

THE GREAT FREAK RECEPTION.

Something Absolutely Unique in the History of New York Clubdom.

A Queer Midnight Exhibition at the "Tenderloin," at No. 114 West Thirty-second Street—Bearded Women, Human Lobsters, Living Skeletons, Cannibals and Freaks Galore Attend.

The Tenderloin Club held a "freak" reception early yesterday morning.

Last night's various members were busy engaged in recovering from the shock. While "Blue Jeans" was just as blue as ever, somehow Bob Hilliard looked tired; while Nat Goodwin played the "Nomic" with dash and spirit, his dashes were somewhat spasmodic. The remarkable head removed by Jimmie Powers looked redder than ever, and inside it there was an ache and a vague regret that passed all human understanding.

The wheels of the city government were temporarily clogged by the absent-mindedness of sundry officials of high degree, and the eminent jurists regarded their briefs with the careless indifference of men who are left out of a jack-pot.

A VERY PECULIAR CLUB.
The Tenderloin has a habit of doing the unexpected. It is constantly outraging the set, staid principles of clubdom, and treading upon the toes of propriety and scandalizing good people whose loss of club-life are confined to politics, prudery and paté. But Tenderloiners are surprised at nothing. If they should drift through the dark doors of the Club some night and find one of Barnum's dromedaries in their Spartan-like parors they would not turn a hair. They would simply say: "Hello, Drommy, old boy, how is your hump?" or something of that kind. Then they would bring out divers "steins" of good old ale and drink to the health of dromedaries in general.

THE INVITATIONS.
Early in the week the members of the Club

were duly served with the following invitation:

The Club will hold a "freak" reception on Wednesday, the 23rd, at 11.50 P. M. You are invited.

There was no further explanation than this. Nobody knew just what line of freaks the invitation referred to, and nobody cared.

At 11 o'clock the club windows at 114 West Thirty-second street were as dark as a family of black cats. The Tenderloin Association is hereditarily opposed to early hours, and nobody thinks of entering its hilarious portals until the rest of the world is wrapped in slumber. "Then," as Capt. Helly says, "it breaks loose and makes Rome howl." Journalists, poets, painters, actors, dreamers, novelists, notaries and men-about-town mingle indiscriminately, clink glasses, smoke disreputable looking pipes and forget dull care.

Wednesday night was by no means an exception to the usual order of things. At 11.30 P. M. Uncle Isaac, the rheumatic old son of Ham who presides over the Club's cuisine arrangements, fired the family cat energetically from the piano with a "G'way I'm yah, Tom; I allow yo got no business round yah nobow on 'ception nights." Then he illuminated the entire house for the coming event.

Not more than a dozen members were present when the first carriages arrived. There were three of them and they were from the Globe Museum. The door bell jingled, the stairs creaked with a ponderous and weighty creak and in came two feminine visions. Talk about avoidspoils! They weighed 400 pounds each. They slid through the parlor door sideways and tripped into the room with two coy and beautiful smiles. They were the Porter sisters.

The Reception Committee was appalled.

But Johnny Beaver, one of the Committee, sketched around and procured two chairs which he tendered the guests. Alas for the result. Both ladies threw themselves with graceful abandon into the chairs, and with equally graceful abandon the chairs fainted and broke into splinters. They were good chairs, but they were physically unequal to the emergency.

With great gallantry Mr. Beaver rushed to the rescue and raised a stray arm from the floor. That was all he could raise. Gallantry could no further go.

THE LOBSTER BOY PRESENTED.
Then the Porter sisters stood up and introduced a wonderful "lobster boy," with hands that suggested innumerable broils and salads, and feet that conveyed a vague idea of the flippers of a crab. Close behind the human crustacean came Michael Gilgal Owens, "the first man ever cured by Koch's lymph."

Just what Mr. Owens was cured of has not yet been definitely ascertained. His voice was like the steam siren that sings off Point Judith on foggy nights, and his capacity for Everard's lymph and Ruppert's ptomaines was something amazing.

Nearly were this quartet of freaks comfortably welcomed before a long string of carriages from Huber's Museum arrived. First came an Italian string band, closely followed by a wild and warlike party of Sioux and Blackfoot Indians. With this party were two pretty Indian girls, "Wild Rose" and "Lily of the Valley."

Then it began to rain freaks and club members. They were as thick as the Sunday throngs on Fifth avenue. In quick succession came the following notables: Jim Kid, the famous cowboy; Gofetchit, a great Zulu chief who smoked cigarettes; three Fiji Islanders, dressed a la cannibal; Bob Hilliard, the Murray triplets, who are also dwarfs; George Williams, the legless

"Turtle Boy," the dwarf policeman, Zelle De Menti, the snake charmer; Susie Conradi, the fat bearded lady; Nat Goodwin, a Scotch Albino, a lovely Circassian, Hermann, the strong man; Urik, the Vienna giant; Elr Goddard, Mattie Lee Price, the electric girl; Harry Neagle, Fifi Jim, the horrible cannibal; the gorgeous mandolin quartet, Stanley, the musical imitator; the Moroccan cannibals, Tagliapietri, Dr. J. Beferon Kunnas, six Samoan warriors, Pat Sheedy, Toosa, the snake charmer; Jim Corbett, Jimmy Powers, Leon Jolly, J. Alegrinus Donaghy, Stanley Cohen, Max Hirsch and more cannibals. In addition to these there were dozens of men about town, human anvils, human pinecones, actors, journalists, "what-is-its," lawyers and human skeletons.

THE SOCIAL SIDE OF FREAKDOM.
In the background stood Managers Huber, Werth and Doris; Prof. Langdon, the cackler; Prof. Pike, Dr. Lindsay and other museum managers and celebrities.

It did not take long for the freaks to make themselves at home. The "Lobster Boy" extended a friendly claw to everybody within reach, the "Turtle Boy" emerged from his shell, the Albino beamed with coquettish and pink glances upon the assembly, and eventually, when everybody had unburied from the severe austerity of their professional dignity, Prof. Langdon mounted a table in the centre of the large room and proceeded to show what a first-class, sound-lunged museum cackler can do.

"Now, gentlemen," he began, "I will introduce to your attention the various wonderful freaks which you see before you." Then he beckoned to the fat and bearded lady, who came modestly forward.

"This, gentlemen, is Susie Conradi, the wonderful bearded woman."

A NARROW ESCAPE FROM THE CANNIBALS.
Instantly there arose loud hissing, whereat

Miss Conradi blushed and stroked her whiskers in an embarrassed manner.

It became necessary to explain that hisses were the Tenderloin expression of applause and approval. This smoothed matters immensely for the Club, as the cannibals had already grasped their war-sticks, and several undoubtedly made mental selections of eligible victims.

After expatiating upon the unique character of Miss Conradi's VanDyke whiskers, Prof. Langdon recited the following beautiful poem:

"Watch the living wonders
When through the room you're restored;
The bearded lady rises,
You hear she's loudly cheered.
Oh, what a charming woman,
In love and friendship reared;
She boasts such handsome whiskers,
A full mustache and beard."

THE ORATOR FROM SAMOA.
Then Prof. Langdon introduced the Samoan warriors, who gave an alleged war-dance that shook the Tenderloin rafters. They stamped around on people's toes, grunted, made bluffs at imaginary enemies, pranced around like chickens chasing a grasshopper, and in due went through with some most horrible motions.

When this was finished, one of them, with the eloquent spirit of Cicero burning in his aboriginal breast, made a speech. It was not adapted to publication; that is to say, he said things that no right-minded man would have thought of saying. His views on the Force bill were warred by the spirit of intense partisanship, and his ideas of the tariff did not come up to the expectation of the members of the club. He was hissed.

Then a Zulu warrior with a large beautiful ring through his nose, was introduced. He knocked off a step or two, in the way of a Zulu horseshoe, snorted, looked about him with contempt and scorn, and withdrew. He was dressed in black and a pocket handkerchief.

A Circassian lady dressed in a light blue satin gown came next. She wore her hair a la porcupine when he is mad. She was beautiful and looked something like a large paint brush.

THE SNAKE CHARMER CAUSES A SENSATION.
Then came a lovely woman known as Zelle De Menti. She was a snake charmer. Close beside her on the floor stood a large box, containing several snakes. They were long and mottled and as large and round as the hose used by the Fire Department.

Nat Goodwin turned pale. He had seen snakes before, but not this species. Hilliard took refuge behind one of the fat ladies. Several members of the Club went down to the wine room and others climbed upon the chairs in order to see better.

Miss De Menti had great nerve. She coiled the snakes around her hip-white neck as easily as a woman would handle a fur boa. Then she would uncoil them and throw them about with careless grace, the snakes all the while waving their long forked tongues in the air close to her face. Everybody hissed, of course, when she had finished her performance.

A COLLATION FOR THE FREAKS.

One by one all the freaks were introduced and put through their paces. Then the entire crowd went downstairs to the café, where luncheon was served, and the ale went around and everybody, freaks and all, became merry. It became a source of fascination to many of the members present to note the deft manner in which the Zulu avoided the ring in his nose in the process of disposing of champagne. Another strange circumstance was the unearthly appetite of the living skeleton and the dainty way in which the fat ladies ate.

The freaks became very fraternal as the night progressed, and at 3 o'clock the "Turtle Boy" and the human lobster, heretofore deadly enemies, became warm

friends. The seven-foot Vienna giant looked sepulchral. He carried a load of woes that a man of ordinary stature would have weakened under.

Bob Hilliard leaned confidentially on the chair of the bearded lady, whispering small nothings, and a prominent newspaper artist was engaged in a deep and abstruse conversation with a big Zulu over in the corner. Each held a mug of ale in the left hand and the Zulu was smoking a cigar.

Nat Goodwin was ascertaining the latest fads on the average cannibal menu from a South Sea Islander. There was no continuity to be observed in the buzz of conversation. It was all in scraps.

TID-BITS OF THE CHAT.
Upon the general tide of talk floated strange bits, something as follows:
"You have a beautiful beard, madam?"
"Now you don't mean it. You are surely joking."

"What! (from Goodwin's direction) skin man alive and eat him afterwards? Thunders and smoke! how does ~~he~~ taste?"
"Are all the colored gentlemen in South Africa as black as you are?"
"What's your name, my fren't Young man 'traid of his' muzzern-law, eh? Well, Mr. Sheever, allow me to introduce you to a fren' of mine—Mr. Young-man-'traid-of-'traid-of—oh, what in blazes are yer 'traid of, anyhow?"

Then, as the gray dawn rose like a specter in the east the company broke up by sections.

The freaks went home in carriages. The ordinary Tenderloin members struggled away in a long procession through the drizzling rain towards Broadway, with their coats well up about their ears and their umbrellas in active service. And every man in the procession went home and dreamed about freaks.