

**THE LIFE OF LAURENCE
STERNE. IN TWO
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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The Life of Laurence Sterne. In Two Volumes, Vol. II by Percy Fitzgerald

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PERCY FITZGERALD

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STERNE. IN TWO
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THE LIFE
OF
LAURENCE STERNE

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BY

PERCY FITZGERALD

AUTHOR OF 'THE LIFE OF GARRICK,'
'THE LIVES OF THE KEMBLEs,' 'BOZLAND,' ETC.

WITH A PORTRAIT

IN TWO VOLUMES

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LIFE OF STERNE

CHAPTER I

MR STERNE IN THE FRENCH SALONS

AFTER six weeks more we find him still lingering at Paris: he had been introduced to 'one half of their best goddesses, and in a month more shall be admitted to the shrines of the other half.' His odd, eccentric style of speech and manner had been much relished, and being now firmly established, and knowing his ground, he gave full scope to his humour. He used to 'Shandy it away fifty times more than I was ever wont, "and talk more nonsense than ever you heard me talk in your days," and to all sorts of people.' He could boast that he had 'converted many into Shandeism.' Scraps of his speech and general oddity struck on the Minister Choiseul's ear, who was heard asking (in better French than Mr Sterne reported it), '*Qui le diable est ce homme là?*' '*C'est Chevalier Shandy.*' He had, he was told, heard of those 'ten thousand things I cannot write,' and

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of 'those thousand things I do which cut no figure but in the doing.' A greater compliment still was paid him than merely exciting the curiosity of a prime minister. The Duke of Orleans had formed an odd collection of the portraits of some 'odd men,' which made a sort of department in his famous collection; and an artistic gentleman who lived with him, got Mr Sterne to sit for a full-length, to add to the eccentric catalogue. It was considered a most 'expressive' likeness.* It was intended that there should be an etching done of this picture.

Not many years ago this portrait came to light, and a chromo print of it was published by Messrs Colnaghi. They informed me that some time since they became possessed of the collection alluded to, and that the name of 'the gentleman who lived with him' was Carmontelle, who also painted Garrick. Among the rest was this characteristic likeness of Yorick, painted with much force and quaintness. The figure is about five or six inches high, drawn in profile, dressed in scrupulous black and elegant lace ruffles. The face is rather old for a man of his age, but there is no mistaking the likeness, and there is a Voltairean expression in the profile, as well as in the spare figure. He would seem to be standing on the terrace of the Palais Royal, and the painting itself has much merit from its spirit and the Meissonier-like treatment of the whole. The picture has been reproduced by the process of photogravure, and the colouring is so

* This portrait, however, is not to be found in the gorgeously illustrated 'Orleans Gallery.'

MR STERNE IN THE FRENCH SALONS

good that it may be readily mistaken for the original. We have now, therefore, several excellent likenesses of Sterne, including the well-known Sir Joshua, the capital bust by Nollekens, of which I have a small copy, and this little work of Carmontelle's.

Garrick was naturally anxious to know the state of the French stage. That tremendous question of the union of the two theatres was now in everyone's mouth. Scraps and snatches of green-room scandal absorbed the wrapt attention of the great metropolis. But the union of the theatres was made almost a party question.

Clairon also welcomed all the world, and Mr Sterne, to her house on Thursdays, 'when *she gives to eat* (as they say here) to all that are hungry and dry.' She more astonished than delighted Mr Sterne. Her style was often the usual French declamatory pattern; which it requires French training to appreciate. 'I cannot bear preaching,' he said; 'I fancy I got a surfeit of it in my younger days.'

On the 19th of March, he wrote to his friend that he was to be entertained that night by going specially to see a tragedy damned. 'Peace be with it and the gentle brain that made it.' Clairon, at first disgusted with her part, with all the fitfulness of an actress, had now taken it up with '*fureur*.' It was at last fixed for this 19th of March, when Mr Sterne was anticipating such a pleasant evening—but at the last moment it was withdrawn.

The fortnight, which at the end of January was to have been the furthest term of his stay, had stretched