

GLASGOW

PAST AND PRESENT

EMBRACING

LOOSE MEMORANDA ON GLASGOW SUBJECTS BY SENEX
AND DESULTORY SKETCHES BY J. B.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOLUME II.

GLASGOW

DAVID ROBERTSON AND CO.

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first time that I played this game was some sixty odd years ago in the College Garden along with the late Richard Alexander Oswald, Esq., of Auchincruive, and I believe he was the person who first introduced it here; at anyrate I do not remember of seeing it played in Glasgow before the time that Mr. Oswald attended our University.

There was a game formerly played in Glasgow, which has been completely thrown in the back ground, and has totally disappeared from amongst us. This is the French game of "tennis," or the game of "fives," as it is called here. In my younger days we had a tennis court, which was built by subscription. I have played the game in that court, but I played it so very ill that I soon gave up the sport; and my memory is now so much at fault, that I feel a difficulty in remembering the exact locality where the said tennis court stood; but I think it was somewhere about Mitchell Street. It was a plain building of a single large room, lighted from above, being about thirty feet high, and the like dimensions in breadth; the length of it might perhaps have been some sixty feet or thereby. There were no articles of furniture in the room, except rackets and tennis balls. As the exercise was a very severe one, the players were generally dressed in light flannel jackets, and otherwise enrobed with loose easy garments. The marker or *paumier* of the court was a capital player, and could give odds to any of our Glasgow players. I understood that he had at one time been in the employment of Douglas, the handsome Duke of Hamilton of sporting memory.

With regard to the game of billiards, there was but one public billiard table in Glasgow seventy odd years ago. This table was placed in a small ill-lighted back room in M'Nair's land¹ in King

¹ Having in a former article—(see *Pagan's Glasgow, Past and Present*, vol. i., p. 295)—taken notice of M'Nair's Land, and given some anecdotes of Mr. M'Nair himself, I now annex a copy of the advertisement to which I alluded on that occasion. It was inserted in the *Edinburgh Courant* of 28th October 1758, and was as follows:—

"Glasgow, 23 October, 1758.—We, Robert M'Nair and Jean Holmes, having taken into our consideration the way and manner our daughter Jean acted in her marriage, that she took none of our advice, nor advised us before she married; for which reason we discharged her from our family for more than twelve months; and being afraid that some or other of our family may also presume to marry without duly advising us thereof, we, taking the affair into our serious consideration, hereby discharge all and

Street, and was kept by a person of the name of Faulds, whose wife assisted him in the management of the establishment. The table was old-fashioned, and of considerably less dimensions than our present billiard tables; indeed it had all the appearance of having been originally a private billiard table, which Mr. Faulds had purchased at some auction. After Mr. Smart had leased the Tontine Hotel, he fitted up two very handsome billiard tables in the large attic of the said hotel. The accommodation there was exceedingly comfortable. In winter there was always a cheerful fire in the room, and the tables were well lighted with oil burners.

every one of our children from offering to marry without our special advice and consent first asked and obtained; and if any of our children should propose or pretend to offer marriage to any without, as aforesaid, our advice and consent, they in that case shall be banished from our family twelve months; and if they should go so far as to marry without our advice and consent, in that case they are to be banished from the family seven years: but whoever advises us of their intention to marry, and obtains our consent, shall not only remain children of the family, but also shall have a due proportion of our goods, gear, and estate, as we shall think convenient, and as the bargain requires. And, further, if any of our children shall marry clandestinely, they, by so doing, shall lose all claim or title to our effects, goods, gear, or estate. And we intimate this to all concerned, that none may pretend ignorance."

In 1736, as appears from *M'Ure's History of Glasgow*, page 210, the firm of Robert M'Nair, Jean Holmes, and Company was placed on the list of Glasgow shopkeepers. At this period, and for some time afterwards, all our great manufactories were carried on by joint stock companies: and the partners of these companies generally consisted of from five to ten of our high-class citizens, such as our Provost, Bailies, and Deans of Guild, with a "Sir John" or a "Sir George" scattered here and there among them. About the period in question the partners of the four Glasgow sugar-houses consisted each of them of five or six of these aristocratic gentlemen. The partners of the Eastern Sugar-house, lying on the south side of the Gallowgate, near Charlotte Street, then were—Provost Pedie, Bailie George Bogle, Bailie John Luke, goldsmith, John Graham of Dougalston, and Robert Cross, treasurer of the city. It was with no little astonishment, therefore, that the public heard of plain Robert M'Nair, Jean Holmes, and Company buying up the great concern of the Eastern Sugar-house which had required the joint stock of five of our wealthiest merchants to carry on.

On the occasion of Mr. M'Nair making this purchase, a satirical song was composed and handed about, which began thus:—

“ You're welcome to the sugar-house,
Robin M'Nair;
You're welcome to the sugar-house,
Robin M'Nair.
How is your sister Bell?
And how is Jean Holmes hersel'?
Robin M'Nair," etc.

From *Scots Magazine*, June 1779.—Died, at Glasgow, aged 76, Mr. Robert M'Nair, merchant in that city.