

As a proof of how soon a common and even old habit passes out of memory and is entirely forgotten, we may refer to the old custom of using a bell at funerals, and for announcing the death of an inhabitant. This was a common custom in Partick up till about 1780, but after being given up it was very soon forgotten. The bell, with the name and date 1726 upon it, was accidentally discovered within these few years, being found in the possession of, and purchased from, a broker in Edinburgh; but when brought back to Partick only one man then living remembered it having been used when he was a boy. This person, Mr. George Craig, was born 1764. The writer's father, born in 1777, had no recollection of the bell; so that this particular bell had not been continued in use over fifty years. Still the practice was common in most towns long before the date of this bell. Since the recovery of the bell I have collected a few notes on the practice, and find it to have been common both in Scotland and England, extending back several hundred years. Robert Chambers, in a note to one of the common nursery rhymes on this custom, says that the custom prevailed in all Scottish towns. Upon the death of any person the bedral or town-crier was sent with his bell or wooden platter, beat with a stick or spoon, through the chief streets to announce the event. In the "Glasgow Burgh Records," dated 19th November, 1577, the following entry occurs under the heading

"SANCT MUNGOWI'S BELL.—The quhilk daye the Prouest, baillies, and counsale, with dikinis coft fra Johne Mr. Sone to umquhile James Mr. and Andro Lang, the auld bell that

zed throw the towne of auld at the buriall of the deid, for the sowme of ten pundis Money, quhilk they ordanit Patrick Glen their thesaurare to pay to hame, and als granted the said Andro to be maid a burgis gratis, quhilk bell they ordanit in all time to remane as comone bell to gang for the buriall o' the deid, and to be givin zearly to sic person as they appoynt for auys in the zear, takand coutiouns for keping and delyuering thairof at the zear's end. And the said Andro Lang, as sone to unquhile Robert Layng, is maid instantlie burgess, as ane burgess sone, gratis, for the said caus of the bell, and has gevin his aith of fideletie to the towne, and als for observing of the satutisis thairof."

How Andro Lang got the bell as his private property is not stated, but this minute shows that the custom of using a bell at funerals was old in Glasgow in 1577. In reference to another dead bell of Glasgow, we quote the following interesting account given by Mr. Macgeorge, showing that at least one of the dead bells of Glasgow had went astray as well as our Partick bell; indeed, the different references suggest the probability that there may have been private dead bells as well as a common one for the public, when we find such from time to time in the possession of private parties.

Under date 23rd October, 1640, the Records of the Council contain the following entry:—" *Anent ane bell.* —The said day y<sup>e</sup> Deid bell delyverit to Patrick forsyth q<sup>m</sup> ordeins to give y<sup>e</sup> half of y<sup>e</sup> prycis of his pairt of y<sup>e</sup> bell to William Bogle during his lyfytyme. And ordaines y<sup>e</sup> Deane of Gild to caus mak ane new Deid bell to be rung for and before y<sup>e</sup> deid under hand." A bell, which there can be little doubt is this same "new deid bell," has just been discovered, and is about to be presented

to the Corporation. All that is known of its recent history is this: About thirty years ago it was in the possession of Mr. Wyllie, a tinsmith in Glasgow. By him it was presented to a Mr. Morgan, on whose death it passed into the possession of his sister, Miss Morgan, now a very old lady, residing in Gretna; and Miss Morgan has just now put it into the hands of Mr. William Henry Hill for the purpose of its being presented to the city. It is exceedingly interesting. The order to "the Deane of Gild" to have it constructed was made in October, 1640, and the bell bears in very distinct figures the date "1641." In size it is 5½ inches in height, exclusive of the handle, and the diameter at the base is 6½ inches. The handle, which is of wrought iron, is of the ancient form (something like that of a tea kettle), and it is attached to the bell by iron rivets. But what is especially interesting is that it resembles on the side in bold relief a representation of the city arms according to a blazon of which I have seen no other example. The shield is in form nearly the same as that which is over the door of the Tron Church, and which bears the date 1592. The tree is represented growing out of a mount in base. The bird is correctly shown on the top of the tree with its head towards the dexter side, and the bell appears on the dexter side, and (as it ought to be) in the fesse-point. But the example is peculiar in this, that the salmon does not appear in the shield at all. It appears outside and beneath the shield, on its back—just as it appears below the shield of Bishop Blackader on the basement of the rood screen in the Cathedral. For such an arrangement of the city arms, I need hardly say there

was no authority and no precedent. It just affords another example of those many varieties in the blazon which I have already had occasion to notice. But there is another highly interesting feature in this curious relic which deserves notice, namely, the form of the bell appearing on the shield. It is a singularly correct representation of those very ancient square bells, dating from before the ninth century, of which unquestionably the bell of St. Kentigern was one, and of which a good example is found on the seal of the Chapter of Glasgow "for causes" of 1488. I think it extremely probable, therefore, that the artist who modelled this shield had before him the actual bell of St. Mungo, which Camerarius, writing only ten years before, viz., in 1631, tells us "is preserved in Glasgow at the present day." Whether the "new deid bell" of 1640 (the one under notice) was intended to be used in the same way as "the auld bell" (St. Mungo) does not appear. In all probability not. If we are to believe Ray, who wrote an account of Glasgow, in 1661, the old bell must have been even then in existence and use, as he tells us how the sexton or bellman, on the occurrence of a death, "goeth about the streets with a *small bell*, which he *tinkleth* all along as he goeth, and now and then he makes a stand and proclaims who is dead, *and invites the people to come to the funeral* at such an hour." Such a description could not possibly apply to the bell now restored to us by Miss Morgan; for, although made to be carried in the hand, it is a large heavy bell, with a strong iron tongue, and producing a sound amply sufficient for the belfry of a country church. The probability is that it was used at the time of funerals; and the expressions in

the Minute of Council, "to be rung *for* and *before* the deid," confirm this view. At the same time, it is quite possible that the ancient bell of St. Kentigern had been used for the same purpose, in which case we may suppose that, having become worn out by use during a period of probably more than six hundred years, it had become necessary to have a new one, and that this large and more substantial bell was the result of the order of the Council.

How so interesting a relic of the olden time should have passed into the hands of a tinsmith in Glasgow I do not know, but it is not difficult to conjecture. The probability is that, being found too heavy, and the form not so convenient as a bell with an upright handle, Mr. Wyllie had received an order to make a new one (perhaps the one now in use), and that with that singular indifference to the preservation of relics and documents which in later times has become chronic with us, the old bell was left with Mr. Wyllie, probably at the mere value of the metal. It is to be trusted that matters will now be put on a better footing in this respect.

Previous to this arrangement with Patrick Forsyth, there are several references to the common use of the dead bell. In 1590 the Council of Glasgow gave their two common bells, viz., Mort and Shellat, with the office of printship to George Johnstone for one year for payment of threescore pounds, payable by three instalments, obtaining security for the payment, the bailies ruling that if any person raise an outcry against the said George in the use of his office, they are to be fined in 16s. for each offence, and if beggars, or unable to pay, to be

scourged through the town, and otherwise punished at the discretion of the bailies.

It seems as if the Church had claimed the origin of the use of bells at funerals, for in the records of the Presbytery for November, 1594, "it is declared that the office of ringing of the bell at funerals to the burying of the dead is *ecclesiastical*, and that the election of the person to the ringing of the said bell belongs to the Kirk, according to the ancient canons and discipline of the Reformed Kirk." And as far back as 28th May, 1612, the Session prohibited the carrying of the train of the corpse at funerals, the carrying out to the street the straw of the bed on which the deceased lay, along with the body, under a penalty of five pounds, and that the dead bell was not to be sent round announcing a death before the sunrising or after sunsetting without special warrant from one of the ministers. The ringer was not to go more than twice through the town for any person, and was to omit the word *faithful*, and the repetition of the name of God.

In the Highlands, according to Captain Burt, writing about 140 years ago, at a death the circumstance is announced by a person going through the town with a bell, and at the funeral "the corpse is carried, not upon men's shoulders, as in England, but under-hand upon a beir, and the nearest relation to the deceased carry the head, the next of kin on the right hand, &c. The men go two and two before the beir, and the women in the same order after it, and all the way the bell goes tinkling before the procession, as is done before the host in Popish countries."

At Peebles, so late as 1790, says Robert Chambers,

the announcement was—"All brethren and sisters, I let you to wut that a brother (or sister) has departed at the pleasure of God, called ———. A' friends and brethren are invited to the burial, on Tuesday neist, at twa o'clock." In his "Domestic Annals" the same author gives the following as the formula used at Edinburgh:—"Be-loved brethren and sisters, I let you to wit that there is ane faithfull brother (or sister) lately departed out of this world, at the pleasure of Almighty God, and here the crier veils his face with his bonnet, and continues, 'his name is Wully Woodcock, a cordinger; he lies at the nixt door within the Norgate Closs, on the Nether Wynd, and I would ye gang to his burying on Thursday, before twa o'clock.' When the burying time come the bell calls the company together, and he is carried to the burying-place and thrown into the grave as dog Lion was, and there is an end of Wully."

This practice of burying the body without a coffin continued in Glasgow and neighbourhood till within these 200 years, when the box or *dead shirt*, in which the body was carried to the grave, was buried along with the corpse.

The custom of ringing bells through the town at deaths and funerals was not confined to Scotland, but was common also in England. So early as 1648 it is mentioned by A. Wood in his "Oxoniana" that it had been a practice, time out of mind, for the bellman, when any died in college, to go into every college and hall, and then make open proclamation, after two rings of his bell—"That, forasmuch as God has been pleased to take out of the world such a person, he was to give notice to all persons of the university that on such a

day and such an hour he was solemnly to be buried." The bellman also went before the corpse from the house to the church or chapel, ringing his bell. In Hexham the custom is within living memory; and the invitation after ringing the bell was, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, &c. All friends and neighbours are requested to attend the funeral of so and so, to be lifted at so and so." A similar custom existed in Carlisle till lately, and we are informed that in Penrith it is not yet entirely done away, so that the custom was as common in England as Scotland.

It is no doubt to this custom of ringing a bell announcing a death that the old ballad of "Barbara Allan" refers to.

"She had not gane a mile but twa  
When she heard the deid bell ringing,  
And every jow that the deid bell gaed,  
'Twas wae to Barbara Allan."

The particular formula used in Partick I do not know, but the late George Craig told me the town-crier went through with the bell and announced the death and invited all to attend the funeral at the hour mentioned, but he did not remember the particular words used. Probably some more rude article than the bell was used in Partick, like Peebles, previous to 1726; and the getting of the bell either by public subscription or gift, was no doubt a step in the way of respectability.

The question is, how was the Partick deid bell removed to Edinburgh? To this question we can only offer a suggestion. It has already been stated that Allan Craig was not only a large landed proprietor in the village, but took an active part in the management



of all public matters. At the time the bell ceased to be used Allan was about the zenith of his greatness, so that it is more than probable that the bell found a resting-place in his house. At his death his eldest son took possession of his effects, and the son, either at that time or shortly after, removed to Edinburgh. No doubt the bell was among these belongings, and thus ultimately found its way into the possession of a broker, as already stated, from whom it was bought by a Paisley gentleman, and was found there and bought again, and presented by Mr. Ross, the last purchaser, to the Partick Curling Club, to be kept in the possession of the president of said club *pro tem*. We regret that it was not given to the Burgh rather than to any club, which may die out, and the Bell again be lost sight of. The following illustration will give some idea of its appearance:—The deid bell of Dunblane is of the same shape as this, dated 1615, and is to be seen in the old cathedral of that town. After laying aside the bell, the custom was, and continued till within these forty years, for two neighbours to go through the whole inhabitants the night before the funeral and give a general and personal invitation. Opening the door, and standing with sneck in hand, they said, "The favour of A. B.'s company is requested to attend the funeral of C. D. to-morrow, at two o'clock." This general invitation was necessary, for the corpse having to be carried on spokes either to Govan or Anderston, it required relays of men.

Another common custom in olden times was, that from the time of the death of any person until after the funeral a sort of free table was kept in the house, when friends, neighbours, and acquaintances met and eat and



FUNERAL BELL.

drank freely. Chambers, in his "Domestic Annals of Scotland," gives many curious instances of this custom, carried to excess in the country. In Glasgow both the Church and Council of the city made every effort to stop the custom of free-drinking, and it is stated that in 1755 whisky was almost entirely given up as a service at funerals. Nevertheless, expensive funerals continued long after in the country, and in some places the customs were such that we can hardly realize their existence. So short a time back as 1732, Captain Burt says—"After the death of any one not in the lowest circumstances, the friends and acquaintances of the deceased assemble to keep the near relation company the first night, and they dance as if it were a wedding till the next morning, though all the time the corpse lies before them in the same room. If the deceased be a woman, the widower leads off the first dance, if a man the widow." Again—"A part of the company are selected after the funeral to return to the house of the deceased, where all sorrow seems to be banished, and the wine is filled about as fast as it can go round, till there is hardly a sober person among them; this was called the *dirgie* or *dredgie*." The following letter describes what was the usual custom in another part of Scotland among the common people, and the feelings connected with it:—

"DUNFERMLINE June 15th day 1761.

"Dear brother,—I Doubt not by this time but you have heard of your Mothers Deces—Shou Dyed the 9 day of June & was buried the 11 day of June & Shou got a verrey honorable buriel: we had plenty of eall and Huskie and brandie & plaine short bread and sukard short bread & wheat

Bread and wne bread—and I have payed all the founrels that Came from our toun such as brandie short bread wheet bread wne bread & the Coffen but Did not gate a pirticular aCount of what eall ther was spent becavs William Paton Came not back to the Dargie: but it is to be payed as shon as I geat the aCount of it: they are all to meet at my hous the first thusday of July: to wit David bennet & Wm. Marshal and our sistar Lissie Philp for to read up maters betwixt David bennet and hir, when I shall give you a pirticular aCount of what is Done and what the burile Comes to—I sent you allinen Serk with Margret Henderson which I expect you will have goot—we had at our Dargie old Dalketh Andrew Scotland Andrew Scotland Rob: Johnston John Demperston Mc Grige harlaw & all the Nebours Round about we had John Harley John Henderson John Buchan, Rob: Mudie in Lochend John Robeson in Shirs Mill & the two John Philps John Philp Jn Murmill & his Mother—we had from the east hand Touchie & Rentoul Tho: Grive Hendrey Symson Andrew Philp James Philp in the Damhead & other two or three that I did not know that Came from the east hand: ther was 36 or 37 men at the Dargie besides above a Dozon of wemon & was all gentilly served we are all weall at presant but my wife & shoe is some Beater—which is all from your Loving brother,

“J. P.”

At the same time, and even after the date of this letter, the same practice was followed in Partick; indeed, Partick may be substituted for Dunfermline, and the description would suit equally. The late Mr. George Craig told us that at his grandfather's funeral in Partick there was baked one boll of meal into cakes, besides flour bread of various sorts, and other food. Every one who came to see the corpse received a glass of spirits

and bread and cheese. At the funeral there were three rounds of wine, rum, and whisky, whichever they choose to take, with shortbread and biscuits. After the funeral the relatives and neighbours returned to the house and held a night of eating and drinking; and those who did not intend returning to the house filled their pockets with biscuits and bread to take home to the family. "I remember," says George, "that for a week the house was in uproar, and the cost affected the family for a long time after."

Between fifty and sixty years ago a general movement was made among the inhabitants of the village to lessen as much as possible the expense of funerals both for the bereaved and those who attended, and agreed that all persons attending the funeral, not related, should go in any dress they had convenient, and that they should not enter the house for refreshment. The first of these resolutions did not succeed for any length of time, but the second did much to modify former practices, and soon became sufficiently common not to be made subject to remark.

About this same time also there was a general sympathy as well as an indignant feeling prevalent throughout the country, and very strong in Partick, caused by the common practice of lifting the dead for the use of the medical profession. The knowledge or belief that their friends had been thus lifted was often more painful to bear than the bereavement. An iron frame was invented with which the coffin was covered when in the grave and locked, termed a *mort safe*; but the use of these was expensive, and could not be paid for by the poor, and a feeling got abroad that even these precautions

were not enough. The inhabitants then combined and formed a general watching party, each taking their turn of watching the grave for three weeks after burial, going two together. Every one had to go or find a substitute. After a short time there were men who let themselves out for this purpose at 1s. 6d. a night, so by-and-by these were the principal watchmen. Rumours got abroad, however, that the watchmen were tampered with by the resurrection-men, as the grave-riflers were called, which caused considerable uneasiness in the minds of those who had lately buried near relations. Indeed, we knew one man in the village, who, having lost an only daughter, a young woman, sat by her grave himself every night for three weeks, reminding one of Rispah of old. These were stirring times in the village. After all fear for the resurrectionists ceased the watching was discontinued. And as trade advanced in the village, and money became more plentiful, hearses and carriages were exchanged for spoked, and what was a universal practice soon became unknown in the village. We remember the last of a custom in connection with Partick that was common amongst the gentry at funerals—distributing doles to beggars, who came from far and near to the funeral. This was at the burial of George Oswald of Scotstoun. After the funeral had left the house, the beggars assembled and were each given a piece of money (we think 1s.), a drink of ale, and a piece of bread. At the funeral of Mr. Bogle of Gilmourhill the beggars at the gate formed a large crowd, and one the appearance of which is beyond our power of description; and when word came that there was nothing to be given, the scene was fearful—howling, cursing, swearing, and

wishing eternal curses on the dead, and blasting influences upon the living, forming the strongest arguments possible for the abandonment of such a reprehensible practice of collecting such groups of blackguards together in any neighbourhood. Even after Mr. Oswald's funeral the village was infested for days with vagrants.

In these bygone times, at least some eighty or a hundred years back—we should almost say sixty years back—there was much more apparent, and we think real, mutual kindness and Christian brotherhood than exist at present. All inhabiting the village and neighbourhood were known to each other; also their habits, character, and positions. That strictly commercial relation existing between the labourer and his employer now had not then been introduced, so that a general employer of labour had no thought of turning his workers adrift when the slightest slackness in trade came upon him, but they were kept working at something, so that although wages were small they were constant. The employer then felt it his duty to look after the welfare of his servants, and the workmen in return felt as if they belonged in some way to their employer, and had an interest in what belonged to him; in short, the rich and poor, or employer and employed, were neighbours, and lived together. Every family had a good-sized garden in which to cultivate vegetables, and every house had its own midden close to it, the manure in which was given to a neighbouring farmer, who, in return for this, and a few days' help from some of the family in harvest or at lint steeping, gave two or three drills in a field to plant potatoes in, so that by these mutual helps every family was secured a good portion of their living.

It may be mentioned here that the lint was generally steeped in the Hay Burn. The water was dammed back at the bridge, foot of Sandy Road (Clyde Street), and, flowing back, it covered a large space of low-lying ground through which the burn flowed, forming a considerable lake. We have also seen this plan adopted in winter to form a curling pond. Further, in connection with the social condition of the people, at say eighty years back, there was another custom. A good many of the villagers had a cow of their own. These fed in one field or common, attended by one herd, who, blowing a trumpet or horn in the morning, every owner let out his or her cow, which, joining the herd, was driven to the common. In the evening they were brought back, and each cow took its own way home when it reached the village. Chambers mentions the same custom as being common in Edinburgh some 200 years ago. In Killin we saw the same custom in 1860. In that interesting work, "The Land and the Book," it is mentioned as a common practice in Palestine to this day. Large droves of oxen and asses are conducted from the common by the herd, and then each takes its way, often through intricate windings, to its own stall, lowing as its master appears to meet it. And such must have been the custom in the days of Isaiah, who, in speaking of Israel, says—"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib." That this same custom was also common in Glasgow, and under public management, is evident from the records of the Burgh. In June, 1574, "John Wilson is made Nethertown herd, and Thomas Arstoun Overtown herd for that year, each giving surety for their good services." And again, in May, 1578, "Archd.



Johnson is made and constituted calf herd for keeping of the calfs upon the green for that year, and he is to get meat and drink daily about of them that has the calfs, together with 6d. frae ilk ane that has the same, and siclike frae them that has land beside the green for keeping off their cow, and that no horse be found thereon untangled, and to enter service next day, with power to Archd. to poynd for queys or great stirks, he also giving surety for guide service and behaviour." We could multiply these notices, and show that the practice was common throughout Scotland, and that every town had large commons for this purpose, and hence most old towns had their cow loans. Whether Partick had a public herd paid for as in Glasgow, and where the common was that any villager had a right to send his cow to we know not. We were told that the meadow was once held common for that purpose. In our day the meadow was part of the Bunhouse Farm, but always lea; and as George M'Gregor's cows, driven by the herd, passed through the village, several of the inhabitants who had cows let them out the byre, and they were taken charge of by the herd, and as they were being driven home in the evening, each cow, as they came along, went to its own byre; but probably this privilege was by arrangement between the proprietor of the meadow and the owner of the cow. In some of the old title deeds for cottages there is included a right to feed a cow on a certain portion of land; but this differs from a common right of which we will have something to say again.