Now, there was an awkward bend about half-way up the chimney, which was always a difficult bit to "soop" clean. Mattie therefore warned the "sweep" to see to it that the soot lodgin' in the ben' bit o' the lum was richt soopit oot, or, failing that, "no a fardin o' the fowr pence to be given him would she pay, pollis or no pollis!"

All this was, so far, duly done. The chimney was swept down, and the master-sweep having several other chimneys to attend to, left the wee apprentice-laddie to speel up the vent and finish the job.

All right; so far, so good. But then, it was Ne'er-Day morning, and everybody seemed touched with whisky, including dooce Mattie, honest Geordie himself, and the master-sweep. Even the wee sooty black-a-vised apprentice laddie was quite bung full of curran' bun and ginger cordial, as was to be expected on a Scotch Ne'er-Day mornin'.

"He's as like a wee black-faced hill sheep as ever I saw," remarked Mattie, when the wee laddie "sweep" had disappeared up the chimney. "I only hope he'll come doon safe an' soon an' a' richt."

"Nae fears o' that, Mattie; he's a born deil, that wee sooty chapp—a fair black chip aff the auld block. If he's no a deil's wean, then he maun be direct aff the monkey breed, for a funnier wee-faced, auld fashion't lookin' mannie I never clap't an e'e on; an' as for speilin' a vent, he jist ran up that crookit lum-heid the noo like a squirrel up a tree, or a monkey after a cocoanut. It strikes me vera forcibly that Auld Sooty, the sweep, must ha'e bocht him, or, mair likely, stolen him frae some auld Italian organ-grinder in some backcourt or ither."

"I wish I saw him safe doon," put in Mattie, "for I'm anxious to get the hoose redd-up an' in proper order—for this, ye ken's the New-Year mornin'."

“There’s nae fears o’ the callan, Mattie; he’s bringin’ doon the soot in fine muckle lumps, onyway. An’ that’s a’ we need be concerned about. As for the rest o’t, he’ll be doon here afore twa ticks, never ye fear.”

The expressive “twa ticks” here spoken of by Geordie, however, passed away without bringing down the wee sweep’s apprentice. They listened, but could hear no sound.

What could be detaining the young imp up the “lum” so long, they wondered. The sound of his brush had fallen quiet all at once, which looked ominous, to say the least of it.

Mattie soon became alarmed at the boy’s prolonged absence.

“Eh, sirc the day!” she sighed, “what if the wee mannie has fa’ en sound asleep up the lum?”

“Stop a wee,” said Geordie; “I’ll soon settle that; a guid lood roar up the lum, or a rattle wi’ the poker an’ tangs shood wauken him up.” But it was all to no purpose.

Various other stratagems to waken the sleeper were tried, none of which, however, proved effectual in the remotest degree. A candle which was lighted and held up the chimney showed nothing; and a long clothes’ pole which was inserted with much difficulty, and pushed about twelve feet up the orifice, brought down nothing better than a loosened bit of brick, and along with that a fresh lot of soot.

“Eh, preserve us a’,” once more sighed Mattie, “the laddie’s either stuck hard an’ fast in the lum, or’s soond asleep; a bonnie pickle to be in on a Ne’er-Day mornin’.”

The situation was critical, and called for instant and effective action. Geordie’s manly soul rose to the occasion. Yes, stick-leg though he had, he would at once cast off his coat and ascend the chimney in search of the lost laddie-sweep.

No sooner said than done. At once off came Geordie’s coat, or rather his sleeved waistcoat, in spite of the warm opposition of his spouse Mattie, who vainly tried to dissuade him from the rash attempt. Having got a cloth tied round

his nose and mouth to keep out the sooty dust, Geordie heroically drew an old worsted night-cowl over his ears and prepared to ascend the chimney.

The next moment Geordie was out of sight, and, thanks to his stick-leg, considerably up the lum.

And thanks were really due to his stick-leg in this particular instance, for by digging the point of it into the side of the chimney next it, Geordie was able to force himself up the perpendicular orifice with wonderful success, in view of his stout podgy build.

For a few minutes Mattie could distinctly hear her worthy and heroic husband warsling his way up the chimney, and that, too, with obvious progress and success, when all at once the scraping, rasping noise ceased, and for some minutes thereafter she heard no sound whatever.

Something had gone wrong.

Half-way up the vent a narrow twist in the build of the chimney occurred, and in trying to wedge himself through this contracted aperture the heroic rescuer had stuck hard and fast.

Here was a terrible dilemma for Mattie. Her guidman stuck in the lum! It was awful to think of it. What but the very blackest misluck could she expect to happen during a year that had begun with such a dire misfortune?

"Geordie, my dear man, are ye there?" she cried up the chimney as loudly as she could.

"I'm here, Mattie, there's no a doot o' that, as I ken to my cost," the husband cried back.

"Come doon this vera minute, an' let the sweep's laddie jist hing there, like a weel-singit sheep's heid, if he'll no wanken. We're no responsible for the deil's bairns; come doon the lum this vera minute, Geordie."

"I canna; I'm stuck hard an' fast here, like a cockle on the rocks," the imprisoned husband cried back.

Mattie's worst fears were now clearly and terribly realised. Her man was stuck fast in the bend o' the lum, and the

former catastrophe was now doubled in the intensest degree.

“Eh, sicee the day,” she half sighed and half sobbed out, “what am I to dae ava’—my man up the lum, an’ no a grown-up bodie but my lee lane in the hoose? It’s the doctor, or the minister that’s wanted here; but o’ the twa I think I’ll fetch the doctor.”

Having thus expectorated her grief and alarm, Mattie suddenly threw a small chackit shawl over her head, and prepared to run off for help.

“Mattie,” she heard the imprisoned man cry after her, “whaur are ye settin’ aff tae?”

“I’m gaun to bring the doctor to ye.”

“The doctor, Mattie? the doctor?”

“An’ what for no? The measles, the chin-cough, or the chicken-pox are each bad enough, but a man up the lum is a case for even a College professor, no to speak o’ a common doctor. Keep quate, an’ haud ye there; I’ll be back wi’ auld Donald Ross, the Calton herbalist, in twa minutes.”

This said, Mattie wheeled about and set off for needed help.

It was no joke for poor Geordie Shuttle, his fixture “up the lum,” however much it looked like broad laughter on the face of it.

The situation was, indeed, an extremely trying one, apart from its rich and most laughable farce. Had Geordie been able to continue the ascent of the chimney he would have gone on and on, no doubt, till he met daylight at the top of the chimney, and then come down by the hole in the roof, as he had, in fact, vainly tried to do.

But further progress up the chimney seemed impossible, in spite of both his resolution and his stiek-leg! On the other hand, a return downwards proved quite as futile every time he freshly attempted it. In fact, so much was this the case that Geordie, poor man, was forced to the conclusion that one of the two alternatives was certain—either the

“lum” was closing in on him, or he (Geordie Shuttle) was fast swelling in his breeks! Dreadful, terrible thought!

Meantime, Mattie had reached auld Donald Ross’s door, and explained things as they were.

“Toots, toots!” replied the once famed old herbalist, “it’s no ta toctor ta poor man needs; it’s ta mason. I cood gie her boeels a wrocht weel enough, but it’s ta mason-man tat’s needed to tak’ doon ta hoose an’ shoost howk ta poor man oot; you’ll teuk goot notiss an’ opserve that, my dear woman.”

“Tak’ doon the hoose!” exclaimed Mattie in astonishment. “Mercy me! will it be necessary to tak’ doon a hail twa-storey tenement before my man can be gotten oot the lum? I’ll jist rin across an’ tell auld Dr. Sawbanes, wha keeps the three big red, green, an’ blue-coloured bottles in his window. He’ll advise me better, I hope.”

Thus resolved, Mattie was soon in the presence of old Dr. Sawbones, who had just opened his shop-door, the morning being yet young, and to whom she addressed herself in the following terms:—

“Come awa’ across this minute, doctor, an’ see what ye can dae for, my man.”

“What’s the maitter wi’ your man, Mrs. Shuttle?”

“I’ll leave you to find that out, doctor, as it’s fully mair than I can tell. But o’ this I’m fell sure: he’s in a sair enough fix this moment, an’ if ye can bring him safe oot o’ his bit trouble, the price o’ yer veesit ’ll no be grudged by me.”

Thus adjured, the worthy Dr. Sawbones took up his hat and stick, and at once left his shop in company with Mattie.

“Has he been long ill?” the doctor asked, as they stepped out.

“Only within this last quarter o’ an hour,” cautiously answered Mattie, who did not wish to spoil her case, as before, with a too literal explanation of the odd affair.

“An’ he’s really bad, then?” repeated the doctor.

“There! ye can judge for yersel’,” said Mattie, as she flung open the door, and pushed the worthy old medical man in before her.

“Whaur’s the patient, Mrs. Shuttle?” questioned the doctor, looking in the empty bed and round the apartment in blank astonishment.

“Up the lum,” promptly answered Mattie, “an’ if ye can bring him safe doon on the floor-heid I’se no grudge yer fee.”

“What! Is he wrang in the heid?” asked the doctor in a cautious undertone.

“He’s a’ wrang thegither, I fear, doctor, heid an’ heels. The fact is, he’s stuck hard an’ fast in the lum, an’ can neither win up nor doon, an’ what tae dae, I kenna. Ye see, this is how the thing happen’t:—”

Here Mattie entered on a brief statement of what had led up to the accident, to which the worthy old medical listened with great apparent interest, not unmixed with a strong sense of the ludicrous.

The doctor was both amazed and amused, and very naturally guessed the affair to be a Ne’er-Day morning frolic arising out of a too free use of the dram.

“Is this a joke, Mrs. Shuttle?” he asked, “or is Geordie really up the chimney? I fail to see any trace of him in the vent,” he added, having suddenly popped his spectacled forehead well under the smoke-board for a sight of the imprisoned man. “In any case,” he further said, “I fear I can do nothing for him.” And with this, he turned to depart, thinking, doubtless, that this being New-Year’s morning the dram had taken the decent woman’s head.

“Can ye no gang up the lum a yaird or twa an’ lance him?” sincerely put in Mattie. “Ye see he’s swalt a bit, an’ wants lettin’ oot. Gang up the lum, doctor, an’ stick the lance intil him. He’ll pap doon at yer feet like a shot doo, ye’ll see.”



At this there was instantly heard an excited fizzlin' up the chimney, which made the worthy auld medical cock his twa ears in astonishment, and presently a voice—the veritable voice of auld Geordie Shuttle—was heard faintly crying doon the lum—

“Od, Mattie, if I was yince safe again on the floor-heid I'd lance ye! Jist let the doctor try that saut trick on me an' he'll smartly answer for manslaughter at the next Circuit Court sittings, if there's ony law left in Scotland. It's auld Pate Barrowman, the mason's man, that's wanted here—he could lowse a brick an' let me nicely doon if ony man cood. Sen' along for Pate, wi' my compliments, Mattie, if ye'd ever see me in life again.”

Old Sawbones, the local apothecary, was amazed. There was now no doubt about the reality of the accident, whether it had originated in frolic or otherwise. A human being was certainly imprisoned in the chimney, and that human being was none other than worthy old Geordie Shuttle, one of the doocest and best known of East-End wabsters.

“It's clearly a case for the mason's man,” acceded the homely old medical, putting past his spectacles with great formality.

“Then I'll hae him here in a vera few minutes, if he's in the toon, an's able to balance himsel' on his twa feet; for this, ye're aware, is Ne'er-Day mornin', an' Pate, ye ken, is no jist strict teetotal.”

This said, Mattie at once set off for auld Pate Barrowman, the mason's man, with whom she returned in less than five minutes, bringing also along with her the journeyman “sweep,” whom she had met outside on the way back.

His sable majesty—*i.e.*, the journeyman sweep, was greatly concerned and amused to learn of the comic mishap, and almost laughed outright when he confessed to Mattie that his apprentice, the wee “lum-climber,” was safe out of the vent, and down on the streets half-an-hour ago,

having emerged on the roof, a not uncommon procedure, and afterwards joined him (the master sweep) by getting down the stairhead hatch in the ordinary course.

A consultation was immediately held as to what should be done.

"Will the hail hoose need to be taken doon, Pate?" Mattie promptly asked the mason's man.

"No, the hoose 'ill no exactly need to come doon, but—the man will."

"Unless the doctor lances him that'll never happen, I fear," sighed Mattie.

Poor Geordie heard Mattie's fresh allusion to the doctor's lance with great agitation and alarm.

"If," he cried down the chimney, "if the doctor daurs to approach my posterior quarters wi' an open lance, I'll ca' a hole in his cocoa-nut wi' the pint o' my stick-leg, if I shood openly hing for't at the Jail Square."

At this interesting juncture in stepped Johnny Paste-Brush, a local bill-sticker.

On being apprised of the peculiar nature of the novel accident, the bill-sticker's fine artistic eyes flashed forth obvious excitement. At the same time he attempted to enunciate a long-drawn monosyllabic whistle, which ended unsuccessfully, Johnny being too far gone on the Ne'er-Day mornin' "squeal" to find sufficient wind for it.

"What a subject for an illustrated bill!" he at length exclaimed. "Talk about the boo-man below the bed! It's nothing to the adventurous weaver up the lum! It's a new and interesting reading of the cork in the bottle, and I fear we'll have to break the bottle to get the auld cork oot!"

"Eh, me!" once more sighed Mattie, "the hail hoose 'ill need to come doon yet I see!"

"Pit that bill-stickin' rascal oot!" the imprisoned man cried down the chimney as loudly as he could. "He's stark mad."

"Failing the breaking of the bottle," continued the half-

fou bill-sticker, intent to give his old friend and cronie a sufficient Roland for his Oliver, "failing the suggested pulling down of the house, there's only two alternatives left—the 'sweep' must either get on the roof an' punch Geordie doon the lum wi' his heavy lead wecht, or ye maun get a fourpenny battle o' dry hay, Mattie, and kennle a fire wi't below him. If he disna rise up the lum wi' that, he's a tichter fit there than I'm willin' to believe him."

So said the humorous bill-sticker, indulging an excess of humour attributable in part, no doubt, to the potency of the numerous Ne'er-Day drams he had that morning imbibed.

Poor Geordie heard the bill-sticker's ominous words, and groaned aloud in wrath.

At this moment a succession of rasping sounds were heard up the chimney, and it was apparent to all that the imprisoned man was making a renewed and last and desperate effort to extricate himself from the "bend" of the chimney in which he was firmly caught.

In this he presently succeeded, and so suddenly, that he lost hold of the lum sides with his two hands, and came rumbling down to the mouth of the chimney in a sort of confused lump, as black as a real genuine "sweep," and twice as graphic, with dislodged masses of soot and lime sticking all over him.

Just, however, at the very bottom of the lum, from which his legs and a portion of his stout posterior quarters projected, Geordie again stuck fast.

It was only for a few moments, however, for Mattie and the romantic-minded bill-sticker laid each hold of a leg, and with a sudden, vigorous pull together, they successfully dislodged Geordie from the twisted grup o' the lum.

"Whaur's that bill-stickin' heathen that was gaun to set fire to me wi' the battle o' hay?" he wildly asked on once more recovering his feet, making his eyes flash round the

apartment, and suggestively working his sooty fists in fine fighting style.

"He's *gone*, as the article of furniture goes at the auctioneer's last call," rather smartly replied the bill-sticker, making unsteady gyrations in the direction of the door, in view of a speedy *exit*.

"An' you, Mattie!" the incensed husband added, turning a severe eye on his spouse.

"No a word, guidman; no a single word o' angry censure will I hear. I'm heart-glad ye're safe doon the lum without the aid o' the doctor's lance; sae much sae that I cood fain tak' ye in my twa loving airms, ye sweet auld doo!" and, suiting the action to the word, Mattie quickly threw her arms round her man's neck and actually kissed the astonished man "owre and owre again," as the lover in the song says.

A burst of hearty laughter followed the amusing act, for Mattie—forgetful, or more likely careless, of sooty consequences—took away on her lips, chin, and nose, a decided coal-gum impression of direct collision with Geordie's soot-smear'd phiz.

"Tuts, woman," said Geordie, with a mollified smile, feeling rather pleased at Mattie's loving act; "what a bonnie lookin' phizymahogany ye've gaed an' gi'en yersel'. A fine lookin' countenance to bring in the New-Year wi'! Gang owre an' tak' a keek at your face in the lookin' gless, an' syne tell me what ye think o' yersel'."

"I think a guid deal o' mysel', an' nae thanks to the lookin' gless," replied Mattie; "but muckle as I think o' mysel', I think faur mair o' you, ye auld sweetie!"

"No, no, Mattie; nae mair o' that before folk, if *you* please," said Geordie, drawing away. "This, I believe, is Ne'er-Day mornin', sae hand me owre the bottle an' glass, for there's as muckle stoor an' dry lime in my throat (*a-chee! a-choo!*) as wad effectually manure a ten-acre tattie field."

With right goodwill the bottle an' glass were thereupon handed round the house, and healths were warmly drunk, seasoned with a solid whang o' guid curran' bun, every person in the house—including the "sweep" and the bill-poster—being presently on the best of social terms, and in fine first-class good-humour and cheery spirits.

And a New Year of better luck Geordie Shuttle never experienced in spite of the funny accident "up the lum," as he was often heard to confess. For Mattie had twins that same year, while he himself fell heir to a stockin' purse o' hail twenty pounds through the death o' an eighty-year-auld uncle in Carmunnock, a historic, auld-warld clachan about a couple o' miles south o' the Cathkin Braes, near Glasgow.