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PIPE BAND SOCIAL.

A very pleasant evening was spent by the band on Tuesday evening last, the guests being Pipe-major C. Wilson and Drummer Woodley. The evening was bright and breezy and truly characteristic of a Scottish welcome. With Chieftain Watson in the chair, things were kept moving. By-the-way, the Chief was wearing a tartan tie and in his opening remarks displayed a great deal of enthusiasm for the bagpipes. The bagpipes was the oldest instrument in the world and was in existence 4,000 years before Christ. Early records of them were found in Genesis. "Some sort of a harp," said the Chief, and we really wondered whether by any fortune or misfortune it was a Jew's harp.

Andy McCulloch seems to have a special liking for a tartan tie and according to Andy, the bagpipes can stir things up. On a recent trip to Dunedin, things got slightly complicated and when the bagpipes began to play "I nearly made a fool of m'sel'."

The health of the guests was proposed by the chairman, who spoke of their long and energetic service. The band had a very successful career and if the younger members were to follow in their footsteps the band would soon regain its former position.

Pipe-major Wilson in replying to the toast, stated that he had been associated with the band for 26 years and was one of those who formed it. If the time spent with the band was put into eight hours a day it would mean ten years of his life spent in the service of the band. Before bicycles came in, the members had to walk to band practice and they were in regular attendance, which was not the case today. The old custom of the party was to march to Makarewa, each one playing the pipes. Yet with all the modern facilities of travel, it is difficult to get good attendance. Drummer Woodley had long experience with the band and between Pipe-major Wilson and himself, many interesting reminiscences of the early history of the band were told.

Pipe-major Wilson was presented by the members, with a gold Albert, and Drummer Woodley, with a lever watch. In making the presentations, Mr Watson asked the recipients to receive them as tokens of the goodwill and fellowship existing between themselves and the band.

(From C. H. Wilson.)

The pipe is one of the most ancient instrument of music. It was in use among the Greeks, by whom it was named *psaltery*, and its form, as represented in some ancient sculptures, was not unlike its modern appearance. That people probably derived it from the barbarians, i.e., the Celts, to whom they acknowledge themselves indebted for a great part of their music. The instrument was also well-known to the Romans, and the Italian peasant still continues to perform on a bag-pipe, of a construction much in character with the modern rudeness of the people. Giraldus Cambrensis, who died in 1225, mentions the pipe as a British instrument, and it was used among his own countrymen in Wales, but gave place to the more pacific and voluptuous harp. The last piper of whom we ever heard in the principality was "Shon na Peep," or John the Piper. There is in the chapel of Roslyn the sculpture of a cherub playing on a bag-pipe, with a book spread before it, proving that in an early age, the bag-pipes were played, not by the ear alone, but from musical notation. That chapel was erected by William Sinclair, Earl of Orkney, as far back as 1446. But older instances of performers on the instrument might be adduced. The northern nation were in the most early ages acquainted with the bag-pipes, which are a sort of mouth organ; but whether the Gael derived the instrument from others, or invented it themselves, it seems impossible to ascertain, and the question is not perhaps of great importance. This much is incontestable, however simple it may originally have appeared, it has been brought by the Highlanders to the utmost perfection; and its form and construction are as peculiarly their own, as the music to which it is so well calculated to give proper effect. The Irish freely admit that the bag-pipes were introduced to them by the Scots of Albany.

The Fish Mhor, or Great Highland bag-pipe, therefore, appears to be the only national instrument in Europe; and it is sacred to Scotland, to whose inhabitants it speaks a language which no others can appreciate, and excites a feeling in their breasts to which others are strangers.

What a fine spectacle is beheld in the intrepid march of a man in advance of his companions, and in the face of a well-appointed enemy, with no weapon in his hand, labouring enthusiastically with great physical exertion and musical talent, to encourage his comrades to deeds of hardihood and glory, pealing forth those mar-

tial strains which distant generations have heard with burning hearts—which are so congenial, so soul-stirring to every Highlander.

The advantages which are derived from the strains of this noble retainer of a Highland chief, are manifold. He is to rouse the courage of his clansmen to battle, and alarm them when menaced. He is to collect them when scattered, solace them in their long and dreary marches, or solitary and painful bivouacs; to keep up in the time of peace, the memory of their ancestors, and impart to the minds of the young the feelings and generosity which distinguished them—by music composed after memorable victories and well contested, but hapless fields; or dissuade them from evil, by tunes which commemorate the distress produced by the indulgence of unbecoming passions.

It was formerly the practice for gentlemen to send their pipers for instruction to the celebrated masters, paying the cost of their board and tuition; but the performers now are chiefly educated at their own expense, which induces them to attempt the accomplishment of much in as short a time as possible; hence they play incorrectly, a residence of one or two years being altogether insufficient for their proper qualification. Formerly six to twelve years were devoted to the acquirement of Piobaireachds alone; for the professors would not allow Reels or Quicksteps to be played in their establishments. The life of a piper in former days was one of comparative ease and dignity; he was allowed a servant or gillie to carry his crosium, or knapsack, and when he finished his part or tune, the instrument was returned to the servant.

The most celebrated pipers were the MacCummens, who, under the liberal patronage of the Lairds of MacLeod, became famous all over the Highlands; and their abilities were so well appreciated, that students from all quarters resorted to them, or were placed by their respective chiefs under those famous masters, whose residence consequently became dignified with the name College. Here was imparted a knowledge of that particular class of music which cannot be acquired except by several years of assiduous study and practice; for the simple reels and strathspeys are far inferior in the estimation of a Piobaireachd player.

The first established of the MacCummens as hereditary pipers to MacLeod of MacLeod, is beyond traditional record. Their Oil-thigh or College was at Bore-raig, eight miles north of Dunvegan Castle. The house occupied by the MacCummens still remains, displaying thick walls, massy cabers or rafters, and other characteristics of old Highland habitations. It was divided into two parts built at right-angles—one forming the class-room, and the other the sleeping apartments; and MacDonald, the present tenant, points out to strangers the localities of many transactions handed down in oral tradition.

About 1795 the last of this celebrated race of pipers left his ancient patrimony and John Dubh proceeded as far as Greenock with the intention of emigrating to America. He, however, altered his mind, and returned to his native Isle, where he spent the remainder of his life in quiet retirement; and when the infirmities accompanying a protracted life, prevented him handling his favourite Piob Mhor, he would sit on the sunny braes, and run over the notes on the staff which assisted his feeble limbs in his lonely wanderings. He died in 1822 in the 91st year of his age, and was buried with his fathers in the churchyard of Duninish.

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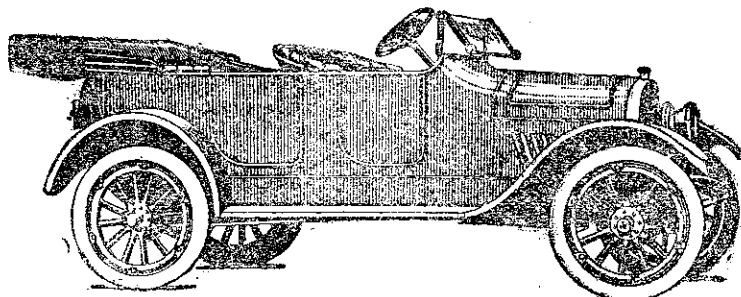
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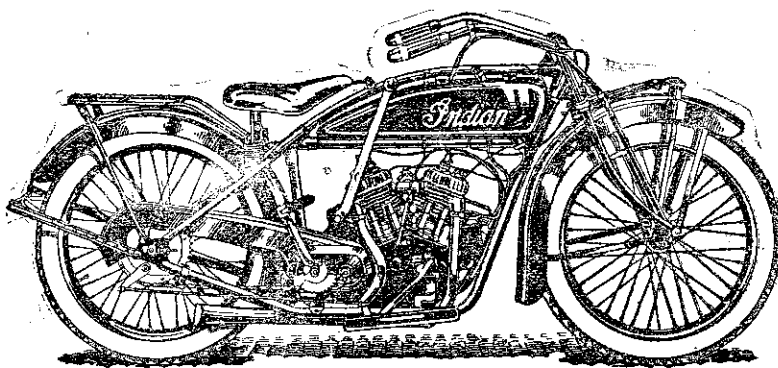
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