

“DOON THE WATER”

It was approaching “Glasgow Fair,” the great holiday time of the year, when the men folks would treat their wives and bairns to a trip to the coast, to the watering-places, doon the water, and the whole topic of conversation was “Where are ye gan at the Fair?”

Collins’ big printing work was “scalin’” the crowd o’ lassies were wending their several ways up the High Street, along the gallow-gate and doon the salt market, crossing the Albert Brig to the south side. Wee Jean McColl was sliding along arm in arm with another two, when the conversation turned on to the Fair. Holidays. Wee Jean McColl said to Bell Broon, “Where’s Tam and you gan’ this year?” “Oh,” said Bell Broon, “we’re gan’ tae Rothesay—the first day, anyway.” Wee Jean said, “Rothesay? I widn’t go tae yon Hungry Hole. Hughie and I went there last year, and wait till I tell you a’ about it. We started frae the Bromilaw at six in the mornin’, and by the time we

got doon the length o' deed slow, I was as sick as a hauf-deed dug. It was awfu'. I was stuck at the sharp end o' the boat a' the road, as Hughie said, 'Let's get a' the fresh air we can,' and just as we were passing Bowling I had tae let go; I couldna' staun' it any langer. O, I wis sick. Hughie said, 'Jean, will I fetch ye something up frae the bar?' I said, 'A drink o' soda,' but it wisna' doon twa ticks till up it came. O, I wis sick. However, I got a wee better, and Hughie said, 'Let's daunner back to the back end o' the boat; there's some fun gan' an there.' So I staggered along, haudin' on tae Hughie like grim death. O, I wis sick; but the change to the blunt end o' the boat done me a lot o' guid. Hughie's chum, Wee Bowlie Smith, had a melodian, so the dancing was began, and after a wee drink o' caul' water I cam tae, and started in wan o' the bunches o' the quadrilles, and I can tell ye by the time we got tae Gourrock, I was wringing through wae sweat, and Hughie's collar was as saft as butter. Then the rain cam' on, and we had tae go doon below. Well, I was sick before, but the second time was awfu'. Ye see, I had naething on my stomach, and I can tell ye, I gie near kicked oot a'-the-gither; I was worse than sick; I was half deed. Hooever, by the time we got tae

Rothesay it was fair, and the sun cam' oot as we strolled along the front. Hughie says tae me, 'Dae ye think ye could eat something noo?' I said, 'Whatever ye think yersel', Hughie.' So in we went tae wan of yon wee eatin' hooses, and ordered ham and eggs, and twa slices o' bread each. O, I was hungry by this time; I could have eaten a cuddy; but, however, as I was telling ye, in cam' the ham and eggs and the buttered bread. Well, I'm no tellin' ye a lee, but as sure as death they spread the butter on and then scraped it off, and the size of the eggs! ye never saw the like—I swore they were doo's eggs; and a wee crunch o' ham the size o' my pinkie. What dae ye think they charged Hughie? One an' a tanner a heed; it was awfu'; really am no jokin' but ye can get a pun o' ham in Glesca' for fourpence, and a dizzen o' eggs for sevenpence. So ye see the profit they make; it's doon-right swindlin' at the fair. Hooever, we had tae pit up wae it, and after we cam' oot we went intae a ice-cream shop, and had twa MacCullums and a slider each, and then we went tae the aquarium. But I got sick again lookin' at the monkeys, and I lost my ham and eggs. It was chawin' after payin' wan and six for them. So I said, 'Nae mair indoor for us the day, Hughie.' So we went along the beach and

I took off my boots. Well, they werena' boots, they were nice gutty shoes Hughie bocht for me on the Friday night afore we went awa' on the Saturday. Hooever, as I was sayin', there was I in paddlin' and Hughie sittin' on the beach chuckin' in chuckie stanes and splashin' me. It was awfu' caul', although the sun was burnin' hot. So I coaxed Hughie tae tak' off his boots and come in and paddle; so there was him and I paddlin' and paddlin' and the sun shinin'. O, it was great, but what dae ye think? When we cam' oot o' the water, the sun had melted my gutty shune, and I had tae sit on the beach tae Hughie ran intae the toon tae buy me a pair o' cheap rubbers till we got hame. I'm telling ye it was a day o' trouble, wan thing efter anither. But that's no' the worst. Hughie wid hae me tae go oot and hae a row in a sma' boat. I didna' want tae go, but, hooever, him bein' my lad and sae kind, I didna' want tae anger him, so I just did as he wished, but never again. We had just got oot aboot twa boat lengths when alang cam past a steamer and upset Hughie and me. Well, I just closed my ee'n, and doon I went. I remember nae mair till I cam' tae my senses in a wee hoose up a back street aboot ten o'clock at nicht, and there was Hughie standin' lookin' in my face. So I just burst oot greetin', but

he put his arms roon' my neck, and kissed me twice, and said, 'Ye're a' richt noo, Bell. We'll tak' the first boat hame the morn'; and it'll be twa wat days and a dry yin before I gang doon the water again."

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