

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.

Nos. 1 to 52,
From 23th June, 1821, to 20th June, 1822.

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 ecrivant variez vos discours.
On lit peu ces auteurs nés pour nous ennuyer,
Quitoujours sur un ton semblent psalmodier. BOILEAU.

PRINTED BY JAMES LANE, IN MONTREAL.
Published in Montreal, and to be had of the proprietor,
SAMUEL H. WILCOCKE, at Burlington, Vermont.

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1822.

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Title: The Scribbler 1821-08-09 Volume 1, Issue 22

Date of first publication: 1821

Author: Samuel Hull Wilcocke (1766-1833) (Editor)

Date first posted: Apr. 23, 2019

Date last updated: Apr. 23, 2019

Faded Page eBook #20190475

This eBook was produced by: Marcia Brooks, David T. Jones, Cindy Beyer & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <https://www.pgdpCanada.net>

THE SCRIBBLER.

MONTREAL.

THURSDAY, 22d NOVEMBER, 1821.

No. XXII.

*Ille sedet, citharamque tenet, pretiumque vehendi
Cantat, et æquoreas carmine mulcet aquas.*—OVID.

Then on the dolphin's back his lyre he strings,
And grateful thus his watery passage pays,
The waves subside, and smoothen as he sings,
And winds are hush'd whilst listening to his lays.

On the day dedicated to St. Cecilia the patroness of harmony not a whisper must be breathed in denial of its divine influence, or in derogation of the *ars musica*^[1] so much extolled

^[1] See an obscure corner on the last page of this number for an anecdote illustrative of this expression.

“By saint, by savage, and by sage”;

and, smothering my heretical opinions on that subject, I fulfill the promise made at the close of my last number, since

“MUSIC HATH CHARMS.”
Sure music hath a powerful charm
To quell the tumults of the breast,
The sting of anguish to disarm,
And lull the labouring soul to rest.

Its soothing strains, in healing streams,
Pour balm into the wounded heart,
Which, sweetly lost in pleasing dreams,
Forgets the wound that caused the smart.

The plaintive chord awakens soft
The dormant feelings of the soul,
And gently bends the stubborn will
To bow to its divine controul.

It smooths the wrinkled brow of care,
It bids compassion kindly move,
It breathes enchantment through the air,
And gilds the winged shafts of love.^[2]

ERIEUS.

Port Talbot, U. C.

^[2] With the freedom of a friendly censor, which I am sure Erius [would] allow, he will perceive that two stanzas are suppressed, which I do [not] think worthy of the rest, especially that where music is described [as having] a “silent sway.”

Of eulogies in praise of music, ancient fable and modern enthusiasm are full. The scholar informs us of the walls of Troy built by the sound of Apollo's lyre, according to Ovid.

*Ilion aspicias, firmataque turribus altis
Mænia, Apollinææ structa canore lyræ.*

“Troy you shall see, and walls divine admire,
Built by the music of Apollo's lyre.”

So too, as Horace tells us, Amphion erected the walls of Thebes:

*Dictus et Amphion, Thebanæ conditor urbis,
Saxa movere sono testupinis, et prece blanda,
Ducere quo vellet.*

“Amphion too, as story goes, could call
Obedient stones to make the Theban wall.
He led them as he pleased: the rocks obey'd,
And danced in order to the tunes he play'd.”

And the strains of Arion, as my motto expresses, even calmed the raging ocean. The harp of Orpheus, tamed the brutes, and made the forest to follow him; hence Congreve, in the opening scene of his Mourning Bride, makes Almeria say

“Music hath charms to sooth the savage beast,
To soften rocks, and bend the knotted oak.”

But these hyperbolical feats were even eclipsed, if we may believe oriental tradition, by M[me] Tousine, a wonderful musician in the time of [the] emperor Acbar, who sung one of his *night-rau* or melodies appropriated to the night, at mid-day, when the powers of his music proved to be such, that it instantly became night, and the darkness extended in a circle round the palace, as far as the sound of his voice could be heard.^[3]

^[3] There were probably no deaf persons within the magic circle above described. This tale may go along with that of the celebrated organist, Abt Vogler's imitating a thunderstorm so well that all the milk for miles round turned sour. The New-York Evening Post speaking of the wonderful effect produced by the vocal powers of Phillips the singer who lately performed in that city, says, “We do not recollect ever to have seen an orchestra so much completely lost in delight or astonishment, as to forget the use of their instruments, which was the case last night, till at length Phillips was obliged to step up and awaken their senses by waving his hand as *an incantation*.” Another American paper remarks upon this paragraph. “This marvellous incident reminds us of a circumstance which took place some years ago in Edinburgh, and which was brought about by the powers of a celebrated tragic actress. She personated Isabella, and the gentlemen musicians, albeit unused to the melting mood, blubbered, every soul of them, like hungry children for their bread and butter, while the audience, poor souls, were left up to their ancles in tears.”—*Boston Gazette*.

Mem. Tho' the New-York paragraph and the Boston remark have already appeared in a Montreal paper, yet as the Scribbler, will, it is hoped, become a store-house in future ages to supply scraps to the retailers who will have to beat their brains for the amusement of Prince Posterity (and I have as much veneration for his illustrious highness as Dean Swift himself,) here they are, snug in a note, at their service.

But to revert to the day we are celebrating. Cecilia was a native of Rome, and is stated to have very early made a vow of chastity, but that her parents nevertheless compelled her to marry a young nobleman named Valerian, a heathen, who, on going to bed on the wedding-night, as, we are told, “*was the custom in those days,*” was informed by his bride that he must withdraw from her bed-chamber, as she was every night visited by an angel from Heaven, who would otherwise destroy him. Surprised and greatly affected by this intelligence, Valerian intreated to be admitted

to an interview with the angel, which Cecilia explained to him was impossible unless he abjured his Pagan errors and received baptism, adding such “*sweet and convincing arguments*,” as in the end completely to persuade him of the superiority of her religion. Thus Valerian and his brother Tibertius, to whom he communicated all that had passed, were made converts to Christianity, and shortly after the good husband found his wife at prayers in her closet, with an angel, in the shape of a beautiful youth, joining in her devotion. The angel assured Valerian that both his own and his brother’s conversion were accepted, and would soon be sealed with the crown of martyrdom. Both the brothers were soon after beheaded, as the angel had encouraged them to hope, and Cecilia remaining steadfast, in despite of the efforts made to persuade or intimidate her into idolatry, was, according to one legend, thrown into a cauldron of boiling water, and scalded to death, or, as another relates, stifled in a dry bath, whilst some authors assert that, surviving the latter attempt on her life, she was beheaded. Her martyrdom took place some time between the year 180 and 230 of the Christian æra.

There is at Rome a beautiful chapel dedicated to St. Cecilia, which it is asserted stands on the precise site of the house in which she received the visits of her celestial admirer. To her has been assigned the patronage of melody, from her alleged excellence in singing the praises of the deity, to which she, first in the Christian church, united instrumental music; and we are assured that the angel who was enamoured of her, quitted the mansions of heavenly bliss, overcome by the fascination of her harmony; and that, when she was beheaded, he joined in a sweet and melodious concert with other angels, who conducted her to the regions of eternal happiness. To this legend Dryden alludes in the close of his admirable ode:

“At last divine Cecilia came,
Inventress of the vocal frame;
The sweet enthusiast from her sacred store,
Enlarged the former narrow bounds,
And added length to solemn sounds,
With nature’s mother-wit, and arts unknown before.

Let old Timotheus yield the prize,
Or both divide the crown;
He raised a mortal to the skies,
She drew an angel down.”

It appears to be an assumption in the Catholic calendar unauthorized by the legends, for St. Cecilia to be styled a *virgin*-martyr. The sole objection to the admission of her husband to her bed appears to have been his paganism, and as he complied with the terms prescribed, and became a convert to her purer faith, she could not withhold from him the implied reward, and it is more than probable bestowed upon him those earthly joys which form the best prototype of such as his approaching martyrdom would fully qualify him for in a state of beatitude.

There is a great similarity between the legend of St. Cecilia, *mutatis mutandis* and substituting an angel for the demon Asmodeus, and the history of Sara of Ragès, and Tobit. The latter would form an excellent ground-work for a modern romance, interspersed with all the machinery of magic, necromancy and incantation; or for “a wild and wonderful song,” worthy of the pen of a Southey. It is noted in my commonplace-book as one of the

“Things unattempted yet in prose or verse.”

But Cicely here jogs my arm, with “ah! but where are the verses on *me*?”—*Les voilà ma belle*.

Cecilia claims the votive song;
With mien angelic and cerulean eyes,
Behold her seated at her golden harp,
And as the wires along
Her slender fingers skim, sweet trills arise,
Full base's quivering swell, and dulcet tenor's sharp.
With flowing hair of ebon hue,
And graceful arm extended, white and smooth
As unstain'd velvet, tapering to the hand,
With pleasure ever new,
Her form enchants us, and her accents sooth,
With beauty's majesty, and music's magic wand.

Nor must young *Cicely* be forgot,
Yon blithesome maiden, frolicking and gay;
Nor buxom^[4] *Cis*, the pride of country bowers,
Ruddy as opening day.
All hail! whether to milk and churn your lot,
Or tuneful harp to wake, or organ's pealing powers.

^[4] This word which now signifies nearly what is meant by the French *en bon point*, was originally written bucksome, and denoted "wild and wanton as a buck." It is somewhat in this sense that it appears to have been used in the old form of matrimony. In 1554 the form is thus printed by J. Weyland. "I — take the — to my wedded wife, to have and to holde, fro this day forwarde, for better, for wors, for richer for poorer, in sicknesse and in hele, til dethe us departe, if holy church it woll ordeyne, and thereto I plight the my trouthe." And the woman repeats the same form, with the addition after "in sicknesse and in hele, to be bonere and bucksome in bedde and at the borde, till dethe us departe." This form maintained its ground for nearly a century, and was, I believe, not altered till the reign of Charles I.

Dr. Johnson in his life of Waller, deprecates the application of poetry to religious subjects; in which he alleges that "poetry loses its lustre and its power, because it is applied to the decoration of something more excellent than itself;" but this sentiment would lead to far different consequences than what he meant, and would equally exclude the pealing organ and melodious harp from the precincts of the temple, which his attachment to the hierarchy of the high church, is a sufficient guarantee he never intended to assert. A modern philosopher, Godwin, who has in more places than one read his recantation of his early opinions, in his life of Chaucer, goes into the opposite extreme and maintain that, "in religion we can never have a system, uniform, general, and nutritive of the purest affection and habits, without the solemnities of worship, the decencies of architecture, the fragrance of delicious odours, and *the friendly alliance of harmonious sounds.*"^[5] How widely men differ on some topics will appear by reference to the laws which were made for the government of the first settlers at Newhaven in Connecticut, amongst which will be found:

"No one shall read common prayers, keep Christmas or set days, make mince-pies, dance, play cards, or *play on any instrument of music, except the drum, trumpet, or jew's harp.*"

^[5] Godwin has here pressed three senses into the service, why not include the other two, and describe them pompously as the "exquisite titillations of the palate, and the rapturous experience of that sense which is emphatically denominated the naked truth." *Vide Ancient Sayings, Proverb, 7777* "Seeing is believing, but feeling is the naked truth."

Other curious ordinances occur likewise in the same code, viz.

"No food or lodging shall be offered to a quaker or other heretic.

“No one shall travel, cook victuals, make beds, sweep houses, cut hair, or shave, on the sabbath-day.

“No woman shall kiss her children on the sabbath-day.

“No priest shall abide in this dominion; he shall be banished and suffer death on his return; and priests may be seized by any one without a warrant.

“A man that strikes his wife shall pay a fine of ten pounds; a woman that strikes her husband shall be punished as the court directs.

“No man shall court a maid in person or by letter, without first obtaining the consent of her parents: five pounds penalty for the first offence, ten pounds for the second, and for the third, imprisonment during the pleasure of the Court.

“Married persons must lie together or be imprisoned.

“Every male shall have his hair cut round according to a cap.”

It would be an almost endless, but neither an unamusing, nor an uninstructional, task to collect all the absurdities which have been promulgated in laws and ordinances (confining the collection even to modern and civilized countries) by men who figure to themselves, in the pride of their hearts and the petty pomp of their “little, brief authority,” that they are adequate to become legislators. Not a few might be gleaned from the works of those prolific authors (with due reverence be it spoken) Messrs. King, Lords and Commons, whose joint labours of late years far exceed those of all other learned bodies or individuals. What a task does the legislature impose on the good subjects of the realm in expecting that their understanding and memory shall keep pace with the enormous growth of the statute-book!

“For who can read so fast as they can write?”

L. L. M.

The length to which the celebration of St. Cecilia’s day has given rise has prevented the continuation in this number, as was intended, of the Letters from Pulo Penang, which so many of my subscribers are solicitous for, and for which I beg to apologize.

M. Cristiani’s musical school,^[6] *three times a week, from 3 till 9 o’clock, terms, 20s. per month and half a guinea entrance.*

^[6] ANECDOTE.—Lord North going to shew his youngest daughter the building in Pall mall in which the Society for ancient music held their meeting, was asked by the young lady what the meaning was of the inscription over the door, *Ars Musica*. Why, my dear, that means—that means, *bum-fiddle*, to be sure.

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 22* edited by Samuel Hull Wilcocke]