Thistledown.
Frae Scotland.

(Contributed.)

TOURS OF DRAM-DRINKING IN SCOTLAND.

"O, wad some power the giftie gie us,
To see oursel's as ithers see us."

And happily, whilst the shout is ring in at the one ear and out at the other—is failing to command obedience—the prayer is gradually being answered. Old customs, like old prejudices, no matter how absurd they are, die hard; but with the spread of education in Scotland, and the dissemination of cheap and healthy literature, the people are becoming day by day more distinctly convinced of the many ludicrous incongruities connected with their old-fashioned habits, particularly with the old-fashioned ideas relating to hospitality and conviviality, and with the practice of persistent and indiscriminate dram-drinking. A man may be merry on Sundays without being "half fou," and yet not be considered "daft," and we have been realizing that there are other ways of hospitably entertaining a friend than by filling him to the brim with whisky. Our dram-drinking habits have made us the butt of every continental jokist, and no wonder. It is utterly absurd the practice in general has been—in many instances it is highly humorous! Your teetotaler, I have often thought, dwells too frequently on the tragedy of the subject. It has a tragic side, no doubt, and a woefully pathetic one; but very much connected with it, like the antics of a half-tipsy individual, is ludicrously humorous, and needs only to be danced before the eye of sober people to render the persistent and indiscriminate participator more than ashamed of his connection with it. Let our active teetotallers interest themselves fairly in the art of photography, and go around photographing respectably-dressed people in their various stages of intoxication, afterwards circulating some of the photos amongst the drinker's friends, being careful not to forget sending a few to the tippler himself, and they will do more service to the temperance cause in one month than perhaps all the labour of lifetime has hitherto achieved. But let us directly to look at the humours of dram-drinking. What have we at the facts of the case? Whisky has been the cure for all diseases, and "saw for a' sairs." Was Sandy cold, he took a dram to warm him. Was he hot, he took a dram to cool himself. Did he feel hungry, and the meal not quite ready, he took a dram to appease his appetite, and another after dinner to aid his digestion. Was he sad, he took a dram to make him "hear his heart abune." Was he merry, he took a dram to drown himself down, or to increase the glee according as he might desire. Did he feel sleepy, a dram was called to hold him wide-awake. Did he feel too wide-a-wake, he required a dram to induce sleep. Did he drink so much at night that he had a headache in the morning, he required "a hair of the dog that bit him," and so on. Was there a birth in the family, the dram had to circulate to wet the young Scot. The "Kirsening" had equal honour awarded it, the "waddin," the "lyke-wake," the "funeral," the "foondin," the "hoose warmin," the "tryst," the "maiden," and all other inevitable occasions, demanded that the "grey-beard" should be tasted and emptied within a brief space of time. Did Sandy buy a cow, he "wetted a dram;" did he sell a cow, it was the same. There was an old woman who lived in Dundee, who some years ago actually went and took a dram to herself because her cat had died. It was called in to solder every "spoon, and the "luck penny," and the "arle-penny," and the "Queen's shilling" demanded in the enlistment of every soldier, meant just so much money to be spent in drink which must be consumed on the spot. Not even "Sam o' Shanter" alone might it be said that "ilka melder wi' the miller thrank as lang as he had siller; ilka naig was ca'd a shoe on, the smith and he got roarin' fou on." I have said that our drinking customs have made us the butt of the foreign press. Here is the proof, in the following clever skit—a burlesque report of the celebration of St. Andrew's Day in Calcutta—which appeared some years ago in the columns of the Indian Daily News, under the title of

CHRONICLE OF SAINT ANDREW.

It came to pass in the year one thousand eight hundred and four and one, in the city of Palaces, that certain wise men from a far country beyond the great sea.

In that year the rulers of the land (that which was right in their own eyes).

Now these wise men assembled themselves together, and they said unto the other. Go to, let us remember our brethren whom we have left behind; behold, we be in a far country. It shall come to pass that when they shall say to us, Ye be nameless men of earth; ye have fled from the land of your nativity, because of your nativity is poor. This thing, therefore, will we do; we will make a great feast, so that the fame of whomsoever smelleth it from afar off, and we will call to mind the ancient days, and the mighty deeds of our fathers.

6. So they appointed a day, and many were gathered together—a mixed multitude from the Land of Cakes and of Thistles, from the West and from the North, and from the Isles of the Sea.

7. And, behold, a great feast was prepared, and men in white raiment ministered unto them, and a ruler of the feast was appointed, and set in the midst.

8. And forthwith to each man was given a writing of the good things of the feast, and the writing was in a tongue no man could understand, for the language was the language of the Crapaud, which signified in the heathen tongue, a frog.

9. And some there were who pretended to know the writing, and the interpretation thereof; now these were hypocrites; for they knew but six letters of the writing, and these letters were HAGGIS, and even this much was a great mystery.

10. And the dishes no man could number; the people ate mightily, as it were the space of one hour. And no man spoke to his neighbour till his inner man was comforted.

11. And while they ate, behold there drew near three mighty men of valour, clothed in many-coloured garments; and they bore in their arms musical instruments shaped like unto a beast of prey.

12. And they blew mightily upon what seemed the tail thereof, and straightway came there forth shrieks and sounds as if it were the howlings of the damned.

13. And the hearts of the people were comforted, for this is that wherein their great strength lieth.

14. And wine was brought in vessels, but the children of the North would have none of these; for they quenched their thirst with the Dew of the Mountain, which is the water of fire.

15. Then spake the wise men of the congregation unto them, and called to mind the ancient days and mighty deeds of their fathers, and the people rejoiced exceedingly.

16. Now it came to pass when they had eaten and drunk greatly, even unto the full, that the hinges of their tongues were loosened—yea, even the joints of their knees.

17. And the ruler of the feast fled to his home, and a third part of the multitude followed, and a third part remained, saying, we thirst; and a third part rose up to play.

18. And they played after the fashion of their country, and their movements resembled the peregrinations of a hen upon a girdle which is hot. Yet they seemed to think it pleasant, for they shouted with joy.

19. Now, as for them that were athirst, behold their drinking was steady, but their limbs were not so; yet, they also shouted for joy and sang amazingly.

20. And they answered one to another, and said that, notwithstanding the crowing of the cock or the dawning of the day, they should still partake of the juice of the barley. So they encouraged one another with these words.

21. Now it came to pass that, as they sat, one came and said he had seen a strange fire in the sky, but what it was he could not tell.

22. And some said, it is the moon; and others said, it is the sun; and some said, Doth the sun rise in the West? and others said, this is not the West, but the east; and some said, which is it, for we perceive two in the sky.

23. And one said, I see nothing. Now the name of that man was Blin' Foo. He was the son of Hand Foo; and his brethren—Bung Foo, Sing Foo, Greet Foo, and Dam Foo—were speechless.

24. Then each man bade his neighbour farewell, embracing and vowing eternal friendship, and some were bourne home by men in scanty raiment, and others in carriages which jingled as they went; and others drove their own chariots home, and saw many strange sights, for they found grass growing and ditches in the midst of the way where they had not perceived them before.

25. And it came to pass that in the morning many lamented, and took no breakfast that day; and the men in white raiment brought unto them many cunningly-devised drinks. Yea, pick-me-ups, for their tongues clove unto the roofs of their mouths, and the spittle on their beard was like unto a small silver coin, even a sixpence.

26. But, when they thought on the previous day, they rejoiced again, for they said, Our brethren whom we have left will hear of it at the Feast of the New Year, and they will remember us and bless us, and our hearts and hands shall be strengthened for our labour here.

We are nae foo—we're no that foo,
But jist a wee drap in oor e'e,
The cock may craw—the wind may blaw,
But—aa wee'l taste the barley bree.

The braw bagpipes is grand, my frien's,
The braw bagpipes is fine;
We'll tank another pibroch yet,
For the days o' auld lang syne.

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