

Glasgow Habits before and after the Peace of Waterloo.

FRENCH CLUB.

THERE was perhaps no period, as we have already hinted, in the modern history of Glasgow, more replete with anxiety and excitement among all classes of the citizens than the months and days of 1814, 1815, and 1816. Amid the thousand rumours and the momentous realities connected with the warlike operations then daily agitating every quarter of Europe, there was little time and less inclination for the discussion of any other topic. Every man was on tiptoe to learn what was to fix the condition of nations, and what was to seal the fate of his own beloved land. It was a restlessness of which any one who has only lived in the placid period of the past forty years can have no idea—an excitement which absorbed and swallowed up all other thoughts and anxieties. The first temporary check to this excitement about public news was, however, felt on the 12th April, 1814, when the intelligence of Napoleon's abdication was announced by the guard of the London mail-coach, on its arrival in front of the Exchange at the Cross. Hopes and fears were now seemingly at an end. The threat of invasion which had kept the whole nation in hot water, although not in fear, and the gigantic power of Bonaparte had both vanished; and the angel of peace, which had so long abandoned the world, seemed now ready to return with the Emperor's expatriation to Elba. The news to which we have just alluded, flew like lightning through the City, and the people, with one accord, resolved that night to certify their exultation at the event by publicly illuminating their shops and houses, and by lighting bonfires on each and all of their public thoroughfares. The

regiments forming the garrison turned out at mid-day to fire a *feu de joie* in the Green, in which they were joined by the 3d battalion of the Lanarkshire Local Militia, commanded by Colonel Geddes, of Verreville celebrity, whose sable steed, as it reared amid the noise and the blaze of the expended gunpowder, did not fail to realise the truth of Blind Alick's immortal stanzas :—

“Like the fiery god of war,
Colonel Geddes doth advance,
On a black horse that belong'd
To the murder'd king of France !”

During the lull which followed the reinstatement of the Bourbons on their ancient throne, foreign politics lost for a time their all-engrossing interest; but no sooner was the intelligence of Bonaparte's landing from Elba received in Glasgow, than the old craving after news became as violent as ever—a craving which was only again soothed and satisfied when the victory of Waterloo once more pacified Europe. Owing to the many years during which the inhabitants of Great Britain had been generally excluded from the Continent, but particularly from France and Italy, it is not surprising that there should have existed, at the close of the war, far greater differences between the habits, fashions, feelings, pastimes, and opinions of ourselves and those of our Continental neighbours than can well be imagined by any one of the present day. No sooner, however, had the peace of 1814 been proclaimed—which threw open the long-closed gates of France to our inquisitive countrymen—than a rapid change took place in our ideas about many things; and although the migratory spirit of the Englishman was not, perhaps, so strongly and decidedly exhibited at first among the denizens of our northern City as might have been anticipated, still it soon spread, and ere the lapse of many years Glasgow—which in 1814 could scarcely point to above a dozen of her inhabitants who had paced the Palais Royal or gazed on the wonders of the Louvre—numbered thousands who could prate as glibly about the *cuisine* of *Les trois frères Provençaux* in the Palais Royal, and the *chefs d'œuvres* of the

Italian and the Flemish masters in the almost endless gallery which borders the right bank of the Seine, as though they had all been born and bred within sound of the great bell of Notre Dame.

Among the many changes which a renewed intercourse with the Continent, and especially with Paris, produced, there was perhaps none which became so immediately palpable as the alteration in dress, particularly among the better classes in Glasgow. As an instance, we may mention that the long wide loose-hanging gaiters, which had succeeded the tight pantaloons and Hessian boots—and which, at the close of the war, was the favourite attire of every man of fashion, both old and young—were soon abandoned, amid the just ridicule which the French caricaturists bestowed on this most frightful piece of English dress, in their Boulevard pictures of *Monsieur God-dem*. It was then that breeches became discarded by all who sunned themselves in the Trongate, and that trousers, that most easy and useful of all habiliments, and which has happily continued a favourite on the broad walk of Kensington Gardens, as in the broader *allée* of the *Champs Elysées*, became patronised by the young, and ultimately gained favour even with the old.* The large thick neckcloth was also about this period exchanged for the smart black cravat; while the flaunting frills, which fluttered beyond the edge of the single-breasted waistcoat, began to be furled or cut off. The swallow-tailed coats, which so long ruled paramount by day and by night, were exchanged in the forenoon for the military-cut surtout, and in the evening for a longer-waisted and shorter-skirted garment; while the striped and barred waistcoat, which had so long characterised the costume of Glasgow grandfathers, was supplanted by vests of black or plain-coloured kerseymere. The long-trailing great-coat was also abandoned for the short military cloak, while the tall cone-shaped chapeau was displaced by a smaller and less absurd-looking hat.

* After the battle of Waterloo, Wellington trousers and boots became the fashionable rage among all young men. The former were of fine lightish blue cloth, braided with

black up the sides and in front, tight at the calf, with an opening of 10 or 12 buttons near the foot to shew the boot.

If the gentlemen's attire began to resemble that of our continental neighbours so soon as the war had closed, the dress of the ladies underwent even a more immediate and sweeping metamorphosis. At that peculiar period, the style of English female attire was altogether most inelegant and unbecoming. Whether from the expense of material, or from the caprice of the milliner, it is certain that the gowns and pelisses which were then worn, were so tight-fitting and scanty, as to control, in some degree, the free motion of the limbs, and sadly to injure the gracefulness of the figure. The fashion in this respect is so much altered, that we most unhesitatingly say, that a lady's dress in 1855 contains nearly three times as much silk, satin, or muslin as it did in 1814. Then, too, the cut was hideous in the extreme; the waist being raised nearly to the shoulders, and the bust brought up by the shortness of the waist to a too proximate acquaintanceship with the chin! The bonnets were small, and resembled a grocer's *scoop*, while the *tout ensemble* was such as fully to justify the French in ridiculing our English female habiliments, in the well known and long popular vaudeville of "Les Anglaises pour-rire."

If a renewed intercourse with France altered, as it certainly did, our taste with respect to dress, it still more changed the character and style of our dinner parties. The tables which hitherto had groaned under the weight of all sorts of meat and vegetables, became gradually relieved of their burden. The *pieces de resistance* became less in bulk, and the smaller dishes were more frequently brought forward in separate courses. Silver forks soon became general, and table-napkins were now as common as formerly they were rare. The character of the wines, too, in common use, was changed; for, during dinner, the guests were not limited to Lisbon, Teneriffe, or Sherry, but were now asked to take Hock, Moselle, or Sauterne, while there was scarcely *un gran mangiare* (as the Italians call a great entertainment) given, without the crack of a Champagne cork being heard, to enliven the company with the certainty of being immediately presented with a glass of this exhilarating beverage. In spite of the increased use of wines at dinner parties, during the second decade of the

19th century, in Glasgow, cold punch still kept its ground during a part of the evening,—although perhaps the china bowl was not so often emptied as it was wont to be, when landlords locked the doors of their dining-rooms, to show their hospitality by rendering their guests unable to carry off, unassisted, what they had swallowed.

However intimate may have been the relations which existed between France and Scotland, antecedent and subsequent to the time when *Beaqué* wrote his curious history entitled *La Guerre d'Ecosse*;* and however much diffused must have necessarily been, at that time, the knowledge of the Gallic tongue among our countrymen and their friendly allies, still it appears pretty evident, from all that can be gathered on the surface of society, that, during the greater part of the last two centuries, at least, there were but few among the mass of Scotchmen who either understood or spoke the language of France with facility. From the records of the Corporation of Glasgow, the fact may, on the contrary, be deduced, that little or no attention was paid to its study in our City, seeing that, in 1663, a Monsieur Barnardon required certain very great inducements before he would settle in Glasgow as a teacher of French.† Of the successive French professors, who may have attempted to eke out a rather scanty subsistence by teaching their native language in Glasgow, previous to the French Revolution, there are really few of which the trumpet of fame has spoken.‡ About that period, however, among the many intelligent and

* *Histoire de la Guerre d'Ecosse, pendant les Campagnes 1548 et 1549*, printed by the Maitland Club. This expedition was sent over from France by Henry II. in the spring of 1548, in consequence of the appeal made to him by the party attached to the Catholic religion, and opposed to the usurping power of England.

† 21st November, 1663. The said day in answer to the supplicatioune given in by James Barnardon, professor of the French tongue, dancing, and fencing, after consideration had thereof, they grant him license and libertie to hold and keep a schoole for

that effect; and the lyke license is not to be grantit to any nither persone for the space of fyve years; as also they have condishendit that he sall be frie during the said space, of all inpositiones and burdings, and to have ane yearlie fiell of fourtie shillings starling.—*Glasgow Council Records*.

‡ Although the French language does not appear to have been very much cultivated in Glasgow a century ago, still it may be gathered from the title page of the following work, that this branch of education was not altogether unattended to. “*Les veritables caracteres de la Raison, ou les Moeurs de l'homme de*

well-educated refugees who took shelter in England, from the political fever which then so pitilessly raged in France, there was one who chose Glasgow as his domicile, and who immediately turned his attention to tuition. It was about the beginning of the year 1795 that Monsieur Christopher Halley first opened his French classes, and it was to his exertions that the few who really then became masters of the French tongue owe the acquirement. M. Halley had been, previous to his exile, a parish priest in Normandy, and was a man of high character and of most amiable disposition.* He was beloved by his pupils, and continued to be so till his death in 1811. At the short peace of 1802, a Monsieur Lemonnaire appears to have taught French, but of him or of his pupils we know little. Soon after this, however, Monsieur Dufour became distinguished as a teacher, and with M. Halley divided almost all the young students of French in Glasgow. As the City became larger, and the education more liberal, various other teachers of the language of Gaul settled here; and among those, Monsieur Harmand soon made himself conspicuous and celebrated. It may be asserted, however, with much truth, that up to the year 1814, a knowledge of the French language and literature was not at all regarded as a necessary branch of a young man's education in Glasgow, for among the thousands who had been called under the fear of the ferula to conjugate *amo*, there were but very few, indeed, who were brought under the dread of the cane to decline *une fille!*

No sooner had the Allies entered the French capital, and a few of our

bien, Divisées par sentences, à l'usage de la jeunesse—A Glasgow Chez Monsieur Knox Marchand Libraire et Imprimeur; Et se vend chez Monsieur Ross au dessus de la Halle Neuve, sur la Bourse"—1763, (12mo. pp.96). In reference to the "Marchand Libraire," who printed this rather unique publication, the eccentric John Dunton, who was a bookseller in London, and who sketches with such a happy pen all the booksellers with whom he dealt and was acquainted, says, "the booksellers in Scotland, Mr Knox,

Mr Henderson, and Mr Vallance, I shall dispense with myself *as to their* characters, for I could never see through a Scotsman in a little time."

* Mr Hally had a tall commanding portly figure, and wore dark coloured knee breeches, with white worsted stockings. He was a martyr to the gout, and was frequently heard during his prelections to groan under the pain in his feet and legs, which were often kept enveloped in a mass of flannel.

Glasgow citizens plucked up courage to cross the Channel, without one word whereby to interpret their wants, than a new stimulus was given to the acquisition of the French tongue. Classes for old and young began immediately to be formed, and in the course of a twelvemonth there were not a few who could, in the way of French at least, have filled the office of a dragoman.

While matters were in this state, there arose a Club, the establishment of which contributed materially to extend a more perfect knowledge of the French language in Glasgow, and which was known under the title of the FRENCH CLUB. The ostensible object of this fraternity was to assemble for the purpose of speaking French, reading French newspapers, and discussing foreign politics and foreign literature; and as a safeguard and retreat from the too great volubility of certain of the members, there was a single card-table provided, where a *partie quarrée* could sit down to a rubber at whist. The first meeting of this rather literary Club took place during the year 1816, and it continued occasionally to assemble for some years. At first, its meetings were once a-week; but in the course of time they became less frequent—not so much from losing their zest as from the loss of several of the best members, whose mercantile avocations had found a wider field for business on the Continent than Glasgow then afforded them.

The members of the French Club consisted of M. Hugot (French consul), M. Harmand (vice-consul), the whole of the foreigners connected with the house of James Finlay & Co., several Germans interested in the trade with Hamburgh and other towns in Germany, a few merchants who had long lived in the French West India islands, Mr George Finlay (since famous for his connection with the Greek diplomatic controversy, and his history of Modern Greece), and about half-a-dozen young men just escaped from classes (to which last category we ourselves belonged), who were desirous to acquire with greater fluency the spoken language of France, in the prospect of being soon called to use it on the Continent. The hour of meeting was eight; and as the clock struck ten, a *petit souper*, got up as

much according to the French taste as a Scotch cook could then manage, was served, and followed by a beverage which, though limited in quantity, occasionally tended to dissipate *mauvaise honte*, and to give a little more suppleness to the tongue.

The majority of the members being individuals who had travelled in foreign lands, or who, during the few preceding years, had at least seen somewhat of the European world, varied topics of conversation were always ready, without calling in the aid of *the weather*. The description of a foreign town ; an anecdote illustrative of some singularity connected with the manners of a country ; the narrative of some strange adventure on the road or in the diligence ; a critique on some new opera at the *Academie de Musique*, or some new dramatic novelty at the then much patronised *Varietés* of Paris, eked out, among other things, the incessant *clitter-clatter* of the evening's amusement, and stimulated the few who had not as yet visited the Continent, to fulfil, as soon as possible, their long-cherished desire to do so. The members had a far wider range of subjects to discuss, than those which fell to the share of the other social fraternities in the City. In conversation, they were in fact cosmopolitan ; and hence, one seldom left a meeting without having heard something new, while that something was worth remembering. It was likewise a standing rule of this fraternity, that every intelligent foreigner was gladly hailed as a guest during his visit to Glasgow ; and as there were about this period not a few who had gallantly braved the difficulties and expense incident to reaching our northern City, it so happened that several strangers of celebrity were occasionally introduced to the Club. In this way the members, whether travelled or otherwise, were made as well acquainted with the peculiarities and manners of the Kohlmarkt at Vienna, or the Linden at Berlin, as though they themselves had at one time listened to St Stephen's bell, or had gazed upon the waters of the Spree ; while the gay and lively descriptions of those who had either strolled through the Chiaja at Naples, or rattled down the Corso at Rome, made many, who had as yet never crossed the Channel, almost feel as if they had themselves stood within

eyeshot of Vesuvius, or had really listened to the *Miserere* in the Sistine Chapel!

Among the multiplicity of topics, which thus necessarily added to the instruction or hilarity of the Club meetings, were the then numerous *malaprop* doings and sayings of John Bull in France. Many were the roars of laughter which were thus excited at his expense. It was here that we first heard the story narrated of the *two tailors*, mayhap of Tooley-street, attempting to travel as *milords* in France, who, on having ordered the *garçon* to bring dinner for two gentlemen, were instantly answered, "*Bien, Messieurs, tout à l'heure.*"* At the last sound both *snips* started up, and looking at each other in perfect astonishment, exclaimed, "We are smoked!" It was here, too, that we were first told of the English prude, who, on her landing at Calais, fearing that she might feel cold during the night, calmly asked the *fille de chambre* to have *deux Matelots* ready to keep her bed warm!† The astonishment of the chambermaid, at such a request, may be conceived to have been as great as would that of Madame had her orders been carried out to the letter! It was likewise to one of the members of the French Club that we owe the following little absurdity, which happened when travelling in the Calais diligence to Paris, and which we can still almost narrate in his own words:—"When we arrived at Breteuil, where we were to pass the night, the landlady received us with unbounded attention; and whether it was owing to the excellence of the supper, the comfort of the chambers, or the fatigue arising from not being in bed for nights, there was not a traveller by the diligence who did not sleep as soundly as though he had drank of the cup of Juliet. It is probable, too, that it might have been as difficult to rouse the passengers from their dormitories, as it was to draw the daughter of Capulet from the tomb of her fathers, had accident not relieved the conductor from his laborious task. The fact was, that one of the passengers, an Englishman, had had

* We need scarcely say, that "tout à l'heure" means immediately, though otherwise understood by the *two tailors*. † *Matelots* being translated is "sailors," the lady should have said *matelas*, a bedcover.

a disagreeable dream towards morning.—had risen, and was anxious for water, which, by some mistake, the chambermaid had omitted to put into his bed-room. The word, too, for water he had forgotten, but the dictionary being at hand, he soon found ‘Eau,’ the vocable he wanted; and, with ‘Eau’ between his lips, he opened the chamber-door, which was at the head of the staircase, and bellowed out the exclamation, in tones of such extraordinary earnestness, that the whole house became alarmed, and rushed to the spot whence the sound proceeded. Pierre, Claude, Baptiste, were all upon the stair, followed by Leonore and the landlady, who, no doubt, imagined there was something serious the matter, as the Englishman still continued to bawl ‘Eau! eau! eau!’ at the very top of his voice. ‘Que voulez-vous, Monsieur?’ said the whole household in one voice. ‘Eau! eau! eau!’ was the answer. Chink went one door—clap went another—out popped one in breeches and another in a night-cap—a living transcript of Peregrine Pickle’s scene with Jolter at Amiens. ‘What’s the matter? what’s the matter?’ was the universal cry. ‘Eau! eau!’ reiterated the son of merry England. ‘Run for a doctor,’ cried a London cit, who approached the scene of action with

‘His old beard scarcely shaven!’

‘run for the doctor—’tis British cholera! ’tis British cholera! the precise symptoms of Alderman Simkins after the last Fishmongers’ dinner!’ The landlady, in an accent of the greatest sympathy, entreated to know what was really the matter. ‘God-dem—Eau! eau!’ responded the Briton. ‘Another paroxysm—nothing will do but opium,’ cried the Cockney, laying his hand upon the Englishman’s shoulder. ‘In God’s name what do you mean?—I have been calling for water for some minutes, and you are talking of opium!’ ‘You were bellowing Oh! oh! and we all thought you ill.’ ‘’Tis the French for *water*,’ said the Englishman, evidently fretful. ‘It would be much better then to speak your own mother tongue,’ grumbled the Cockney. Upon this some one said it was *de l’eau* the

gentleman wanted. 'Water!' exclaimed the whole household, and ran down stairs, convulsed with laughter, while the various passengers retired to finish their toilet."

While such light *causerie* might be said to be the chief characteristic of the evening's pastime at the French Club, a rather long and even grave yarn was occasionally permitted to be spun by any member who might have encountered, in his Continental peregrinations, anything illustrative of a national peculiarity. The French Club had a short life, but that was a merry one. It died of youth—not of age; for had its members been each blessed with a fortune, a business, or a settled home in Glasgow, it certainly would have continued to be much longer a most delightful resort to all lovers of *petits soupers*, and of that tongue which has ever given to these entertainments their chief spirit and delight. During its short and *spirituel* career, if it did nothing else, it at least had the merit of laying the foundation of the "Glasgow Foreign Library," from which many of the younger citizens so long derived both amusement and instruction.*

* One of the great promoters of the Foreign Library was Mr John Bell—a gentleman possessed of a wonderful facility for acquiring languages, European and Oriental.