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# THE SCRIBBLER.

MONTREAL, THURSDAY, 29th NOVEMBER, 1821. No. XXIII.

"All your burghers of a certain description, who have an humble ambition to be great men in a little way, who thirst after a little brief authority, that shall render them the terror of the almshouse and the bridewell—that shall enable them to lord it over obsequious poverty, vagrant vice, outcast prostitution, and hunger-driven dishonesty; that shall give to their beck a hound-like pack of catch-poles and bumbailiffs, tenfold greater rogues than the culprits they hunt down! My readers will excuse this sudden wrath, which I confess is unbecoming a grave historian, but I have a mortal antipathy to catch-poles, bumbailiffs, and little great men."

KNICKERBOCKER'S NEW-YORK.

## LETTER II.

*Pulo Penang; 3d May 1821.*

In my last, my dear Sir, I anticipated in my narrative by mentioning the expedition into Rangoon to get hold of S—, which did not take place till after his house had been ransacked, and Louisa's person insulted and ill-treated by some of the same ruffians who went after him; but in the sequel of this story I will take care to tell it in chronological order.

It was in the afternoon, a few days after S—'s departure, that, whilst Louisa was occupied in her household cares, or ruminating on the difficulties she should have to encounter in proceeding to join him in Pegu, whither his faithful Irish domestic, Patrick, was to have conducted her, she was surprised by the appearance of several officers of the police, who were in a few minutes followed by two of the members of the Council, both of them magistrates *ex officio*, and three of the

writers belonging to the East India Company's establishment; a formidable array to besiege, confound and oppress a defenceless woman.

As in the Iliad, Homer gives a descriptive catalogue of the generals and troops employed in the siege of Troy, and his practice has been followed not only by epic writers in general, but by historians and novellists, who usually give a preliminary account of the chief actors in their epopœa before introducing them upon the stage, I will make you acquainted with the besieging and storming party that accomplished this memorable coup de main.

First there was Major-General ——— who so ably afterwards conducted the predatory expedition to Rangoon, a fat man, who is blessed with a conveniently forgetful memory, as will amply appear in the *séquel*; a man of great profession and no performance. Next came a leader of note, who had distinguished himself in the wars with the Battas, and other Indians in the interior of Sumatra; a man of an ancient highland family, and who, being the only real gentleman, as well by birth and education, as by manners and behaviour, in the concern, it is the more to be wondered at that he should have lent himself as an active participator in this infamous transaction, and as an insulter of an unprotected woman. These were the commanding officers; and under them, as subalterns, came, the aforesaid Dutch renegado, whose actions, as I shall relate them, will sufficiently characterize him; one Head, who, from his happy genius in taking of all manner of oaths, has since received the nick-name of *the swearer*; and an honest Scotchman the only one of the band who behaved with civility and attention, and did not take an active part in the brutal outrages of all propriety that followed. As

chief of the police-gang appeared captain Liver, a Botany Bay convict, who had made his escape in one of the country-ships from New South Wales, and who, being tinged with crimes of various dyes had been, according to the proverb "set a thief to catch a thief," exalted to the dignity of principal catchpole in this fortunate island of ours. The rest of the forces were men of no note or name, but formed a crowd to fill the ranks, and overawe resistance; for the garrison that possessed the fortress they had to reduce was certainly formidable, consisting of Louisa herself, her female domestic, and poor Pat.

Thus having described the combatants, proceed we to the details of the action. Be it remembered, however, beforehand, that in order to sanction their proceedings with some colour of justice, they had got *the swearer* aforesaid to take one of his glib oaths, that certain papers were missing from the office in the East India Company's establishment in which S—— had presided, and that he had reason to believe they were stolen by the said S—— and were concealed in his dwelling house. Although most of the agents of the honourable the East India Company in this island are magistrates, yet as they sometimes, (not always) care for appearances, they judged it most expedient to employ one of their tools of magistrates, not immediately connected with them, but known to be entirely subservient to them in consequence of the valuable business which a near relation of his, as a lawyer, transacts for the Company. The deposition above stated having been made before this tool, pray admire the constitutional knowledge, and profound veneration for the law of England which this magistrate evinces, who thereupon issues his warrant to *search for papers* a thing unheard of, unpractised, illegal, and

punishable, in every case except in cases of high treason. However, maugre all law and common sense, he did do so, and it served the purpose. Armed with this illegal authority they produced it to Louisa. This paper, of which from her surprise and confusion she did not know the purport till afterwards, was, as has been said, a warrant to search for and seize *certain specified papers*; and here began the functions of the gentlemen employed in this affair; functions which, however much they might become the understrappers of the police, certainly disgraced the very honourable members of the honourable East India Company's Council. A detachment of bailiffs was stationed in the hall; a detachment of bailiffs was stationed in the court-yard and viranda; a detachment of bailiffs was stationed in the kitchen to which the servants were confined; no admittance or intercourse was allowed, although some friends of S—— called at the house while the transaction was going on: the lady was not suffered to stir out of the presence of these inquisitors, and even when she had occasion to go into her bedroom, she was followed and accompanied by one of the myrmidons. In short, no severity of precaution was omitted that might be considered necessary in the most atrocious case of high treason, and under the apprehension of rescue and rebellion. Unversed in the forms of law, ignorant of the extent either of the rights of an individual, or of the authority of magistrates and their satellites, without a friend to consult, or an arm to protect, Louisa could not but remain passive. She might otherwise have dared them to have entered her apartments, which were distinct from those occupied by S—— and his family, and were separately leased to her; she might have dared them to have searched her trunks, boxes,

and writing-desks; or to have touched her person. But the honourable gentlemen gave her at first abundance of good words; said, nothing was meant to injure her, that to a stranger in the settlement and an unprotected female they would take care no harm should happen, with numerous other common-place cajolements which the cunning of arbitrary minds dictates before their prey is fully in their power, and whilst they are wrapping it up in their traitorous web. The Major-General, with hollow and hypocritical professions, cajoled her to tell him what course S—— had taken (for as yet they were uncertain whether he had gone to Pegu, to Junk Ceylon, or to Sumatra) promising never to divulge it. She did not know, poor soul, that his promises were as celebrated as the *Punica fides* of the Carthaginians. After a strict search in all places, possible and impossible to consider as repositories of papers, they demanded her keys; not aware of the utter illegality of the demand and of the warrant under which they pretended to act, she consented to unlock her boxes, drawers, writing-desks, &c. all which they searched with the most indiscriminate and indecent avidity. That a trunk or drawer contained female apparel, linen, or night-clothes; that a band-box had caps, bonnets, or laces in it, was not sufficient, the contents must be emptied out, tossed and tumbled on the floor, unfolded and looked at, the borders of every night-cap examined, and the plaits of every shift peeped into; worthy occupation for members of the honourable East India Company's council! Even the foul clothes bag, the *impenetrabilia* of the dressing room and the closet, were raked into by these churls\*. Her person did

\* Query; does not the letter-writer here allude to CURZ the bookseller, who frequently bribed the night-men to hunt the temples of

Not escape, she was commanded to empty her pockets, for she is not fashionable enough to wear none, and they were turned inside out. In the course of this strict scrutiny, what did they find? Not one of the papers specified in the warrant; but in fact they looked to make important discoveries, yet what those discoveries were supposed to be, has never properly transpired, and they expected likewise to lay hold of money to a considerable amount, in both which objects they were disappointed, as well in their siege and reduction of his house and effects, as in their expedition against, and capture of his person. Yet their objects, that of securing the persons of all connected with S——; seizing and converting to their own use all the property they could lay their rapacious hands on, whether his or that of others; and crushing him and his for ever, must at all hazards be accomplished. But the false, malignant, and truly frivolous pretence they resorted to for this purpose must remain for the next sheet, for both my time and paper you see, are for the present exhausted.

*(To be continued.)*

There is so much congeniality with my own sentiments respecting female dress in the following observation of a writer in the Richmond Compiler, that I can not avoid giving them a place in the Scribbler.

“ All the restraints upon nature which distort the figure are contrary to good taste, in a word, are deformities. The hair, the beard, the nails,

*Cloacina for the letters and other literary reliquie of Pope and Swift?*

*Exert thy Curl-like soul,*

*And fish for golden leaves from hole to hole;*

says the facetious Peter Pindar in his Epistle to Boswell, urging him on by this glorious example, to rake for scraps and papers, in every receptacle.

It may be dressed *à la Titus* or *à la Brutus*, without injury to the vital organs. But when we mutilate our frame, or disorder any of our organs from our natural functions, nature commonly resists, and taste ought to second her punishments. The greatest liberties are generally taken in the fashionable societies of civilized countries with the waists of women, and that part of a beautiful woman which Edmund Burke describes as "the most beautiful." Our great-grand-mothers disfigured their waists with hoops, and many a tough battle did Addison in his *Spectator* wage with them, and with the head-dress. The next deformity was the stays, which cramped the vital organs, and offended the eye by causing women to resemble wasps. Both these deformities in themselves have been discarded; though we occasionally see the encroaching corset assuming the prerogative of the stays. Some of our dandies and even our dandies buckle themselves up in corsets; both the sexes to give themselves an elegant waist, and the females in particular to add to it the beauty of a finely moulded bosom. As to your corsetted dandies I have no patience with them. To them the beauty of a taper person is of far less consequence than it is to a woman; and besides, the most beautiful part of a woman forms no part of man's attraction. With the female corset I will not quarrel if it be kept within the bounds of moderation. If any bandage be used merely to support the bosom and bring it within certain proportions, a sound taste might overlook it. But let us have no non-elastic and unyielding material. Let us have no iron or steel; no prop to press into the chest; no those parts of our anatomy, which some writers consider as excrementitious, are fair subjects for the utmost caprice of taste. We may cut or curl the hair, according to the pleasure of the wearer.



cincture to impede the natural play of the lungs. Nature will resent the wrong by consumptions. In general she abhors all mutilation of what she has given us; all distortion; all fashionable assaults for bettering her work. She dislikes all dresses which press upon her functions and impede their operation. Whatever gives the freest play to the limbs and lungs, without violating the strictest rules of decency is the dress which a good taste strongly recommends. Above all; let us observe the decency of dress. No petticoats drawn up so as to reveal what they should conceal; no bosom artfully let down; no peak of the corset thrust upon the eye, as I have felt pain to observe in some sweet girls, can recommend the wearer to a sensible man. Our girls have a sufficient variety of colours and shapes to please even caprice itself without violating either nature or decency."

There are not many wasp-like dandies in Montreal; but one I have noticed, who makes himself truly ridiculous with his tightly corsetted waist, and artificially projecting hips and shoulders. If he did not often wear a black cravat he would not be so laughably conspicuous.

A meeting of the proprietors of the Montreal Library is about taking place (*see advertisement below.*) I trust they will come to a resolution to condemn to utter oblivion the execrable imposition that has been foisted upon the public, at the price of two shillings, under the false pretence of its being a Catalogue of the Library; and that they will take measures for preparing and publishing one that may be of some service.

L. L. M.

*A general meeting of the proprietors of the Montreal Library will be held on Monday next the 3d December at 3 P. M. for electing officers for the ensuing year.*