

**THE NOVELS; THE LIFE
AND OPINIONS
OF TRISTRAM
SHANDY. GENT. VOL. I**

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The Novels; The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy. Gent. Vol. I by Laurence Sterne

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LAURENCE STERNE

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Yorick and Father Lovewick



THE
LIFE & OPINIONS
OF
TRISTRAM
SHANDY
GENTLEMAN

BY
LAURENCE
STERNE.
□ □ □ □
ILLUSTRATED
BY
GEORGE CRUIKSHANK

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THE
LIFE AND OPINIONS
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Ταράσσει τοὺς Ἀνθρώπους οὐ τὰ Πράγματα,
Ἄλλὰ τὰ περὶ τῶν Πραγμάτων, Δόγματα.

VOL. I. ORIGINAL EDITION.

THE
LIFE AND OPINIONS
OF
TRISTRAM SHANDY, GENT.

CHAPTER I.

I WISH either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about, when they begot me; had they duly considered how much depended upon what they were then doing;—that not only the production of a rational Being was concerned in it, but that possibly the happy formation and temperature of his body, perhaps his genius and the very cast of his mind, —and, for aught they knew to the contrary, even the fortunes of his whole house, might take their turn from the humours and dispositions which were then uppermost;—Had they duly weighed and considered all this, and proceeded accordingly,—I am verily persuaded I should have made a quite different figure in the world, from that in which the reader is likely to see me.—Believe me, good folks, this is not so inconsiderable a thing as many of you may think it;—you

have all, I dare say, heard of the animal spirits, as how they are transfused from father to son, &c., &c.,—and a great deal to that purpose:—Well, you may take my word, that nine parts in ten of a man's sense or his nonsense, his successes and miscarriages in this world, depend upon their motions and activity, and the different tracks and trains you put them into; so that when they are once set a-going, whether right or wrong, 'tis not a halfpenny matter,—away they go clattering like hey-go mad; and by treading the same steps over and over again, they presently make a road of it, as plain and as smooth as a garden walk, which, when they are once used to, the Devil himself sometimes shall not be able to drive them off it.

Pray, my dear, quoth my mother, have you not forgot to wind up the clock?—Good G—! cried my father, making an exclamation, but taking care to moderate his voice at the same time,—*Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question?* Pray, what was your father saying?—Nothing.

CHAPTER II.

—THEN, positively, there is nothing in the question that I can see, either good or bad.—Then, let me tell you, Sir, it was a very unseasonable question at least,—because it scattered and dispersed the animal spirits, whose business it was to have escorted and gone hand in hand with the *HOMUNCULUS*, and conducted him safe to the place destined for his reception.

The HOMUNCULUS, Sir, in however low and ludicrous a light he may appear, in this age of levity, to the eye of folly or prejudice;—to the eye of reason, in scientific research, he stands confessed—a BEING guarded and circumscribed with rights.—The minutest philosophers, who, by the bye, have the most enlarged understandings (their souls being inversely as their enquiries), show us, incontestably, that the HOMUNCULUS is created by the same hand,—engendered in the same course of nature,—endowed with the same locomotive powers and faculties with us;—that he consists, as we do, of skin, hair, fat, flesh, veins, arteries, ligaments, nerves, cartilages, bones, marrow, brains, glands, genitals, humours, and articulations;—is a Being of as much activity,—and, in all senses of the word, as much and as truly our fellow-creature as my Lord Chancellor of England.—He may be benefitted,—he may be injured,—he may obtain redress; in a word, he has all the claims and rights of humanity, which Tully, Puffendorf, or the best ethic writers, allow to arise out of that state and relation.

Now, dear Sir, what if any accident had befallen him in his way alone!—or that, through terror of it, natural to so young a traveller, my little gentleman had got to his journey's end miserably spent;—his muscular strength and virility worn down to a thread;—his own animal spirits ruffled beyond description,—and that, in this sad disordered state of nerves, he had lain down a prey to sudden starts, or a series of melancholy dreams and fancies, for nine long, long months together.—I tremble to think what a foundation had been laid for a thousand weaknesses both of body and mind, which no skill of the physician or the philosopher could ever afterwards have set thoroughly to rights.