

THE CANTERBURY CATCH CLUB



THE CLUB ASSEMBLED

Strolling through the rooms of the Beane Institute, at Canterbury, the Editor's eye was caught by a fine engraving of an old time music-making—a meeting of the Canterbury Catch Club. Applying to the very courteous Librarian, Mr. Mead, he obtained permission to have this photographed, and was further allowed to inspect the minute books of the famous old club, now securely kept in the strong room of the Institute. At the Librarian's suggestion he then sought out a surviving member of the Club, Mr. John E. Wiltshire, only just in time to get from his lips some fuller particulars of the Club and of other music-makings of former days in Canterbury, for shortly after his visit this fine old gentleman passed away.

The article that follows was written thirty-five years ago, and is printed from the manuscript—lent to him by Mr. Wiltshire for the purpose. It is reproduced without alteration, one or two allusions which cannot now be fully understood being included. It may surprise some readers to discover the popularity of good orchestral music in an English county town from fifty to one hundred years ago.

A DESCRIPTION COPIED FROM A
MANUSCRIPT, BY MR. WELBY, 1875.

The Canterbury Catch and Glee Club of its rise, and, alas! that tongue or pen should tell, of the fall of this grand old club, we will endeavour to bring a few recollections to mind.

The Club occupied a large share in the century 1770 to 1870, as the last season ended in 1865. Commencing in a very humble public tavern by some half a dozen musical citizens meeting to sing glees and catches, it rose to be the chief estate of Canterbury. Within the memory of many now living the orchestra comprised some 50 performers, and the Club consisted of about 200 members, numbering among them the resident Gentry, Clergy, and leading Tradesmen. The new members were proposed by a member, and balloted for. No citizen could be admitted unless a member. No apprentice or minor could ever be admitted. Visitors were admitted by payment, on the last night of the season only. Admission, half a guinea, one year's subscription, one guinea.

The Club was renowned throughout England for its famous music, and for its gentlemanly atmosphere; and visitors were numerous, consisting of Officers of the Army, Country Gentry, and Commercial Travelers. When the Mayor paid an official visit his name was inserted in the Charter Glee. The M.P.'s of the City, and Candidates for that office always attended, and great was the speech-making.

The famous Motto of the Club was "Harmony and Unanimity," and politics were rigidly excluded.

This important Club lasting nearly ninety years—1779 to 1865—had a beneficial effect on the City, as, in the first place it was a school for vocal and instrumental practice, and during this long period an army of "young-un's" were brought up and wended their way to the metropolis.

Sir George Elvey, son of Dr. Stephen Elvey, Hobbs Hawes, Goulden, Shoubridge, Dyson, Tom Young, *et hoc genus*, vocalists and instrumentalists were constantly in practice. A full rehearsal always took place on Saturday evening for the Wednesday concerts, of which 30 were given from the first Wednesday in October to the last in March.

The first, and almost perpetual, Chairman was Charles Delmar, Esq. The most rigid order was kept, rarely did any disorderly visitor interrupt, the cry of "Turn him out" was swiftly raised. When the programme was concluded the early birds retired, and for some forty years the after evening was celebrated by amateur free and easy singing, the mirth growing fast and furious till the small hours. No Bruce being then in existence, our grandfathers made a night, and often too, a morning of it.

Gin punch in half-pint mugs was the beverage, and the mutton-pie man, Hagell, supplied the solids.

The room in Orange Street, now called the Appolonian Hall, was built for the Club about 1800, and there the meetings were held for some forty years.

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HANDEL



CORELLI

The Club then removed to the Guildhall Concert Room (N.B.—This removal took place in 1831, as recorded in the minute books of the Club) where it remained until the new Music Hall in St. Margaret's Street was built for it about 1850, where, after a lingering decline, it expired in 1865.

The Hall was uncomfortably large, the old members died off, and innovations were made on the ancient rules, citizen visitors were admitted at one shilling, music hall comic singers and stars from London came down and swept away the larger part of the funds, party spirits began to divide the City, and the end came. Ichabod! When will the citizens be-wise enough to revive this happy institution?

We subjoin a list of the musical worthies—

Thos. Goodban, senr. (leader for 30 years)	} First Violins
T. Evans Jones (then Organist of Cathedral)	
Henry Palmer (afterwards leader)	
Osmond Saffery	} Second Violins
John Irons	
— Kempton, senr.	
J. Shoubridge (afterwards of St. Paul's)	
S. Elvey (afterwards Dr. Stephen Elvey)	
M. Wellard	} Violoncellos
H. Goodban	
J. Harrison	
G. Mount	
W. Lepine, senr.	} Double Bass
— Stacey	
Wm. Palmer	} Flutes
H. T. Clark	
W. Stewart	} Oboe
W. M. Welby	
Saml. White	} Clarionettes
J. Mount	
James Welby	} Bassoons
M. Furner	
— Manclark	} Trumpets
J. Welby, junr.	
— Furner	} Horns
Trombones,	Drums, etc.

Mrs. Jennens, Miss Longhurst, Messrs. Sheepwash, Young, Shoubridge, Beckwith, Dobson, E. Nicholson, John Hobbs } Vocalists
George Elvey, W. Longhurst, Merrett, } Chorister boys who
Coveney, and Eastes } sang frequently

Often the Military Bands contributed to the harmony.

The Programme usually consisted of four overtures, or parts of symphonies by Haydn, Bach, or Abel; sometimes part of Mozart's. Handel's overtures were frequently done in first-class style. Three or four glees for 3, 4, or 5 voices, one duet, four songs, and one Catch or Round.

The noble Charter Glee, the music and words of which are the sole composition of the late Thomas Goodban, was always performed by the whole orchestra on the opening and closing nights of each season, introducing the health of the Chairman. On the visit of the Mayor his name was substituted.

We subjoin the words, and let all clubs which desire a model take this, the words happy, the music perfectly good.

CHARTER GLEE.

GOODBAN. Circa 1820.

To Apollo and Bacchus our offerings let's bring,
And join hearts and voices their praises to sing,
Relaxing from labour, and all cares beguiling,
How happy we're met at our Club so inviting.
Here's a pipe and good liquor our spirits to cheer,
And Music's sweet sounds, so delightful to hear,
Here's social good fellowship all hearts inspiring,
And mirth and good humour on each face sits smiling.
Then with pleasure abounding,
It's fame far resounding,
Let's be merry and happy at our meeting's so rare,
From contention restraining,
And order maintaining,
Here's success to our Club, and a health to the Chair.

The portraits given on this page are taken from two old oil paintings, once the property of the Canterbury Catch Club and now that of the Corporation of Canterbury.