

LETTER V.

HAMILTON, December, 18—.

DEAR F.—This is a day like a handsome shrew—beautiful in appearance, fresh and finely tinted, but most vixenish, with its “brazen, burning sun and graceless wind”; so we shall visit the Public Building, and spend the day in the Library, instead of driving about.

There are not many fine buildings in Hamilton. Trinity Church is one of the handsomest, and occupies a commanding site above the lower town. It is Anglican, and is called a *High Church*. I am not alluding to its elevated position, but to its doctrine; and if high means Heavenward, I trust its motto will be “Excelsior” till it arrives at the summit of that Rock on which Christ built His Church, secure against the warfare and the wiles of Satan. Near by, on the same range of hills, stands the Sessions House, in which are the House of Assembly and the Court House. This was built in 1822. Below the hill on which the Session House stands is the Public Building, erected in 1839. In this important building are the Custom House, Colonial Offices, Public Library, Council Chamber, etc. Upstairs there are some cases containing Natural History specimens, curiosities, etc. The old-fashioned Grandfather’s Clock in the hall regulates the Bermudian hours.

And from its station in the hall

This ancient time-piece says to all:

“Forever, never; never, forever.”

The large Barometer denotes the atmospheric variations, usually showing from 60 to 70 degrees in winter.

The area which surrounds the Public Building is tastefully ornamented with trees, plants, flowers and shrubs. A fine cedar tree, now fourteen feet high, was planted by H.R.H. Prince Alfred (Duke of Edinburgh), then serving as

midshipman in the flagship *Nile*, in 1862. This is called “Prince Alfred’s tree.” A majestic granite obelisk, with an inscription on it stating that it was erected in graceful remembrance of Sir William Reid in 1861, is also an attractive object in the grounds. This Governor was the most energetic, active and popular of all the rulers who ever held office in Bermuda. He established the Model Farm, instituted the Public Library, improved Mount Langton, and carried out various other works beneficial to Bermuda. Sir W. Reid also wrote a well known book—“Reid on Storms”—most useful to navigators.

The Public Library is well stocked with excellent works of literature, many of a high class, and also with magazines and many old books, quite curiosities in themselves. I was much entertained with the perusal of some old copies of the *Bermuda Gazette*, the first newspaper published in the islands. It was established in January, 1780. The news, though *slightly stale*, is interesting—advertisements of various sales of coloured men, boys and girls, at auction, an account of a hurricane which uprooted trees and levelled houses; and a description of the earthquake of 1801, the state of the crops; new potatoes for sale in February and March; also tomatoes, strawberries and Loquat plums. The issues of the *Gazette* for the years from 1781 to 1810, however, were of absorbing interest to me. Each one relates, in a succinct manner, the weekly news of the troubles existing in France and in Ireland. The *Gazette*, quoting from an Irish paper concerning a speech which Grattan delivered in the House of Commons, says “the torrent of Grattan’s eloquence completely swept away all ‘Flood-marks,’ without leaving a vestige.”