

## The Glasgow Charities.

SHUNA CLUB.

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THERE is perhaps no City in the world whose inhabitants generally contribute so much time and money towards bettering the condition or soothing the sorrows of their brethren, as those of Glasgow. From the earliest times—either when under the power of book and bell and the influence of liturgy and surplice, or the more simple attributes of Presbyterianism—it has been always famed for its rich and multifarious charities. Of late years it has supported and assisted every reasonable scheme, calculated either to alleviate the miseries of the diseased or unfortunate, or to educate the poor, the ragged, and the neglected. In fact, it may be truly affirmed, that amid all its restless commercial enterprise and its active manufacturing industry, it has never forgotten the great truth of Christianity, that the most blessed of all enterprises and activities is charity. While we say this much of Glasgow benevolence, it is also but just to add, that her philanthropy has never assumed so vainglorious and ostentatious an appearance as that of many other cities and countries, and particularly the metropolis of Scotland. With few exceptions, it may be honestly said, that in Glasgow there are no *palaces*, ostensibly erected for the retreat of squalid poverty—no large monument of gorgeous masonry, calculated rather to relieve the just obligations incumbent on parents to educate their children than to give instruction to the poor, the neglected, and the outcast; we find no colonnaded façade or florid minaret, reared rather to minister to the vanity of the giver than to the necessities of the recipient.

Many, many thousands a-year are annually dispensed in the metropolis of the west through the benevolence of men who leave no traces of their gifts save those which are seen to flow from the ameliorated condition of their wretched fellow-creatures, or the acknowledged intellectual and moral advancement of many who might otherwise have been lost to society.

Among the more modern bequests made to the City was the one whereby Mr James Yates, a native of Glasgow, and some time merchant in London, gifted the Island of Shuna to its Lord Provost and Magistrates; the annual produce of which was to be applied to the furtherance of education in her ancient *Alma Mater* and the more modern Andersonian University—to increase the benefits to be derived from the Royal Infirmary—and to beautify and improve the City. Although the settlement of the benevolent testator was all regularly executed and duly certified, still considerable difficulties arose in obtaining possession of the property; and, consequently, during several years after Mr Yates's death, which happened in 1829, his bequest occasioned much trouble and many meetings to the municipal trustees. Out of these regular official assemblies on the business of the trust—which, however, it may be mentioned, resulted in possession of the Highland islet—there arose at length a Club—composed in part of certain of the magisterial functionaries with other friends—which at first ostensibly met for the purpose of talking over the affairs of the rather odd bequest, but latterly settled down into a convivial meeting for discussing public news and town's gossip. Among the chief originators of the brotherhood were those Magistrates, who, during the sittings of the Court of Justiciary held in the City, most assiduously encircled the large round table then laid out in the Magisterial refectory attached to the Court Hall, and who there sat and drank, as was wont, while the criminal business was being proceeded with. In those joyous days, the Circuit dinners at the foot of Saltmarket did not end, as they now do, with a glass or two of wine, but were invariably followed by one, two, or three bowls of cold punch; and when a case involving the last punishment of the law was being tried, it not unfre-

quently happened that the Magisterial party were found pushing in their glasses at midnight.\*

The fraternity which met under the appellation of the SHUNA CLUB was composed of some of our most respectable citizens; the members, as we have hinted, being either connected with the old Magistracy or Magistrates for the time being. The Club met usually at eight o'clock in the evening; during winter, at first in the very snug parlour of what was then considered a good tavern, in the old Post-office Court, Trongate, and afterwards in the *restaurant* and night-house, fitted up with considerable taste and expense, in the sunk flat immediately under the New Royal Exchange in Queen-street, which was soon afterwards better known by the sobriquet of the *Crypt*.

Startle not, timid reader! when I mention the "Crypt," that I am about to conduct thee into any of those dark and lugubrious receptacles of the dead, such as a quondam Doctor of our City once had in contemplation to establish, under a central and general mart of pigs and poultry.† Imagine not that I purpose carrying thee through the intricate and appalling catacombs of Paris or Palermo, to pour forth sentimentality over the cross-boned altar-pieces of the one, or to hold companionship with the stalwart but consuming anatomies of the other. No, kind reader! I have no such melancholy duty to perform. My object is of a far gayer and livelier nature. The Crypt whither I would lead thee, though certainly

\* The round table, which is still in use for refectory purposes during the Circuit, formerly stood in the Town-Clerk's office in the Old Tolbooth at the Cross; and, though now long devoted to the pleasures of those who encircle it, is nevertheless associated with the murder of an individual who at one time sat daily at its side. In 1694, a dispute having taken place between a citizen and a soldier, the Town-Clerk of Glasgow, Mr Robert Park, having notified in favour of the former, was thrust through the body, while sitting in his chamber, by Major

James Menzies. The officer who in the heat of passion committed this outrage immediately fled—was pursued—and, in consequence of resistance, was shot in Renfield garden.

† We allude to the scheme, brought forward by Dr Cleland, for converting the whole burying-ground of St David's into "one grand vaulted cemetery, similar to the crypt of that church; the spandrils or upper sides of the grand arches to be paved, and the area or square thus formed to be used for market purposes."

situated, like that favoured one of the lamented Doctor, beneath a mighty commercial mart, and replete though it was with many sorts of *spirits*, was nevertheless such as to inspire courage rather than to awaken fear. The Crypt to which I would now go, though illumined, as it was—like that of the matchless subterranean *chateau en Espagne* of our departed Statist—with all the brilliant appliances of good coal gas, was altogether free from any pestilential vapours, having been filled with *living* not with *dead* men's bones. In this Crypt, the only species of interment which happily took place within its gay and rather flaunting precincts, was that of fresh and well-fed Pandore oysters dropped into the gaping grave of the gourmand's gullet. The Crypt, in fine, to which I would now take thee, and which proved the last rendezvous and resting-place of the Shuna Club, boasted at that time a society as brilliant and many-tinted as the London *Rainbow*—a community with voices as cheering and chanticleering as the *Cock*—and a squad of wags and wifings as bright and sparkling as those of the *Cider Cellar*. The fact is, whether it was on account of the Crypt's vicinity to the News-room, or its facility of access to those who would willingly take a stealthy tumbler before retiring to a rather inquisitive spouse—who must needs be kept ignorant of such an evil practice—the result was, that for some time at least after the opening of the Crypt, it was frequently difficult to find admittance, at least into one of the four snug shrines of Bacchus, known by the sounding titles of the “Ship,” the “Star,” the “Sun,” and the “Globe.” To the large *salle-à-manger* which was more particularly dedicated to the worshippers of Heliogabalus, and which boasted at least a dozen brass-rodded and scarlet-curtained temples, each designated after one of the well-known capitals of the world, the access was rarely difficult—not because the small chapels were uncomfortable, but from the feeling that neighbouring eavesdroppers might carry away words intended only for the ears of friends and companions.

It was in “the great Globe itself” of this well-known Crypt, that the men of Shuna nightly congregated, and where, for several years, its



many respectable members too palpably showed the truth of Shakspeare's saying—

“That men are merriest when they are from home.”

Although many of the originators of the Shuna Club were justly entitled, in their official capacity, to the well-known epithet of *sitting Magistrates*, the great majority of the brotherhood generally rose at the sound of the ten o'clock bells, except, perhaps, on very rare occasions, when oysters or a Welsh rabbit were summoned from the kitchen to wind up the business of the day. But even when this luxury was indulged in, the Club was never known to extend beyond the “witching hour of night.” In addition to the nightly meetings, there were, however, during the year, generally one or two dinner-parties of the Club, at which there was always a good gathering, a good dinner, and an endless flow of fun and frolic. When it is mentioned that the late Bailie Stewart Smith and Mr David Pattison took upon themselves the surveillance of the *cuisine*—that Dr Macarthur and Mr James Crum looked to the quality of the rum and lemons, for the manufacture of the cold punch—and that the conversation, if it ever for a moment flagged, was sure to be filled up with some strange tale about Turkey, which was happily termed a *Levanter*, from the lips of the late facetious George Douglas, of Smyrna memory,—it will at once appear evident that, among the many convivial brotherhoods of the City, there was not one that surpassed the Shuna Club.

It was of one of the steady members of this rather early and sober brotherhood that we have heard the following odd story related, connected with the Crypt, and which, as good luck would have it we are now enabled to give in his own graphic words. “On sallying forth,” says he, “one night from a regular blow-out party, redolent with chicken-turtle and old Johannisberger, it was suggested by one of the party, who had retreated along with me, that the day's business ought to be wound up in the Crypt—where, by the way, the whole business of life was ultimately to be completed. To this proposal I at first objected, on account of the

lateness of the hour, and from a secret suspicion that the ill-assorted marriage of cold punch and claret in my stomach required no *third* party to be present. My companions, however, having urged me with some anxiety to accompany them, I at length acceded, and ere a few moments had elapsed, found myself in front of that fell *bar* where so many *howtowdies* are daily condemned to be drawn and quartered, and where so many ale-bibbers are nightly called up to answer with their coin for the ‘deeds done in the body.’

“Having cast a longing, nay almost a burking, eye at the subjects laid out for the evening’s dissection, I pushed my way into the BELL\* *salle-à-manger*, but lo! not a single shrine—among the many dedicated to the spiritual comforters of London, Paris, Lisbon, and Washington—could afford us accommodation. The fact is, every brass-rodged and scarlet-curtained temple had each its own ‘hole and corner’ meeting of worshippers busy in the orgies of Bacchus or Heliogabalus. We demanded if we could get on board the ‘Ship;’ but we were told, with a sigh, that the berths were at that moment all secured by a batch of old and new bailies, busy taking measures against the approaching cholera. We asked if we might enter the ‘Star;’ but we were answered that that luminary was already crowded with the sons of her brother Mars, in deep forgetfulness of the proposed reduction of the army. We next inquired if we could gain admittance to the ‘Sun;’ but the negative shake of the waiter’s head mournfully intimated that Phæton, Phœbus, or whatever the ancients would have called it, could that evening afford us no light nor comfort. We had now but one hope left, and that was to obtain possession of ‘the great Globe itself.’ The demand was of so ambitious a nature that our tongues faltered as we whispered the magnificent monosyllable to our bustling attendant. The ominous grin, however, that played on his lips pro-

\* The allusion here is to Mr David Bell, who was one of the great promoters of the Royal Exchange, and who took a warm interest in the establishment of the *Crypt* as a

tavern. After a short and rather brilliant career, it gradually declined and at length was closed.

claimed that the men of Shuna still reigned paramount there. Sulkily we wheeled about and prepared to travel homewards, when, just at the moment we were on the move—which, Heavens knows! would have been better for us—the door of the huge ball of ‘Atlas’ slowly opened, and two sexagenarian figures, inspired with at least a couple of *double* ‘Dawnies,’ slipped out of the apartment, and bolted past the glass door. ‘There is the Globe at last for you, gentlemen,’ shouted the waiter, with an air of satisfaction; and into the comfortable planet we went, thanking Heaven for our good fortune.

“Somewhat lazy and dozy, I threw myself at once into the luxurious lounging crib of the president of the snug and sensible fraternity which there held its regular evening assembly, while my companions ensconced themselves in the two elbow-chairs that graced the sides of a blazing fire-place. The table was instantly cleared of glasses, and almost immediately covered with a snow-white cloth; while oysters, crabs, and lobsters were successively paraded, till Hunger at length declared a halt, and his brother Thirst seized the reins of government. It would be here altogether impossible to go over a tithe of the highly interesting and edifying topics which seasoned each successive tumbler of gin-twist; hours passed, Charlies shouted, and *scadding-burn* (Anglice, hot water) was still the cry. In the midst of the wit and drollery, however, that was sported by my jolly and waggish companions, my eyes eventually began to twinkle—a dozy-ness came over my spirits—the lights of the gasalier became dimmer and dimmer—the tongues of the speakers, like the sound of a bell in the receiver placed over an exhausting air-pump, became less and less perceptible. I nodded, winked, and nodded again, till at length I fell into the meshes of Morpheus.

“Finding me fairly trapped in a death-like snooze, my companions voted me *comfortable* and a *non-convivialist*; and, as a just and appropriate punishment for the latter high misdemeanor, they proposed that I should be forthwith left where I was for the night. The *gegg* was a good one, and they now prepared to carry it into execution. Everything was in

their favour for accomplishing this project successfully. The hour had sent every inmate of the establishment, save a *sleep-stupified* stripling, to bed, and a stillness now reigned in the Crypt of the Royal Exchange as solemn as that in the Crypt of St Mungo. Extinguishing the gas in the 'Globe,' my companions slipped out of the apartment, paid the bill to the stripling at the bar, and having quietly *bolted* out, the boy bolted the door. The sleepy stripling, seeing the 'Globe' in gloom, passed on to his dormitory, and was soon snoring as snugly as a ship in the trade winds.

"Unconscious of my situation and solitude, I slumbered on, and then began to dream. The four-course dinner, combined with the three-course supper, summoned up before my mind's eye the most hideous and terrifying phantoms. At one moment I was pursued by an animal more monstrous than the antediluvian mammoth; at another, I was tossing on a billow, exposed to the jaws of a fish more mighty than that which bore Jonah in his belly. Again, I was galloping on the back of an alligator to the summit of a pyramid; and anon I was flying, parched by thirst, through a stifling and sulphureous atmosphere, in the car of a gigantic balloon. This illusion was my last, and stuck to me longest. With the rapidity of the tempest, I flew over seas and rivers, over mountains and valleys; at length methought Mount Etna appeared, blazing forth fire and lava. I called out for mercy, as I saw myself nearing the crater of the mountain—I drew nearer, and nearer, and nearer—terror was roused to its utmost pitch—I smelt the sulphur—I felt the heat—I panted for breath, for one drop of cold water—I rallied my sinking energies, and made one vigorous effort to leap out; but at the very moment that I did so, the flame caught the balloon, and I was tossed headlong, like Empedocles, into the boiling and rumbling volcano!

"I started from the president's chair at my fearfully imagined destiny, and thought myself in eternity. All around was dark, and although my eyes were open, my mind was still insensible to my real situation. In this plight I saw a white-sheeted figure, dimly illumined by the rays of a waning moon, that insinuated themselves through the half-open door of



the 'Globe,' standing anxiously gazing at me; and, still believing that my spirit had quitted its mortal coil, I faltered out, 'Who art thou that awaits my coming to this realm of spirits? Art thou a restless wanderer on the shores of Styx, or an angel of light come to conduct me to Paradise?' And springing forward, under the impulse that frequently accompanies fear, clasped the sheeted figure in my extended arms. The warm flesh and blood of the supposed spirit, followed by the immediate exclamation of astonishment, and 'O, Mr S., you are bumbazed! Do you no ken the landlady o' the Crypt?' naturally recalled my reason and my thoughts.

"The illusion gone, I made a thousand apologies for my folly. The landlady explained, that, attracted by groans, she had risen from her bed, imagining the noise to proceed from the throat of some sick waiter. The affair was soon cleared up; and I sallied forth at four in the morning, vowing vengeance against my waggish companions, and resolving never to pass another such night in the Crypt."

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