

Music and Masonry in Glasgow.

PACKERS' AND EVERY NIGHT CLUB.

IN the halcyon days of pure protection and excessive love of native industry, when drawbacks and bounties were indissolubly united with all our manufacturing and commercial policy, and when Commissioners of Excise and Customs, backed by the imperial Parliament, exhibited an astonishing fondness for *oaths*, there was found in the countinghouses of every foreign merchant what was then called a *swearing* clerk—generally a youthful personage—who felt no difficulty, on any occasion, to swear solemnly, when printed calicoes, linen checks, plain linens, or other excisable goods were being packed, that the whole duties had been paid on the one, and that there was not a thread of cotton in the others.* Although this oath-gulping individual was generally the only representative of the mercantile establishment, to which he formed so necessary and important an adjunct, who was expected, in company with the exciseman, to be present at a packing for foreign shipment, in the warehouse or calender; still, it was sometimes the practice for one or other of the principals to leave his snug domicile of an evening, to take a look of the iron-bound and government-sealed boxes, before they were fairly consigned to the care of the Greenock carriers, who at that period held the monopoly of

* It used to be told of a well known calico printer in this City, when the presence of excisemen was required at works to *stamp goods* with his Majesty's seal, that he was in the habit of inviting these functionaries to breakfast, and of course, as he was a religious

man, to family worship. Both the *temporals* and the *spirituals* were at that time most unusually prolonged, and the officers, *having forgotten* to take their stamp along with them, a very profitable use was made of it during their absence.

transporting goods from Glasgow to Greenock and Port-Glasgow, whither all the foreign vessels connected with the trade of Clyde arrived and departed. The business of the Broomielaw, now teeming with the magnificent ships of all nations, was then confined to little more than the coasting trade, and even of that trade it had but little. Henry Bell had not yet launched his tiny steamboat, the "Comet," nor had the deepening-machine and diving-bell been employed on the river. The fact is, that all the goods destined for foreign parts were either carried by gaberts or flats down the Clyde, or by carts along the Greenock road and Inchinnan bridge; and so much was the latter conveyance patronised, for its safety and certainty, that it was by no means an uncommon sight to behold upwards of one hundred loaded carriers' carts crossing in a string the Jamaica-street bridge, after midnight, on their way to the lower ports of the Clyde.

When merchants or manufacturers were thus making as much as they possibly could of bounties and drawbacks; when a *partnership* with King George III. was looked upon as a paying connexion; and when the ports of embarkation were so situated as to render an afternoon or night packing of goods an absolute necessity, there arose a CLUB, which was not inaptly called by others, as well as by themselves, the PACKERS. The appellation of this jovial but *drouthy* fraternity, originated from many of its members being in the habit of starting off, from their own houses, immediately after dinner, upon the ostensible plea of having goods to pack at the calender, when, in reality, the object they had in view was merely to *pack* punch, and to bolt a provocative to thirst (which, Heaven knows, few of them required) in that well known and well frequented tavern, called the "Three Tuns," kept at that time by one yeleft honest John Gregg.*

The members of this guffaw-loving and *hika-hikaing* brotherhood were

* The principal calenders were those of Messrs Buchanan & Paterson in Candleriggs, Mr Ure in St Andrew-square, and Mr Miller in Ingram-street; the first being frequently shown to strangers as one of the lions of Glasgow. Mr Ure's calender had just one horse, which turned a gin, to the great delectation of the juveniles, who looked upon it as a *prodigious wonder*.

not numerous; but, what perhaps was much better, they were all leal and true men, being generally among the first at a feast and the last at a supper table. It was, indeed, a rare occurrence that a Packers' Club chair was ever found vacant, or that the principal Packer was ever obliged to punish any skulking member, as he was wont, by ordering him to be "put to the horn." Not, legal reader! to that fearful horn which some of thy fraternity were wont to sound occasionally from the pier of Leith, proclaiming every "breaker of the promises" a rebel to the State, and, consequently, escheating his goods and chattels to the King; but merely to an additional *horn* of soul-stirring stingo, to ripen reason and "to bathe the drooping spirits in delight beyond the bliss of dreams." Music in all its moods was the peculiar pastime of this brotherhood; for never was a meeting held when the walls of the apartment did not ring with the notes of a catch or a glee, or that the roof did not echo back the praises of Calcott, Webbe, or Mornington.

The Club of Packers were, in fact, the chief originators of that series of gentlemen's "Subscription Concerts," which were got up in a manner so honourable to the taste of our City, during the first two decades of the present century; but which, like the Club that gave them birth, or at least renewed their youth, are now, we fear, never again to be revived. Of these concerts, managed as they were by a select committee of subscribers, it is not too much to say, that, during their pretty long career, they always gave general satisfaction. The company which patronised them was uniformly select, and there fashionable strangers had an opportunity of seeing our City *beau sexe* to advantage, donned as they always were in their assembly dresses. The young ladies, by attending these well-conducted concerts, acquired a taste for good and classical music; while professional people of talent were encouraged thereby to remain in the City. The expense for a winter's entertainment to each family was but trifling, while the advantages and the amusement were great. Strange is it to think, that when Glasgow had not a third of the population which it at present possesses, an annual series of concerts was carried on with the

greatest spirit, while numerous candidates were generally waiting to fill up any vacancy which might occur in the regular list of subscribers. It is also worthy of remark, that, during that period, no orchestral or vocal performer of eminence visited Scotland until he or she had procured an engagement at the Glasgow concerts. In proof of this we may mention, that on the celebrated Mrs Salmon (of London) and Miss Cheese (of Dublin) completing their engagements in Glasgow, and thereafter visiting Edinburgh, the following epigram was written :—

“Sure auld Reekie's pride and her puffing will fail,
 Since she's nothing her taste now to please,
 Excepting of our Glasgow *Salmon* the tail,
 And the pairings of our Glasgow *Cheese!*”

The recollection of the many jovial hours spent in concocting and forwarding the musical meetings above referred to, must still remain fresh in the memory of every surviving member—alas! now few—of this cremona-loving fraternity. It would, indeed, be a sacrilege committed on fun and good humour for any member to forget the enraptured countenance of the principal Packer, when, after the bowl had received its top-dressing of limes and *ketchup* (a well known kind of old rum), and when glasses were each filled brimmers, he, with a loud knock on the board, exclaimed, in accents of self-satisfied delight, “Well, what do you think of that?” or when, raising the *galoptious* draught to his lips, and ordering each member to be perpendicular, he dedicated the bumper, amid the swelling *crescendo* of a harmonised hurrah, “To the lovers of music throughout the globe!” Neither will it be possible to efface from the memory of any brother, the unambitious wit and ceaseless humour of its warm-hearted secretary,

“Whose eyes like twinkling stars in evening cleare,
 Were deckt with smyles that all sad humours chased;”

of him, who, on his favourite four-stringed instrument, was sometimes heard to *out-Pan* even Pan himself, “in notes most musical, most melan-

choly;" or who, with his voice, made every listener at once most willingly acknowledge, when singing the bass of the well-known glee, that

"Smiths are good fellows,
When they blow the bellows!"*

The social-minded individuals who composed the fraternity of Packers—of whom, in good troth, it may be said that they sang from the heart "of all the brave birds that ever I see"—who revelled in the mysterious sounds of "one, two, three,"—and who, moreover, rarely got home from the Club by the straightest course,—are now, for the most part, torn asunder, either by distance or by death; and although we know that the very limited number who still remain in our City feel yet a desire to have a small *delectable* pack, for the purpose of recalling the pleasures of the past, and singing "peace to the souls" of their departed companions, we much doubt if the following choral chaunt of the brotherhood will ever again call forth the enthusiasm which it was always wont to produce within the precincts of the "Three Tuns":—

"Saw ye Johnnie coming, Nannie?
Saw ye Johnnie coming,
Wi' the Packers at his back,
And wee Parsons rinnin, Nannie?
And wee Parsons rinnin.

What wad ye do wi' them, Robin?
What wad ye do wi' them?
I'd gie them drink until they blink,
And devil'd farls gie them, Nannie,
And devil'd farls gie them.

Haste Rab, my man, as fast's ye can,
Get rum and water ready,
For here we'll sit, nor doup we'll flit,
Till fit we're for our beddy,
Till fit we're for our beddy.

* The late Mr Archibald Hunter, cloth-merchant, who played the tenore or viola at the Harmonic Society's private concerts, which took place in the houses of the members.

CHORUS.

Long live our preses John!
 May he ne'er heave a groan.
 Nor want a crown!
 May he have grog in store,
 And snuff for evermore,
 That Packers still may roar,
 Long live John Brown!"*

For several long years the Club of Packers continued to assemble regularly every *lawful* night, till at length, strange to say, while there were but few changes among the members, the Club itself changed its name; and what is less surprising, like too many other aliases, it did not improve in its character, either for sobriety or early home-going. The Packers, during its reign under that name, was indeed an early Club. For although it frequently met as the six o'clock chime of the music bells was tinkling, from the Cross steeple, "the lass of Patie's mill," it was almost always dispersed before the mighty "Tom" of the Cathedral had sounded ten. The new Club, composed as it was of the old brethren, and which, Phoenix-like, rose instantly out of the ashes of the old, was known by the name of the EVERY NIGHT, which, from a whimsical member prefixing a K to the monosyllable, gave rise to the idea of conferring a title of knighthood on each of the brotherhood, and which was soon after fairly followed out. Under their own banner and titles, the old Packers met later in the evening and sat later at night. They had become, by reason of continued sederunts, rather a pelican-throated set of soakers, who scouted the idea of looking at a watch after dinner, and who took no note of time but by the loss it created in their purses. The titles of the members will hence appear appropriate and descriptive, for there was a Sir David Daidle, a Sir Simon Sitlate, a Sir Rodger Risenever, a Sir Mungo Muz, a

* This choral chaunt arose out of the following circumstance:—One evening it was agreed to have a small concert at the Club, but it was also fixed that the only instrument to accompany the voices was a French

horn, which was at that time well played by a nice boy of the name of Robert Parsons, in the band of the 42d Regiment, then in the garrison of Glasgow.

Sir Reginald Round-the-Horologe, *cum multis aliis* of chair-warming notoriety.

While music continued to be a favourite pastime of the Every Night, as it had been of the Packers' Club, it may here be mentioned that Freemasonry was with each and all of them a passion. The mystic art, it must be remembered, had been, during the great volunteer mania of 1804-5, very much patronised by all the young sparks of the City; and the evening assemblies in the Trades' Hall of the Argyle Lodge, then the most fashionable, on St Andrew's and St John's nights, were hence sure to be crowded to the door with the most ardent devotees of the craft. During the military period above alluded to, the gilt mallet was ably wielded by Mr Samuel Hunter, whose *bonhomie* was always certain to gather round him a host of enthusiastic and willing workmen, requiring little persuasion "to go from labour to refreshment, and from refreshment to labour again;" and who, besides, rarely ceased to call for ammunition till the lodge was closed, as it was wont, at "high twelve"—an hour it may be truly affirmed, at which few, few indeed, ever "went away dissatisfied." At the time, however, when the Every Night Club was in its zenith, the right worshipful master's jewel and sash had been transferred from the neck and shoulders of the volunteer Colonel and quondam Editor of the *Glasgow Herald*, to those of Mr John Douglas of Barloch, whose flowing oratory and attic wit proved an attractive loadstar to the mystic members of the Argyle Lodge; and among the many who were then drawn to the Trades' Hall by the annual summons of the brethren on the 27th of December, there were none so regular in their attendance as the members of the Every Night Club. The fact is, the chief office-bearers of this once celebrated and numerous Lodge of Masons were composed of leading Packers, and consequently it was found that on occasion of great Masonic festivals, the Every Night could never "make a house," at least at the usual hour of seven or eight; although it frequently happened that the majority of the members were brought together, after the Lodge had been closed, to a hot supper, laid out either in the Prince of Wales

Tavern or *Major M'Pherson's* oyster-house, at that period two of the most noted night-houses in the City.*

On such rare occasions the jovial and red-cross knights gave full scope to their musical and masonic propensities. Not satisfied with the "assistance" which they afforded, during four hours of the already spent evening, to the *perpendicular firings* of the shut lodge, they had no sooner swallowed their oysters or tripe, than the said lodge was again opened, when the hidden orgies of Free-Masonry were continued with increasing *spirit*, till the hoarse cry of some Highland Charley screeching "past three o'clock," reluctantly brought the truncheon of the warden to a "once, twice, thrice," and the lodge to a close!

It was of the knight *par excellence* of this truly jovial Club, and of this matchless masonic fraternity, many of whom were in fact knights of Malta and of the Holy Cross, and who in the Every Night made the low-roofed parlour of the "Three Tuns" ring with a "fal, lal, lal, lal, la, la"—it was of this knight, who like the Club is now, alas! defunct, whose vulgar

* The establishment of Free-Masonry in Glasgow was coeval with the building of its Cathedral. By a charter of Malcolm III. about the middle of the eleventh century, it appears that that Scottish monarch granted to the Free Incorporated Masons of Glasgow "to have a lodge for ever in the City," under the title of St John's Lodge, charging and commanding "that none take in hand any way to disturb the free operative masons from being incorporated freemen, or to have a free lodge; to take away their good name or possession, or harass or do any injury to any free-masons and practitioners, under the peril of my highest displeasure." It appears from the Records of the Burgh that the St John's Lodge, St Mungo's Kirk, Glasgow, held heritable property in *Isle Toothie*, on the north side of the Drygate, at an early period, as shown by a security granted over it about 1750, by James M'Gurdie, then grand master of said lodge; Robert Marshall, writer, senior guardian; John Kinniburgh, coal-hewer in Shettleston, junior guardian; Robert Rak-

ing, tailor in Glasgow, senior steward; and Thomas Algie, junior steward; William Wilson, in Gatedside of Camlachie, secretary; and Peter Wilson, land-labourer in Garterraig treasurer. Free-Masonry was also much in vogue in Glasgow during the latter portion of the last century. From an advertisement in the *Glasgow Mercury* of 1783, we find that the Argyll Lodge then met in Fraser's Hall, King-street, to solemnise the anniversary of St John, at *five o'clock*; dinner in Mr Scott's Shakspeare Tavern being announced at three o'clock. At that period, a regular Masons' sermon was annually preached in St Andrew's Church on the 27th December. Among the enthusiastic Free Masons of these and later days, none occupied the chair or wielded the gilt mallet with more dignity and more mystic knowledge than the kind-hearted Dr Rattray, of High-street, the teacher of botany. His jolly contour, and frank open countenance would have graced the board of a prince.

name and surname were merely John Brown—a name and surname which many others besides himself bore in our good City—that the following ludicrous but authentic anecdote was told. John, as the story goes, one evening, as if to prove the general rule of his attendance at the Club by *one* exception, bethought himself of killing the heavy hour within the precincts of the theatre. He chose the pit, and sate himself down on the centre seat. The play went on as well as it was wont, when Glasgow filled the box circle with the fairest of her citizens. The house, which was in reality a bumper, shouted applause; the actors bowed and made their exits; and the green cloth fell. John was pleased like all around him; and although the snug parlour in the “Three Tuns” often swept athwart his brain, he bravely resolved to sit out the afterpiece, which that evening happened to be “Love, Law, and Physic.” Every one acquainted with this little drama, must remember the scene where one of the characters, with an anxious countenance, enters and makes the repeated exclamation, “But where is John Brown?” A wag near the orchestra, aware of John’s Every Night Club-going propensity, immediately called out, loud enough to be heard in every corner of the theatre, “He is in the Three Tuns.” The words struck like a thunder-bolt on the ear of the Every Night member, and forgetting for a moment where he was, he bolted up right from his pit seat, and bawled out, “You’re a liar, sir; I’m here!”