

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.

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By **LEWIS LUKE MACCULLOH, Esquire.**

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FORMING  
**VOLUME I.**

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*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,  
Qu'ils jouent sur un ton semblent psalmodier. **BUTEAU.**

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# THE SCRIBBLER.

MONTREAL.

THURSDAY, 27th SEPTEMBER, 1821.

No. XIV.

"I would not be understood, that, while I discard this monstrous invention, I am an enemy to the proper ornaments of the fair sex. On the contrary, as the hand of nature has poured on them such a profusion of charms and graces, and sent them into the world more amiable and finished than the rest of her works, so I would have them bestow upon themselves all the additional beauties that art can supply them with, provided it does not interfere with, disguise, or pervert, those of nature. I consider woman as a beautiful romantic animal, that may be adorned with furs and feathers, pearls and diamonds, ores and silks. The lynx shall cast its skin at her feet to make her a tippet; the peacock, parrot, and swan, shall pay contributions to her muff; the sea shall be searched for shells, and the rocks for gems; and every part of nature furnish out its share towards the embellishment of a creature that is the most consummate work of it."

STEELE, *Tatler*.

For some time past I have been endeavouring to obtain from my committee for female fashions, a formal report of their observations; but, though repeated meetings have been held, the ladies who compose it have never been able to agree in the same opinions as to the merits of the various dresses, colours, and fashions, that have presented themselves for remark. I can, however, collect that in general there is little comparative extravagance or impropriety in the modes that have prevailed this summer, and, I am ready to allow that, with the exception of the bonnets, which are still of very preposterous dimensions, and the petticoats which are full short, there is much elegance in the general costume of the fair sex. The colours worn are rather less gaudy than last year, and the disgusting fashionable stoop, the duck-waddle, and hoydening swing, which were thought accomplishments in an elegante, are fast wearing away, and ladies are beginning again to resume their own native gracefulness of deportment. I still, however, must deprecate in the strongest terms the unnatural and deforming habit of wearing stiff stays, pressing and moulding the shape into a fantastical and artificial form, disagreeable to the eye by its monotony and angularity, grating to the ear by its frequent discordant creaking, and obnoxious to the touch by substituting hard and unyielding whalebone or steel for the soft and harmonious swell of nature. The shape of celestial symmetry that heaven has bestowed upon the female form, it is profanation to destroy or to attempt to mend; you may as well

..... gild refined gold,  
Or add a perfume to the violet.

Where there is any real defect in the shape that requires bolstering, hiding, or compressing, let artificial means be resorted to; but ye, who are blessed with forms faultless as your faces, do not, dear ladies, be thus cheated out of your superiority of attraction by those who possess not the same advantages. For it is with this, as was the case with the hoop-petticoats worn in the last century, in like manner as they were originally invented by some incontinent dames, in order to hide the visible marks of their frailty, and, when universally introduced, made all women look alike; so you may depend on it, that stiff stays were first brought up by women who were

crooked, or had unsightly protuberances, or bosoms that required bracing; and when you have all got your armour on, who can perceive the difference? you are puppets all alike. This practice is not only inelegant, but hurtful in the highest degree to the constitution, and medical men will agree with me, that in all cases, but more especially in married ladies, tight lacing is very detrimental. Nay, it ought perhaps to be a subject of legislative interference, as tending to injure the rising generation before they come into the world; and some divers into causes and effects, allege that from the long time stiff stays have been in use, arises the shortness and depression that is said to prevail now-a-days in men's noses.

To return to my committee; on this subject, my lively young Canadian agrees with me fully, and is content with the artless outline all bounteous nature has given to her youthful shape; but the English and the American ladies are both advocates for whalebone and steel; the latter particularly, who is really intrenched *jusqu'aux dents*; whilst my Irish widow alternately laughs at, and praises busks and stays, for at one time she is as unconstrained and *dégagée* in her shape and air, as her own lovely person can make her; and at others, when she dresses for company, she puts on her coat of mail, and says, "why you know we must do as others do;" which is, by the bye, a motive that weighs equally with the fashionable belle in dressing for a ball, with the Chinese lady whose feet are pinched into one fourth of their natural size, and with the Hottentot Venus who adorns her arms and legs with the rich and dripping spoils reeking from the abdomen of an ox. I am old enough to remember the absurd and disgusting custom of powdering and plastering the hair; when ladies wore their toupees three stories high, chignons spreading a coat of grease and powder all down the backs of their costliest apparel; when they wore waists tapering down to a point, that might almost be spanned, about two feet below the bosom; when they tottered upon shoes with heels four inches high, and scarcely half an inch in diameter. But all these vanities I have seen pass away; and in almost every respect, but in the infatuation of wearing stiff stays, nature has resumed her sway. It is to be hoped that in this too, good sense and good taste will ere long prevail, and the abomination be removed from the land.

Neither on another subject do I agree with my committee; namely, as to the shortness of the petticoat. In my sentiments on this head I have only the American lady on my side; her drapery is long and graceful; nor is it, as I have been informed by her waiting-maid, on account of any want of pretty legs, that she wears her clothes so long; but she appears to me to be truly sensible of the becoming elegance of that costume, that leaves those charms that chance alone ought to discover to the creative colouring of imagination. Venus herself in Virgil appears thus,

. . . . . *pedes vestis defluxit ad imos*  
*Et vera incessu patuit Dea. . . . .*

Down to her lovely feet, her spreading robe  
Flow'd graceful, and confess'd the goddess stood.

Both the widow, and the Canadian lass, are incorrigible in this respect; I will admit that their ancles and legs (for the least motion or air shews as high as the calf,) are as handsome and attractive as almost any that are to be seen; but that is the very reason why they are not so handsome nor so attractive as those that are not to be seen. My Englishwoman is between the two extremes, but yet, though she certainly has the most beautiful foot, ancle and leg, without exception, that imagination can conceive, or that is to be met with on a summer's day, still too much is shewn; and I would recommend to her, and all who are fond of conforming to such a fashionable display to profit by the charming description Sir John Suckling gives of the bride in his poem of "the Wedding;"

Her feet beneath her petticoat,  
Like little mice, stole in and out  
As if they fear'd the light.

For it is only in a ball-room that more than an inch above the shoe ought to be seen; and there I will allow even as much as full five or six inches.

Here my fair friends turned the tables on me, and plainly insinuated that the invention of long petticoats originated with such ladies as had crooked or thick legs, and that this argument was quite as good as that which I had used with regard to stiff stays and hoop-petticoats. I parried the attack, however, by shewing that the two cases were not parallel; for, when cased and hooped in armour, no opportunity offers for the most graceful form to be displayed or admired, whilst, let the petticoats be ever so long, both chance attitudes, and playful dexterity, may throw the folds sufficiently aside to discover every charm as high as decency will admit, and higher too; and in fact a taper and beautiful leg, shewn by glimpses accidentally or designedly, appears with far more voluptuous attraction from underneath a length of robe, than when the general shortness of the clothes gives full occasion to admire it.

As to the size of the bonnets, schisms prevail also in the cabinet on that head. The American lady is an advocate for the largest that are to be found, and Erin's gay daughter joins her; whilst, truer to nature and proportion, their coadjutrices prefer those of a moderate size. As the present fashionable shape of the bonnet partakes less of the nature of a poke than formerly, and being widened and thrown open, gives more scope for the artillery of the eyes to play around; they may be left to find their own level.

In full dress, fancy-caps, as usual in this place, are too much worn. A braid, a band, a circlet, with a flower or a feather, tastefully arranged amongst the beautiful tresses, for which the ladies of this country are so remarkable, are more becoming. Gold or silver net-caps, however, may be excepted; these, with pearl ornaments, set the hair off to the greatest advantage.

The coronation at home will probably give the tone to the female head-dress for some time to come, and it has been predicted that Ostrich plumes will wave with renovated elegance in the circles of fashion in England, during the ensuing winter. Steal a march, therefore, on the leaders of taste at home, good ladies, and adopt them by anticipation here, was my advice to the committee: to this they unanimously agreed, and it passed *nem. con.* that the next opportunity they would each sport a plume as large as that upon the champion's helmet, or so much less as may suit their complexions, statures, and fancies.

Having thus got them to be of the same opinion in one thing, the conference was broken up; and being, as naturally might be expected in an elderly gentleman engaged with four ladies, fatigued with the exertion, I reclined back upon the sofa, and fell into a doze, in which silks, and muslins, and bonnets, and feathers, and flounces, and ribbands, and jewels, and ancles, and legs, and petticoats, and stays, and Heaven knows what besides, floated in wild and variegated confusion, before my eyes;

“Visions of glory spare my aching sight!”——

till order arose at length amongst them, and arranging themselves around, I found myself in a charming neat dressing-room belonging to Venus on the top of Mount Olympus—but what I saw and heard there in the subsequent part of my dream, must be reserved for a following number, as some other matters are now waiting at the door of my cerebellum for admission and discussion.

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I have been informed that the lines in my last appeared some years ago in almost all the

American papers of note, and were universally attributed to Thomas Moore; yet I do not recollect ever to have seen them published in any collection of his poems. I shall in future be on my guard against such disingenuousness, and shall remember the hand-writing. Whatever appears in the Scribbler, *without the mark of quotation*, may be considered as original, and where not attributed to another pen, as the inspiration of my favourite muse.

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A SCENE IN THE STRAND, LONDON.

One morn I stept into a modish shop,  
An opera-glass, or something else, to buy,  
And on a lady fair I there came—pop—  
Who cheapen'd—what?—a pair of garters—fie!

A gay and gallant dame she was, I ween,  
And tho' a grandmama, yet youthful rigg'd  
Full sixty lusty summers she had seen,  
Yet look'd delightful, feather'd, capp'd and wigg'd.

I made my bow, and as I spoke, I view'd  
Elastic garters just arrived from France,  
Where gold on pink this noble motto shew'd,  
St George's, "Honi soit qui mal y pense."

A passing smile betray'd my latent thought,  
And this the lady chose that I should tell:  
"You think too flashy articles I've bought,  
To suit my age." "Ah, no, I know full well."

"That like Ninon's your charms are never old,  
But these are useless, like an *unseen rose*."  
She smiling answer'd, "Men are very bold;  
I've many known, and *what may happen no one knows*."

A question somewhat similar, to compare great things with small, to that which agitated the literary and chronological world as to the exact time of the close of the last and the commencement of the present century, seems likely to arise between the Scribbler and some of his subscribers. The first number having been published on the 28th of June, it has been contended that the present No. although the 14th, belongs to the first quarter, but the inconsistency of this will be evident when it is considered that by reckoning so—

No. 15, to be published the 4th of October, would be the first, and No. 28, to be published the 3d of Jan'y, the last, of the 2d quarter;

No. 29, to be published the 10th of January, the first, and No. 41, to be published the 4th of April, the last, of the 3d quarter;

No. 42, to be published the 11th of April, the first, and No. 55, to be published the 11th of July, the last, of the 4th quarter;

thus stretching the year a fortnight, and requiring 55 numbers instead of 52. The fallacy has arisen from taking the date of the first paper as that of its commencement; whereas, though this is no summary of weekly events, it must be considered that in like manner as a weekly paper contains the news of the preceding week, so does this contain matter arising during the week before, and consequently the real date of commencement is the 21st of June, the exact centre of the solar year.

Be it therefore enacted, by the authority aforesaid, that No. 13 was, and is, the last number of the first quarter of the Scribbler, and the present No. 14, the first number of the second quarter, and so to continue *quamdiu se bene gesserit*.

LEWIS LUKE MACCULLOH.

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The Verses entitled “the Emigrants,” and the eighteen Stanzas by a Settler, though well meant, are utterly inadmissible. Here followeth one of the eighteen as a sample:

Eighteen months for to do settling duties,  
Five acres to clear, and the street,  
To build a log-house, eighteen by twenty,  
And cover'd with shingles complete.

## 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 14* edited by Samuel Hull Wilcocke]