

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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From 28th 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 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, 14th FEBRUARY,
1822.

No. XXXIV.

——But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold, whose slightest word,
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine.

SHAKESPEARE.

Nos patriæ fines, et dulcia linquimus arva,
Far from my native land and smiling home I go.

VIRGIL.

LETTER V.

Pulo Penang, July, 1820.

MY DEAR SIR,

My last dispatch carried the story of Louisa A—— down to her departure from the house of the time-serving magistrate to whom the East India Company's agents had applied on the occasion. It was between ten and eleven at night that she was sent with a warrant of commitment for *further* examination, though she had not been examined at all, to the common gaol of the island, in custody of a parcel of blackguard police-officers, and, would you believe it, accompanied, as if in a triumphal procession, by the still greater blackguards at whose instance she was thus brutally persecuted. They were not content with having secured their innocent prey in their vindictive toils, but must enjoy the diabolical satisfaction of seeing her safely lodged within the bars of the prison. It was but a short distance, but that distance was embittered by several mean and unmanly sarcasms quite in character, and consistent with the talents, education and manners of the honourable agents of the honourable Company. In the confusion of her mind, and amidst the distraction of her thoughts as to what was to be her fate, and the fate of S——, she does not recollect the particular persons who so politely did the honours of her entrée into prison, but she well remembers on turning round when the entrance grate was closed behind her that she saw the satyr-like face of Lieutenant General Tonguettye, viewing his victim through the bars with satanic triumph. There he

“grinn'd horribly a ghastly smile,”

that made her very soul shudder. A sneering smile of fiend-like rancour that she declares she never can forget, and which often visits her in dreams and in the dead of night. She was now, however, left under the care of the notorious Captain Liver, who delivered her to the gaoler, with such whispered instructions as no doubt he had received from his honourable employers. We may judge what these instructions were from the treatment which followed. She naturally

concluded that, although in an East India Island and not a great distance from shores inhabited by the most savage Malays, yet as she was still in the hands of Englishmen (although were I an Hibernian, I should perhaps say that most of the English here are Scotch) she should receive such treatment as her sex, and her appearance, if not her situation in life, demanded. She expected to have had something like an apartment assigned her, a bed to lie on, and to be able to procure some refreshment after the exhausting scene of the last six hours, especially as the hypocritical Major General had told her the falsity before mentioned that she might have whatever she wanted. Her purse was fortunately pretty well stocked, for, although the plunderers took all the money they found in the house, they had left what she had about her person. But no refreshment was to be obtained for money nor for entreaty, and she was brutally ordered down a flight of steps that led to the lower regions of the prison under ground. At the bottom

“No light, but rather darkness visible,
Served only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades where”——

naked, blaspheming, and miserable wretches, rushed forward with the eager curiosity incited in a state of confinement by every novelty, to behold their new companion in misery. Another, massy grate was unbarred, and the affrighted Louisa, for now her long-suffering fortitude began to forsake her, was thrust in amongst the abject victims of crime and oppression that flocked around her, staring at her by the light of a solitary candle whose melancholy ray was worse than total darkness. But this light was almost immediately withdrawn. The heavy grating was closed behind her and she was left to shift for herself in a situation of indescribable horror to a mind of sensibility, and of poignant suffering to a female of delicate habits, tender health, and refined manners. She turned round, and before the outer massy door was closed, begged at least to have some water. O, water she would find there, or if not, she should have some in the morning. But even water there was none, for in the suffocating temperature of this island, you may readily conceive, my good friend, that were even the supply of water to the inmates of a dungeon-prison as ample as it was parsimonious, it would be soon consumed, and probably wasted with the thoughtlessness incident to a situation of utter despair and misery. Endeavouring to collect her scattered spirits, and endure the wretchedness of one night, for she had been told that she was to be examined in the morning,^[A] which she had not the least doubt therefore would bring her liberation, she turned to the poor creatures around her, and as there was one who spoke English, she learnt she was in the ward allotted to females in that part of the prison which is used as a house, of correction^[B]; but into which all female prisoners of every kind it seems are indiscriminately thrown. The scene amongst them baffled description, women and girls of all colours, countries, and ages, scarcely clothed, and in the most brutal state of degradation, prostitutes, thieves, runaway slaves,—figure to yourself, my dear Sir, a lady like Louisa A—— driven down to herd amongst such a group, and, if you can, avoid both shuddering at the picture, and execrating the vile authors and perpetrators of such opprobrious, such savage, treatment. Summoning all her fortitude, however, she enquired where she was to lie; as we do, on the stone floor was the reply; what no bedding, not even a bedstead? No, you will lie comfortably enough if you take this log for a pillow. She surveyed the floor; ’twas loathsomely filthy, damp to wetness, and covered with innumerable swarms of vermin, cockroaches, lizards, etc. She dreaded even the bite of a centipede, a scorpion, or a cobra di capello; but her new associates informed her there were no venomous reptiles there. Ah! thought she, true enough, the venomous reptiles are those I left outside of the gate of this dreary abode. The place she was in was a large kind of subterraneous hall arched over, on each side of which were several doors, which were those of the cells or apartments which were destined for the sleeping-places of the wretched women. In one of these a middle-aged woman who was sick had a miserable bed of straw which had been

sent her from the work-house on account of her illness: this accommodation she offered to Louisa, and indeed insisted on her taking it; it was the only article of the kind that was to be found in the whole ward;—Louisa has not forgot that woman.—After some persuasion she accepted the offer, and lay down in her clothes, hoping to find in

“kind nature’s sweet restorer, balmy sleep!”

some relief for her harassed mind and body, and some alleviation of her woes. ’Twas long, however, before she could close an eye, and not until some copious showers of tears had relieved the oppression with which her heart was bursting; for hitherto she had shed no tear, she had felt no softened emotion, but the burning force of resistance to insolence and tyranny, and the swelling of her soul to repel unmerited insult, had fevered her veins, and parched her lips. When, however, she could weep, the bow unbent, the string relaxed, and the sweet slumber of conscious innocence and rectitude visited her, though but for a very short time, in the gloomy cell and upon the hard and noisome bed, where she reposed. Four of the poor creatures lay down on the floor of this cell, which was about ten feet by eight in size, which shows the populousness of the mansion; but the appearance of a well dressed person of rank and elegance, in these subterraneous abodes of horror, was too extraordinary a circumstance, and afforded too interesting a topic for conversation and remark, to allow of the ladies of the house retiring to rest at an early hour; those who had lain down, rose up from their stony couch, and blacks, Hindoos, Malays, mulattos, mixed with the few white females that were there, entertained each other, for several hours, whilst they smoked their tobacco, and caught their fleas, amidst repressed laughter and smothered oaths, with conjectures as to the causes and consequences of poor Louisa’s misfortune. In this receptacle of human misery there was a wretched mad woman, who kept singing all night, and added greatly to the horror of the abode. A bucket of water was brought in in the morning, and shortly after bread was distributed, and Louisa had her loaf of brown bread also thrust through the bars to her. This produced a still more poignant feeling, and, in her own artless words “after a hearty cry,” she gave her bread to the poor creatures around her, who thankfully received it to eke out their scanty allowance. To behold the half naked wretches take their bread to the bucket, and sometimes eating it dry, and sometimes soaking it in water, make their miserable meal with the keenness of hunger, mingled with oaths and execrations, was a horrid scene, which will never be effaced from her memory. Soon after this Louisa’s servant brought her some tea from home, which, as no doubt, the honourable gentlemen had forgotten to prohibit being sent to her, she received; and about eleven o’clock the gaoler’s daughter came down to the grating of her prison, and, seeing her deplorable situation, said, she should not remain there; and with that humanity and commiseration which are the characteristics of her sex, persuaded her father to appropriate a ward in the body of the prison to Louisa, whither she was then removed. ’Tis now time, however, to conclude, and refer you to my next for the continuation of her history.

(To be continued.)

[A] The magistrates in Pulo Penang, who, with very few exceptions, are great ignoramusses, having found in an Act of Parliament that a prisoner who is brought before them, *may* be committed for further examination, and kept for 48 hours without being brought up again, which is a provision made to enable magistrates, in *extraordinary cases*, to make enquiries into the circumstances, have most wisely and most equitably construed it to mean that they *shall, in all cases*, be kept in prison 48 hours before they are examined; and this is their almost universal practice especially that of the magistrate who is at the head of the police, a Mr. Ropeson, a halfwitted old woman, who has been even known repeatedly to reprimand the constables for allowing the prisoners to bring with them any witnesses to exculpate them from the charges made; it being his creed that accusation is guilt, and every attempt at defence, a contempt of that magisterial authority, which he grossly abuses.

[B] The gaol in Pulo Penang is one of the most wretched construction, and in which a more inhuman and brutal system prevails than in any other place in the British dominions, rendered necessary, they say, from its insecurity; though a very

trifling expense would entirely remove that pretext. It is worthy of remark that the Acts of Council (which form part of the provincial law of this island) by which a part of the prison was appropriated to be used as a house of Correction, expressly prohibit any person being confined in that part, except convicts under sentence; yet, in utter defiance of this statute-law, it is the constant practice to put females into the house of correction who are taken up for felonies, because, forsooth, there is no separate room for them in the other part of the prison, but in this most righteous settlement

Law is a farce, and all things shew it;
I thought so once, and now I know it.

FOR THE SCRIBBLER.

A Lady's soliloquy while crossing the Atlantic Ocean from England to Canada.

Love, O love! thou sovereign passion,
Tyrant of the human breast,
Who that does not own thy mandate?
Who obeys not thy behest?

I have own'd thy pleasing empire;
To Alcander now I fly;
He hath not deceived Elvira;
We're each other's faithfully.

But how hard was the condition,
Sacrificing all my friends,
I left them all, perhaps for ever
Gone to earth's remotest ends.

To the partners of my childhood
I have bid a last adieu
All the scenes of youthful pleasure,
Where my infant breath I drew.

Albion's fairest fields forsaken,
Shall delight my eye no more,
Nor mine ear the murmuring billows
Rolling round her sea-girt shore.

Swift before the tempest flying,
Now we plough the foamy deep;
All I once held dear behind me!
Have I not then cause to weep?

But each sigh my bosom swelling,
E'er it rises is repress'd;
My Alcander is before me;
His kind care will make me blest.

Ocean's thunders roar around me,
Drear Canadian wilds before—
Ocean's waves shall not confound me;
I've a friend on yonder shore.

Whither do the fates command me,
Untried scenes of life to prove;
Yet I must not be complaining,
For it is th'award of love.

Woods and wilds shall not affright me,
They in vain shall spread alarms,
When Alcander is beside me,
Shall the wilderness have charms.

Love, O love! thou sovereign passion,
Sweetest monarch of the breast,
Whoe'er obeys thy truest mandates
Is on earth supremely blest.

GUESTICUS, SANDY, FEE-FAW-FUM, THEODORE, and other articles are reserved for the next number of the Domestic Intelligencer. Space has not allowed of ABELARD this week.

The speech of the Honourable TORY LOVERULE and the proceedings at the meeting held on the 18th of December, for the suppression of *laughing*, are too long; if possible to be curtailed, their humour and genuine satire will entitle them to a place.

S. H. Wilcocke gives notice to such of his friends as may favour him with petitions to the Legislature, to engross, that it will be necessary to state if such petitions are designed to be presented for signature to the gentlemen of the *ci-devant* N. W. Co. in order that in that case he may disguise his hand-writing, as otherwise they will not sign, altho' they may have promised it, as was the case in a late instance; for they have a mortal antipathy to whatever comes from his pen, and are by no means shy of forfeiting their words.

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 1822-02-14 Volume 1, Issue 34* edited by Samuel Hull Wilcocke]