

THE
SCRIBBLER,

A SERIES OF WEEKLY ESSAYS PUBLISHED IN MONTREAL, I. C.
ON LITERARY, CRITICAL, SATIRICAL, MORAL, AND
LOCAL SUBJECTS :

INTERSPERSED WITH PIECES OF POETRY.

By LEWIS LUKE MACCULLOH, Esquire.

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FORMING
VOLUME I.

*Sunt bona, sunt quædam mediocria, sunt mala, plu. a,
Quæ legis.....* MARTIAL.

Voulez vous du public meriter les amours,
Sans cesse en écrivant variez vos discours.
On lit peu ces auteurs nés pour nous ennuyer,
Quitoujours sur un ton semblent psalmodier. BOILEAU.

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.....
1822.

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THE SCRIBBLER.

MONTREAL.

THURSDAY, 6th SEPTEMBER, 1821.

No. XI.

Nec luisse pudet, sed non incidere ludum,—HORACE.
To sport's no harm, but ever to be sporting.

—*Hic toto tecum consumerer ævo.*—VIRGIL.

Here could I live, and love, and die with only you.—DRYDEN.

Wit is a most dangerous quality in the possession of either man or woman; and most difficult to be kept within the bounds of discretion and even within the limits of excusable vivacity. Its greatest danger may be said to be in the almost irresistible temptation it affords for exposing the foibles of our friends and acquaintances. Many men, by an indulgence in their sarcastic dispositions have totally lost their most powerful friends, and ruined all the prospects of their lives. Self-interest being the main spring of action in these degenerate modern times, however, there is not much danger amongst our young men, whose chief vice is a superabundance of prudence, of their wit running away with their caution. Of minds infinitely more independent, not bound in the trammels of avarice or yoked to the wheels of ambition, and with fervid imaginations, and excursive fancies; the other sex stand perhaps therefore more in need of a curb in that respect. The natural vivacity of the Canadian ladies (and by Canadians I do not here solely mean those of French descent, but generally those who are natives) when not damped by sectarian austerity, or wrapped up in the glooms and sullens that they put on in compliance with the laughable haughtiness of the would-be great men here, of whom there are too many, gives a very pleasing archness to the general tenor of their conversation, and the lively repartee, the retort courteous, and the quips and quiddits of ingenious witticism, receive additional poignancy from the lustre of a dark and meaning eye, and the satiric playfulness of a dimpled smile. Not to condemn, not to destroy, this disposition for raillery, but to regulate it, and restrain its excess, is my object. In the first place, my dear ladies, allow me to define to you what true wit is. It is the quick and intuitive sense of whatever is ridiculous or inconsistent, combined with a fertility of imagination that induces an instantaneous comparison in the mind, between objects that are, excepting in the one point of view which then presents itself, otherwise remarkably dissimilar or incongruous. In other words wit is the perception of hidden points of resemblance between objects that in other respects are widely different from each other, and the ready expression of that perception. Intuitive wit, however, will laugh at this pompous and learned dissection of its own internal structure, and like a young beauty, whirling through a waltz, will keep time and measure, with rapid step and graceful attitude, without thinking either of the anatomy of the foot and ankle, or of the structure or philosophy of the musical instruments that animate the dance. But, as in dancing, excess fatigues, affectation distorts, and fashionable nudity disgusts, whilst by too wild or frantic motion you may tread on other people's toes; so in the exercise of your talents for wit, beware of fatiguing your companions with too constant an exhibition, avoid the distortion arising from false wit, the indelicacy of expression into which a vivid fancy will

sometimes unavoidably betray those who profess to be smart, and, above all, the infliction of pain upon your friends and neighbours, by treading too hard upon their gouty places.

CORINNA sees nothing, hears nothing, reads nothing, that does not call forth the coruscations of her really pregnant wit; but their frequency dazzles, and their being often ill-timed, destroys their zest, or perverts their application. A fellow being condemned for sacrilege, having robbed a church and taken away along with him the communion plate, the creed and the ten commandments, a gentleman remarked, I do not wonder at the plate being stolen, but I can not think what was the man's object in taking the creed and the commandments; upon which Corinna said, "O, he took the creed to *make believe*, and the commandments to *break them* to be sure." Now this, though witty, happened to be ill-timed and perverted, for it was the day appointed for the execution of the poor fellow, and tho' aimed at the gentleman who had made the remark, and who was notorious both as a hypocrite in religion and as a libertine, was applied to the delinquent.

TRIFLETTA, has addicted herself to the sin of punning, and makes and solves charades, rebuses, riddles and conundrums, which are a kind of tinsel trappings that are hung round the tiara of sterling wit. Though this bastard wit is generally harmless, it is like a dose of magnesia, both palling and ineffectual. Some puns indeed have point, but then that is because they are not genuine puns, the distinction being, that where there is only a resemblance in the *sound*, it is a pure pun, whilst, if there is an allusion also that applies to the *sense* of the word at the same time, it partakes of the nature of a witticism. True wit is translatable into all languages, puns never can be understood but in one. A gentleman of a facetious disposition, had the mischance, on an aquatic excursion to be soured in the water, and on his emerging and shaking himself on the deck of the vessel, he observed, with an apt allusion to the want of refreshments that had been complained of, that for his part he had partaken of *a cold duck*. This was a pun. Trifletta, on whose muslin robe part of the sprinklings from the beau's coat had fallen, had a more brilliant thought than usual, and remarked, that she too had had a share of the same dish, but it seemed to her to be *goose-dripping*. This was the loftiest flight I ever knew her attain.

CUNEGONDA, who with the most bewitching beauty of face, and the most seductive luxury of shape, possesses likewise an imagination that darts its contagious fires through her laughter-loving eyes, unfortunately tinges all her wit with the purple bloom of Erato. It is my advice to her to spare her double entendres until after marriage; then and in solacing secrecy, the private parlour and the genial bed, admit of almost every freedom of word and thought; but till then beware! One of the most decent of her jokes was upon the occasion of some severe censures having been passed upon the character and conduct of a married lady, who seldom lost an opportunity of decorating her husband's brows, and who had just eloped and abandoned her young children. A gentleman was anxious to say something in her favour, and praised her for her well known charitable disposition, adding that she was a woman of feeling at the bottom. "I believe you," said Cunegonda, "for I dare say both you and most of the gentleman in town know that by experience."

But SCANDELESSA is still more deserving of reproof. Corinna, Trifletta, and Cunegonda only tire and displease others whilst they injure themselves; the raillery and sarcasm that flow from Scandelessa, vex and injure her most intimate friends; but friends she never keeps; she sees and seizes every the slightest object of ridicule or satire in all her acquaintances, and has no mercy in exposing them: It is true the flashes of her wit are in general brilliant, they excite admiration, and extort involuntary applause, but they inflict pain, and shew so bitter and sarcastic a disposition, that hardy must that youth be, and either endowed with superior talents, or blunted by callous dulness that ventures upon her as a wife. I will not give an example of the witty malignity with

which her conversation is replete, as she scarcely ever says any thing that is not so pointed but those against whom the shaft is aimed can feel it rankle the moment it is sped; and I can not be the retailer of ill-nature, be it decked in ever so bespangled or illuminated a garb.

Yet these are nevertheless all redeemable faults; let Corinna curtail the exuberance of her remarks, Trifletta study the essence of words more than their sound, Cunegonda restrain her vivid wanderings, and Scandelezza only do as she would be done by, and then they may all in time emulate my own ALTHEA, whose wit and vivacity is tempered by good nature and good sense, whose talents for conversation and pleasantry do not detract from her sympathy and friendliness, and whose mental attractions are only to be equalled by the unfading beauties of her person that years have not dimmed, and by the undiminished constancy of her affection that poverty and misfortune have not destroyed.

With her a cottage would be a palace, a prison-cell a vale royal of sweets, company and the world, a scene of fairy felicity, and HOME, all, and more than is pictured so poetically in the following lines:

FOR THE SCRIBBLER.

HOME.

“There’s a land of delight that the stranger knows not,
An Eden terrestrial, a soul-cheering spot,
Where the sun-shine of happiness pours its best ray,
And the halo of pleasure enlivens each day.

’Tis unknown to the traveller that roams the world round;
In wild dissipation it never is found;
’Tis not in the field where ambition stalks high;
Nor is it in Courts with the artful and sly.

Yet it blooms in all countries, ’tis known in all climes,
’Tis found in all nations and found at all times——
In the mountains of Norway, snow-cover’d and drear;
In the south where the burning sun flames all the year.

The shrine of affection within it is raised;
The altar of friendship long in it has blazed;
It is sacred to love, and it long will retain
The dear sweets of life that are found in love’s train.

It was given to man for a quiet retreat
From the noise of the world—there peace fixes her seat;
There gentle contentment delights to reside,
While soft, dove-eyed, tenderness keeps by their side.

But ah! there are demons of jealousy, hate,
Dissipation, intemperance, that round this land wait,
To enter and spoil it. O! let them not come,
For with them destruction would ravage your HOME.”

ERIEUS.

Port Talbot, U. C.

The manly, gentlemanly, and classical amusement of racing, is, I see, about to be renewed in Montreal. It is one that is worthy of an enlightened nation equally desirous of cultivating the arts of peace, and of being prepared to confront aggression. The eminently useful and pleasing qualities of that noble animal, the horse, are cultivated, improved, and displayed by races, whilst joy, pastime, and delight are called forth by the occasion in all classes. That these, with many other public games and exhibitions, are liable to be abused, is no argument to be applied to their

condemnation, *ad abusu ad usum non valet consequentia*; all we have to do is to guard as much as possible, against their abuse. The principal one is that of making this noble pastime a trade, or as our 'cute and cunning neighbours in Yankee-town would say, a *speculation*. Jockeyship of all kinds should be discouraged, from the sharp-eyed boy, who, with a knowing leer, will take a bribe on both sides, to the importer and puffer of horses that "have beat all before them in the Upper Province and in the States." All sales of horses made on the ground should be declared void, and the disgraceful scene that has been practiced here, of an auctioneer selling horses on the spot after the races, utterly prohibited. Let the contest be between gentlemen and gentlemen, to try the speed, mettle, and bottom of their own horses, for an honorary or trifling premium; and let jockeys, horse-dealers, and professed *speculators* be in every possible way discouraged. Gambling too is, I will allow, an evil of gigantic growth that will accompany this species of amusement; nor do I know of any remedy that can be proposed that can remove it. Some consolation may be found in the reflection that in these hard times, as there is little to spend, there is less to sport.

CRITIC, who ought rather to have signed MISOGYNOS, conceiving I want to make all women appear angels, instances Queen Mary, Lot's daughters, Joseph's mistress, Sampson's Dalilah, and Herod's Herodias, as either, in his courtly language, great she-devils, or such at least as played the devil sufficiently in their turn. I never contended there were no bad women, (I do not mean, *bad women* in the sense that mothers and aunts mean when they admonish their sons and nephews, for every body knows there are plenty of them in Montreal, and some of them good creatures too) but I contend that in women, their virtues and excellencies are all intrinsically and naturally their own, and that their vices and failings, which I confess are not few, are all, without exception, of foreign growth, occasioned by man, and are the consequences and fruits of his conduct, of his example, of his erroneous system, his bad treatment, and his evil propensities. In a future number I will prove this to be the case in all the instances Critic adduces, and in every other that can be brought forward.

L. L. M.

It will be perceived that the letter from William Henry^[A] has not gone unregarded. Whether the hint is taken or not the Scribbler will be glad to hear again from Mr. L. F.

DR. SLEIGH'S *six lectures on Craniology are now in progress; to-morrow, Friday, will be the 4th, and the following Monday and Friday, the 5th and 6th. Admission to one lecture, 5s. to three, 10s.*

LAVOISNE'S *ATLAS is open for subscription at Mr. H. H. Cunningham's, in St. Paul Street, where a specimen may be seen every day after 3 o'clock.*

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[A] I take this opportunity of exclaiming against the barbarous and unnecessary change that has been attempted to be made in the appellation of the above place from the original French name of *Sorel* to *William Henry*, one that almost rivals in absurdity the Homer's, the Manlius', the Ulysses', the Sempronius', &c. of the *American Gazetteers*. Fortunately the nationality of the French Canadians is in this instance justified by good sense, and *Sorel* will no doubt, outlive its affected and puny successor, *William Henry*.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *The Scribbler 1821-08-09 Volume 1, Issue 11* edited by Samuel Hull Wilcocke]