

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, AUGUST 1, 1891.

FASHIONS IN BATHING.

BATHING DRESS AND METHODS IN AMERICA AND EUROPE.

The Bathing Machine of The English Woman—Going Down to the Beach by a Swinging Cable at Brighton—The Sting- ing Fish Make Sandals Necessary.

Modes and modesty. English bathing women and French baigneurs. "Remem- ber, my love, we are going to Trouville this year. You must have your bathing dresses made in Paris," were the words said by an American mamma to her daughter who



THE SURF COMEDIAN.

made such a sensation last year at Bar- bor by wearing white flannel suits which were everything that was respectable until dipped in the water. After that their color changed to pink, so indiscreet was the ocean swell and so transparent its treat- ment. What her mamma hoped the Parisian dressmakers would be able to turn out for her daughter which would prove more at- tractive to the casual loungers on the French coast it is difficult to surmise, but it must not be supposed that at foreign watering- places costumes used by ladies at the court of Neptune and Amphitrite are more becoming than those in use in America.

It is conceded in all polite society that at a certain time of the year when the icy waters of the Atlantic begin to modify their temperature and the waves court the swim- mers or merely the wading bathers who seek for ozone and the invigorating tonic of a plunge, that men and women may cast aside much of the conventional covering propriety demands and appear together on the sea beach in costumes which would not only be comical but utterly reprehensible in a ball room or on Broadway. For one

of these reasons only known to the law- makers of society a lady may show a great deal more than her shoulders in a ball room; but were she to exhibit ten inches above her ankle (a modicum of leg which the ripples of the shore look on as prudery compared with what they often wash,) she would be regarded as a brazen thing, unfit for Newport Casino or Delmonico's Patri- archs. But let the bathing season com- mence and how few pretty women appear on the ocean whose figures can not be divined beneath their dark bathing suits, while many are the wonderful outlines of factitious beauty which fade into terrible reality when their frauds are given away by the heartless sea, and of course one of the most fruitful joking-grounds for the summer journalist is the watering place—not merely for the flirtations on the piazza around the hotel or boarding house, nor for the chase after man when the week days take the fathers and husbands away to New York; but more especially for the never ceasing attacks on girl-bathers and their vanities; their diminishing suits and their out-of-sight modesty. After studying marine life among the bathers of most sea- shores I cannot say that women in America display more than the natural *amour propre* every woman ought to possess, as evinced by a desire to look her best, and as little ridiculous as possible in trotting across the sands from her bath house to the water.

The most trying moment for a bather is the entrance on the scene; the promenade down the beach when the eyes of those in the water and those lounging around will detect any flaw or deformity, any incon- gruous appearance or unfortunate ten-



THE LATEST PARISIAN STYLE.

dency which nature or want of taste may accoutance.

The woman who knows she is well made, can walk with the *démarche* of a goddess, and is certain there is nothing in her costume which calls for criticism or cavi, may

set out from her boarded boudoir where she has left the fig leaves of fashion, and calmly traverse the strip of sand separating her dressing room from the sea, conscious that no unnecessary *decote* or meretricious make-up will enhance her attractions or prevent her beauty making its mark. While the smile goes round from lip to lip among the groups on the sands, where the babies are making castles and moated granges with their spades as some abnor- mally thin old maid h-plelessly ambles past into the rippling water, or some over- grown matron shakes the shore in her



TROUVILLE—A PRETTY PLUNGER.

laudable attempts to conceal her avoidu- pois among the breakers. In England this ordeal is not one of the miseries of life. The English have no bath houses such as we have in America. All bathing in the sea is done from what are called bathing machines. These are simply cabins on wheels drawn out to the axles, higher or lower, as the cus- tomer may demand, with steps at either end to enter or descend into the waves. On many shores these machines have awnings like the head of a bassinet or the hood of a perambulator, effectually concealing the fair occupant till she emerges beyond its protecting flounce into the open sea; and though the lounge on the beach is de- prived the pleasure of witnessing the plunges of the siren and the frolics of the nymph, the unwieldy matron and the ossi- fied old maid are saved the chagrin of an offensive notice which often verges on con- tempt.

In some places, as at Brighton, where the beach is precipitous or shelving the machines are let down by cables from a windlass, but usually horses are used, and when a stranger finds himself for the first time left in his wooden cabin in a raging sea while his hull and drivers depart to haul another machine his dismay may be better imagined than described.

In England the bathing woman in an in- stitution, though living all the summer in the sea looks more like a porpoise than a mermaid; but she is most useful in giving confidence to beginners and even in teaching ladies how to swim. She is re- placed in France by the *Baigneur*, who takes ladies in his arms into the deeper waters and is much patronized when a strong bearer and a good swimmer. Such a *baigneur* is the hero of a French play by Meilhac, in which Madame Judic used to delight her Parisian public.

The English bathing machine has been adopted at many of the French watering places, more especially those contiguous to England. Calais, Boulogne and Dieppi are all fond of bathing machines, and the French have introduced family cabins divided into two or three compartments for ladies and children. At Trouville, Etretat and Biarritz, at Ostende and Blankenberg, all fashionable resorts either for French or Belgians, the cabins as at long branch or Narragansett are in use.

Fashion first began to trouble her head about the *modos* for bathing when the beau- tiful Eugenie, Empress of the French, made Biarritz the only place for lovely women. She wanted sea air at that period. There the fair Spanish-Milesian first instituted the *costume de bain*, which has since become so necessary an adjunct to the trousseau of every fashionable beauty.

At that time the English women wore for sea baths a dark blue flannel garment which tied round the neck with a string, and coming down to her ankles, made her look like a shapeless bag; added to which she concealed her hair in a yellow oilskin cap. Very proper, no doubt—except when some



ENGLISH BATHING WOMEN.

libertine wave insisted in pulling it over her head—but tasteless and encumbering to a degree.

On the French coast the sandal is a ne- cessity in some form, on account of the

prevalence of an annoying fish (*Trachinus Draco*) known in England as the weaver. This name comes from the French *Vire*, given it by the coast fishermen in recog- nition of its power of living out of water for some time after capture.

Ammonia is always kept by the pro- prietors of the bathing establishments in case of accidents caused by this particularly objectionable fish. He is not large, but the prickles of his gill-covers and dorsal fin sting almost like a hornet, and I have seen



ON OUR COAST.

a foot and a hand swollen to double their normal size from the injuries it has oc- casioned. In France it is compulsory by law for fishermen to cut off the stings of these fishes when caught.

The bathing sandal is much thought of by its wearers in France. Not so many years ago, Paris was placarded with the colored advertisements of a sea-sandal christened Amanda, by its manufacturers. *N'allez pas aux Bains De Mer Sans Amanda*, (don't go to the seaside without Amanda) stared the Parisian and his guests in the face from every wall.

As much care and taste are displayed in these sea shore sandals as Helen of Troy or Phryne of Athens could have used in past ages. On the French shore there is doubtless some variety of color and form in the dress seen in the waves. Every Parisian dressmaker wishes to stamp even a bathing dress with his or her individual taste; but it is not by any means good form or bon ton to show too much of the figure as caricaturists would lead people to suppose.

In every country and on every shore there are thoughtless duds with no idea beyond their own selfish vanity who en- courage girls to make idiots of themselves, in no country perhaps more so than in

France. If a bathing costume is wanted more exaggerated and extravagant than another's it will be found either on the Trouville shore in France or on the variety stage in America; but rarely, if ever, on our Eastern coasts, from Atlantic City to Narragansett Pier. In most French watering places part of the bath- ing area is roped for men alone; only those with ladies and fami- lies being allowed to bathe together. Ropes are used as with us; but there are always one or more boatmen rowing up and down continually during bathing hours to guard against accidents, and there is one accommodation universal which might be well introduced into America. If a bather is tempted to stay in the water too long it is not necessary to wait until he turns blue to discover it. His feet will grow cold. Now to avoid ill-effects on re-entering the cabin or machine the *baigieuse* or old woman in a blue bloomer and rough straw bonnet will bring a foot bath of hot water into which the feet are plunged while dress- ing. The benefit is incalculable and the institution has saved many from sickness, if not from consumption.

Men bathers are just as open to criticism as the opposite sex, only as they are not so attractive they are often spared observa- tion. But of all comical shows on the watering place beach nothing comes up to the fat old gentleman who cannot swim. The way in which he splashes like a water- logged balloon amid the breakers, jumping up and down while he rubs his bald head or pats his protuberant stomach is a farce- comedy of itself, but when he persists in making a ring with two or three children



THE COUNTESS GOES SHRIMPING.

and a couple of forlorn old maids and dancing round and round in the surf, would compensate any feminine specta- tors for all the criticisms lavished on girl- bathers. DAVID WECHSLER.

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