

Manx Notes 623 (2023)

THE BOAT SUPPER

(1)

[5c] Instead of keeping Christmas Day and the evening that preludes by sober thoughts and proper observances, as the occasion suggests, it was formerly the custom here to spend Christmastide in the ale-house, where frequently at these times parties I were tempted to indulge too freely in the intoxicating cup. This used to be the time of [5d] year when boat crews met together to have what they styled a “Boat Supper,” which often commenced on Christmas Eve, and ended on New Year’s Day, the cost of which frequently amounted to £10, and seldom under five. This bill of fare was called “The Shot,” and which had to be paid for out of the first earnings. We regret to say that the church did not exert her best to counteract this state of affairs by making some provision during the Christmas times where all grades of society could meet together and unite with all Christians the world over in common thoughts, feelings, and joys, and by exchanging festivities and greetings over the “cup that cheers but not inebriates” and thus spend Christmas Day—a day of unrebuked joy and gladness. Within the last few years things have, however, greatly changed, and the dissenting bodies of this town strain every nerve by providing tea festivals and concerts in order to induce all persons, but the young especially, to forsake those haunts of sin formerly the retreat of their forefathers, and whilst they may feel that it is a time to lay aside business and greet each other sociably, that it is not a time to spend in rioting and drunkenness. Knowing the disposition there is in many persons on a holiday to go from home to spend a few hours, the Wesleyans of this town very wisely arranged with the Railway Company to place a late train upon the line, with the express condition that none were to return by it but those who held a ticket for the tea and concert held in the Centenary Hall upon Christmas Day. This arrangement took extremely well, for whilst a large and respectable number arrived by the 3-30, the most of the bacchanalians were prevented from coming, or those that did come had to return by the 6-30 train. The tea meeting and concert was a great success.

“[Peel and the West] Christmastide in Peel.” *Mona’s Herald* 27 December 1876: 5c–d.

(2)

[5c] Hearing that there were real live men and times in Peel this Christmas a correspondent of ours who has a speciality for scenting fun from afar, betook himself to the ancient city; and the following is the result of his visit:

Living as I do at the extreme end of South Barrule, I know but little of what is going on in the regions below; and as in Christmas times people travel far and near, I

undertook a journey to Peel with the hope of seeing and hearing some thing new. In this I was not disappointed. For at this season of the year fishermen come in groups from all parts of the Island to hire for the Kinsale and other fishings, and of course bring with them the news from their different homes; and I assure you that to hear these tars discuss politics and teaze each other would be equal to an hour with the best comic in the kingdom. Sailors as a rule being pretty generous, you may naturally expect their course to be followed by a host of loafers or land sharks, and these you will find in abundance in Peel at this season of the year, and who will perform almost all kind of antics for the sake of a pint of beer—make speeches, dance the frog, stand on their heads, or run 100 yards in a sack. In giving an account of my rambles in the Bishop’s City, although somewhat lengthy I shall be as brief as my subject will permit me. Having a weakness for houses who have a government permit to make people merry I at once made tracks for the cooling and refreshing shades of the majestic “Oak;” but finding that no wild animals approached near its branches I wended my way to the den of the “White Bear,” where I found a large body of females indulging in tea-drinking and criticising the skirt tails of the Kirk Michael boys, besides planning an elopement case. Such atmosphere not being congenial to my virtuous nature I quietly withdrew and made direct for Tom’s.” In Tom’s there were three boat suppers—in the parlour, and upstairs, and in the kitchen was Cloddy, Benny, Harry, Jack, Tom the Docthar, Koof, and old Grumble Bones. When the boys had finished supper the kitchen soon filled, and we had a jolly time of it. [...]

“[Peel and the West] Lively Times at Peel. The Boat Supper at ‘Tom’s.’”
Mona’s Herald 31 December 1879: 5c–d.

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