
The Auld Scotia

A verse on a Glasgow musical institution by Freddy Anderson



From a typescript dated 27 June 1968 and dedicated in handwriting to singer and raconteur Mick Broderick, the verse tells of the spirit of a long dead regular customer returning to the site of the redeveloped Scotia Bar, Glasgow and remembering the characters and escapades of old. It is a great snapshot of the folk revival of the time and mentions quite a few well-known names and lots of now lesser. The Scotia Bar is still in existence.

The year two thousan an fifteen,
An aged man leaves Glesca Green
An slowly then on weary feet
Stops for a breath in Stockwell Street,
Frae his eye there draps a tear,
Remembring friens o yesteryear – O lang, lang syne.
The ancient tenements are gone:
Beneath the brig Auld Clyde flows on,
Tho all around a brighter scene
Arises where drab shops had been in his young day.
Now frae a house across the way,
There sallies forth a kindly lad
Enquiring why he looks sae sad.
The bearded one but shakes his head,
“I’m thinkin now o friens lang deid.
Upon this site Auld Scotia stood,
An ach, I’m in a dreamy mood,
As my wanderin thought recalls
The host within these vanished walls.
For here on mony a Saturday,
The low roof rang wi laughter gay,
An, ah, how merry they could be,
These lads frae yaird an factory!
But this was no your common pub
O boozers swillin at the tub,
Or domino or flying dart:
No! There were folk frae every airt!

A Scottish Musical Miscellany

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Engineer an student came,
 An some upon the brink o fame,
 An some wha gear an' fame despised
 Lest higher purpose be enticed
 Into a web sae wicked wove,
 Talent transforms tae treasure trove.
 Here by the turn o Howard Street,
 Poet, scholar, sage might meet,
 But in the hour o which I dream,
 Oh, how the very rafters rang
 Re-echoing mony an auld Scots sang,
 Til doun frae native crag an glen,
 An ancient host o' Hielan men,
 By treach'rous lairds made lean & lanky,
 Sprang sgians out in "Killiecrankie",
 An helped restore a nation's pride
 In generations of the Clyde.
 Ah, Laddie, in your eyes I see
 The ripennin fruit o history,
 E'en such were we in auld lang syne,
 Sae tent ye weel this tale o mine!
 For here, guitar, banjo an' whissel
 Upheld the glory o the thissel,
 The hairst o moon-licht on the rig
 By magic gleams at Glesca Brig.
 Oh, here were lads an lassies bricht,
 Lang since hae faded frae ma sicht
 An that is why the tear-draps fall
 Frae fand auld mem'ries I recall.
 For where is Clydebank's bearded Mick
 Regalin us a wi mony a trick?
 His phantom-hov'rings in mid air
 Made even strangers stop and stare and then applaud.
 To Scotia's heroes he gave fame,
 Til in the act, himsel became
 A kind o God!
 Or where is the MacLaren Clan?
 In company wi a female fan,
 The elegant an dashin Dan
 No more you'll see,
 Unless in paradise he sings,
 An by the power o his strings
 Frae some frail cherub's flutt'rin wings,
 Wins ecstasy!
 Or, where is Grimes' dark rollin eye
 That raised the subject to the sky,
 Howe'er mundane?
 Where are they now?
 Stockwell Street no langer echoes wi' their feet –
 I search in vane!

Gone alas these names sae bricht,
 Like Molendinar out o' sicht,
 How transient is the mortal licht
 O saints and sages!
 Come forth, ye shadows frae the mist!
 Tho powers o dree ma plan resist,
 I'll dip a pen an mak a list,
 My Book o Ages.
 Where is that young minstrel pair
 Wi' ranchy duds an flowin hair?
 What feasts o music they once shared,
 These Humble-bums?
 Your party try in vain tae guard
 Wi' bolted door an winnow jarred,
 You'll meet them in your ain back yaird
 Come down the lums.
 Or Al an' Stuart, brithers twain,
 You'd find across the Irish main
 Or lappin lager in Dunblane
 Wi Johnson Billy,
 Or wi yon hermit o Glencoe
 Tastin' strange auld vines that grow
 By Ossian's Cave an Glendaroe
 Wad knock you silly.
 Now comes the daddy o' them all,
 Four-score an' brisk, yet kindly Paul.
 Before he hies hame tae his dearie,
 He'll wander back tae auld Dunleary,
 Wi slistenin eye a bout recall
 O days he flaired them yin an a.
 Hear Auld Scotia's voice proclaim
 Many a well remembered name,
 Fairy-fingered "Banjo Maley",
 The fiddling architect called Daly
 Hirstlin Harry an Laggan Art
 All piped their tune an played their part,
 An now perchance some Stygian glade
 Nestles a library in its shade
 Where curious sprites in wonder troop
 To knowledge with the Clutha group.
 The lassies too, I mind them well,
 Helen, Cath an Isobel,
 Irene wi Colin shares the Coke,
 While Annie peerin thru the smoke
 Spies the mince-pies lowp & bristle
 - A moment more they'll turn tae grissel,
 As Jackie answers clamourin calls for beer,
 When, lo, A tumbler falls tae rouse a cheer.
 Brave patient Jo wi brush and shovel
 Gropes smithereens amid the hovel,
 And sends some drunk's unsteady feet
 Tae stagger on the totterin street –

The night wears on,
 Ah, friens an cronies o my day,
 Where are ye gone?
 Here wi his own merry band,
 Uproarious Imlach used tae stand,
 Protected as an heirloom locket,
 He hugged the bottle in his pocket –
 Some fiery stuff wad rouse the Devil
 An sharpen swords o bad an evil.
 Mandoline an concertina,
 Grimes' rollin eye transfixed on Gina,
 The lilting voices o the thrang
 Sway wi an auld sea-shanty sang.
 Bush-bearded Vinnie holds the wand –
 There's one or two can barely stand –
 Wee Peter Feeney, a glass the worse,
 Looks for pills tae feed the horse,
 Man's frien now sunk sae low you see
 (Its shoes alane he'll guarantee) –
 He damns the Polis, nor gives a care
 If every word they're notin there.
 Out-side cold stars shine on the city,
 A world within o warmth an pity,
 Generous hearts 'spite fault or sin,
 Wad fill the auld age pensioner's tin,
 Of sich Auld Scotia had her share
 - Aye, maybe mair than anywhere,
 For here you'd meet in social round,
 The rowan heart o Glesca toun.
 Occasionally, the cold wind blew
 In frae the East a canny crew,
 A brash hard-headed impious lot
 The Major's tricks had not forgot,
 But they soon learned to grow less gallus
 In traffic wi the sons o Wallace,
 An even upstarts o the Clyde
 We douced their zeal an damned their pride,
 Spared no conceit nor foolish fancies
 But in the wake o "Poosie Nancy's"
 To "King an Law" we raised no cheer
 For all were Jolly Beggars here!
 The night must pass.
 Johnny Silvo calls for a glass,
 Luke Kelly's on the Rocky Road
 An toddlin hame tae his abode,
 Christy calls one for the bhoys
 An prays it will be paid by Moyes,
 While John wi dark suspicion fell
 Eyes that temperamental bell,
 A moment more we're on the street,
 A final gab an silence is complete.

Ah, mony years hae lang passed on,
Since Scotia's an its folk hae gone"
An here the auld man drew his breath
"Mony! Mony sunk in death!
Lads an lassies o the Clyde:
Ebbin lives just like the tide.
Some an earthly fame acquired.
Some no higher rank aspired.
Children of a toilin race,
Who can ever tak your place,
The night wears on,
Oh! Friens an cronies o my day,
Where are you gone?"