

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

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.....
1822.

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THE SCRIBBLER.

MONTREAL.

SATURDAY, 8TH JUNE,
1822.

SUPPLEMENT TO No. L.

Quadrupedante purtem sonitu quatit ungula campum. VIRGIL.

With four feet pattering o'er the echoing soil.

Tecum vivere amem, tecum obeam libens. HORACE.

With thee I love to live, for thee I'd gladly die.

It is well known that very strange work has been made in the world under the name and pretence of *Reformation*; and how often it has turned out to be in reality *Deformation*, or at best a tinkering sort of business, where, while one hole has been mended, two have been made.

I have at present in view an event of this nature of considerable importance and permanent influence, which took place in very early times, and which is by some supposed to have been productive of many and great advantages to the human species. I allude to the alteration brought about in human walking, when man, who, according to the best and ablest philosophers, went originally on four legs, first began to go upon two. I hope I shall be excused if I venture humbly to offer some reasons why I am led to doubt whether the innovation has been attended by all the advantages so fondly imagined.

There is something suspicious in the account given of this reformation. It is said to have had the same origin as that ascribed by Dr. Mandeville to the moral virtues. It was "the offspring of flattery begot upon pride." The philosophers of those days discovered that man was proud; they attacked him, in a cowardly manner, on his weak side, and by arguments, the sophism of which it might be easy enough to unravel and expose, prevailed on him to quit the primeval position, and, whether fairly or not, they coaxed him to stand upon his hind legs. How far any good is to be expected from a reformation founded on such principles, the reader must judge for himself. By the account with which the authors of it have furnished us thus much is certain, that nothing can be more unnatural, and yet, say these philosophers, at other times, "whatever you do, follow nature;" a precept which, in general, mankind seems very well disposed to practice, to the best of their abilities. A child naturally goes on all four;

and we all know how difficult a matter it is to set him on end and to keep him so. He has not even the stability of a nine pin, which will stand till it is bowled down. For my part, I never see a child's forehead with a great bump upon it, or swathed up in an enormous black pudding lest it should receive one, but I am irresistibly impelled to bewail this supposed reformation as a most notorious and melancholy defection from our primitive condition. When the two children brought up to man's estate, apart from all human beings by the command of a king of Egypt, who imagined that the language which they should speak, must necessarily be the original language of the world,—when these children, I say, had the honour to be introduced at court, amidst a circle of all the learned, and wise, and noble personages of that celebrated country, history bears testimony that they proceeded up the drawing-room and made their way to the royal presence upon all four. I am aware that some have thought that they threw themselves into that attitude from the dread and awe inspired by the sight of majesty; and others, reasoning with still greater subtlety, have supposed they might have done so, to adapt themselves to the feelings and employment of those whom they found assembled in that place, and be prepared either to creep, or to climb, or both, as opportunity offered. But I can not apprehend that the course of their education could have qualified them for speculations so abstruse as these; and I therefore can not avoid looking upon this recorded and undoubted fact, as undeniable evidence that such was the attitude proper to man. I am still further confirmed in my opinion from the strong propensity visible in mankind to return to it again. The posture into which we have been seduced is productive of constant uneasiness. We are in a fidget from morning to night, we tire ourselves, we carry sticks and canes as a consolatory approximation to our state of quadrupedal nature. Nay I do not know but that sitting is entirely a consequence of our having been unnaturally mounted into an upright instead of an horizontal position, and that the expense of benches, chairs and sofas, has become a permanent tax upon our property from which we should have been free had this innovation not taken place. After all we can not compose ourselves perfectly to rest but when recumbent upon our beds, and it is in the night alone, and when hidden in the shades of darkness, that we can resume our original posture; while it is feelingly remarked by Sterne, quoting the sentiment, however, I believe, from some ancient philosopher, that a horizontal position is the one in which we are best able to endure pain and grief, and for aught that appears to the contrary, pleasure and joy also. That our sole business is with that which is beneath us, universal practice seems to determine. Why then should we look after any thing else? or why be reproached with *O curvæ in terris animæ!* “O ye souls grovelling and bending down to the ground”; or suffer ourselves to be elated by the poet,

*Prona cum spectent animalia caetera terram,
Os homini sublime dedit.*

Whilst other brutes bend prone to earth their eyes,
Sublime to heaven behold man's aspect rise.

Rather let us recollect the fate of the astronomer, who whilst he was gazing at the stars, fell into a ditch.

It deserves notice that some of the most distinguished orders of chivalry derive their names from our fellow-creatures, the quadrupeds, whose virtues we are desirous to imitate, and even many of the familiar denominations of social life rest upon the same basis. An accomplished young gentleman of fashion, family, and fortune, glories in the name style and title of a buck. The corniferous animals, indeed, afford rather ominous symbolical appellations for those who take the wives unto themselves; but then on the other hand how envied is the reputation of a jolly dog, a clever dog, a funny dog, and many other varieties of the canine species, save however, puppies, who, though often called so in the rhetoric of conversation, are not very ambitious of the appellation. Then there are your cunning old foxes, your lion-hearts, your sheepsfaces, and calves heads, your pretty pussies, your pigsneys, your dear lambs, and now and then a pretty little mouse, all shewing how much both sexes have a hankering after going on all four. Nay, my dear duck, a common term of endearment, tho' it appears to be derived from the fowl species I contend has a higher and more sublime origin, and is allusive to the proverbial friskiness, and close embraces of a bear; for do we not repeatedly hear in that great menagerie, the stock-exchange of London, of a *bear* changed by a metamorphosis no less sudden and surprising than any in Ovid, into a *duck*, a *lame duck* indeed, but still a duck, with its characteristic *waddle*, a qualification in fact in which many of the connubial ducks before alluded to, excel. But to return to our bear, (be patient, gentle reader, I will not dance him backwards and forwards quite so much as Sterne's white bear;) in Cook's voyages we are informed that "the Kamschatdales are not only obliged to the bears for what little advancement they have hitherto made in the sciences and polite arts, as also in the use of simples, both internal and external, but they acknowledge them likewise for their dancing-masters; the bear-dance amongst them being the exact counterpart of every attitude and gesture peculiar to that animal, thro' its various functions, and this dance is the foundation and ground-work of all their other dances and what they value themselves most upon." Our North Western traders know it is the same with all the tribes of Indians throughout the continent, and so graceful and rational is the dance considered, that it is almost always one of the exhibitions with which the select parties of North Westers, who every winter assemble in this city to eat, drink and get drunk, under the title of the Beaver-club, amuse themselves and their staring guests, when they, *in vino veritas*, reassume their original brute state. It were to have been wished that one of these Siberian teachers had been present to have bestowed a lecture upon a friend of mine, who had been instructed to

marshal his feet in a tolerably decent way, and had attained some proficiency in what Dr. South styles “that whimsical manner of shaking the legs called dancing”; who, all at once, holding up his hands in an angle of 45°, with a countenance full of ineffable distress, and the most lamentable accents, exclaimed to his master “but, sir, what am I to do with THESE?” In fact, since we have left off putting our arms to their due and proper use of forelegs, they are constantly in the way, and we often do not know what upon earth to do with them. Some let them dangle in a perpendicular line parallel with their sides, some fold them across their breasts; some stick them akimbo in defiance, and not a few continually move them up and down, and throw them about in all directions and at all angles, as was the case with Dr. Johnson, when Lord Chesterfield had like to have fallen into fits by looking at him and could consider that stupendous lexicographer in no other light than that of an ill-taught posture-master. Some thrust their hands as far as they can into their breeches pockets, which is a bad habit enough; because if they find nothing in their own pockets, which perhaps pretty generally happens, and indeed is mostly the case with me, they may be tempted to try what they can find in those of others.—While forelegs were in fashion, the limbs which are now the cause of so much embarrassment to us, had full and proper employment: and it might have been said “Every man his own horse,” which, when we consider the expense and trouble of keeping those animals, and the varieties of accidents that occur from their use, is an additional argument to wish we still went on all four.

As I am upon the subject of the reformation made in our persons, I can not help mentioning one effected in an age so distant that no system of chronology within my knowledge has marked its era. The period is altogether unknown when we were first despoiled of an appendage equally useful and ornamental. I mean a *tail*, for, with an eminently learned philosopher of North Britain I am persuaded that it was originally part of our nature, and that man, when he lost that, lost much of his dignity. If a conjecture may be indulged on the subject, I should be inclined to suppose that this defalcation was coeval with the change of posture before discussed. No sooner had man unadvisedly mounted on two legs than his tail dropped off, as being useless, except when upon all four. I am sensible this is a topic which requires to be treated with the utmost caution and delicacy, and therefore, feeling the ground to tremble under me, I shall not venture to advance farther, but shall conclude by encouraging my readers, from the disposition prevalent amongst us to copy the manners of the brute creation, to hope that the time can not be very far distant, when we shall all once more go on all four, and have our tails again.

L. L. M.

During absence and neglect.

What was the world to me, its pomp and pride,
What were my books, but nonsense thrown aside;
What brightest sun, or darkest pelting storm,
The varied landscape, or bright beauty's form;
Insipid all; on only you I thought
With love, with fear, with jealousy, with doubt;
By turns I wept, and rail'd, and pray'd, and swore;
I call'd you angel, devil, and e'en—more;
I sought t' excuse, then studied to accuse,
And still adored you, while I tried t' abuse;
Love follow'd rage, and grief did rage subdue,
The world I cursed, and every thing but you.
But when you came; away flew doubts, and fears, and pain,
Love reign'd supreme, & "Richard was himself again."
MARK ANTONY.

*To ***** ***** on her wishing to be called ANN.*

Forgive me if I wound your ear
By still repeating Nancy,
That is the name of my sweet friend,
The other's but her fancy,

Nancy agrees with what we see,
A being gay and airy,
Blythe as a nymph of Flora's train
An angel, witch and fairy.

But Ann is of a different kind,
A melancholy maid,
A dull, prim, sentimental, soul,
In solemn pomp array'd.

O ne'er will I forego that name,
So artless, lovely, free!
Be what you will to all beside,
But Nancy still to me.

S.

To CORRESPONDENTS.

JACK EASY, from Plattsburgh, N. Y. and AMICUS, from Middlebury, Vt. will please to observe that the delineation of manners and characters, south of latitude 45° does not come within the present scope of the Scribbler. FLORA's favours are just received.

JUST PUBLISHED. A letter to a friend in Nova-Scotia, relating to banking institutions and other joint stock companies in Canada, &c. by MAURICE MASK, Esq. To which is added the protest of the Hon. Chief Justice Sewell, against the passing of the bills for the incorporation of the banks in Canada, &c.

To be had at the office of the Montreal Gazette, St. François Xavier-Street, price 2s. 6d.

Two pence a piece will be given for every copy of the following numbers of the Scribbler, that are not soiled or torn by Mr. Alexander

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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 1822-06-08 Volume 1, Issue 50s* edited by Samuel Hull Wilcocke]