

COMMENTS on STERNE. By. JOHN FERRIAR, M. D.  
*Read, January 21, 1791.*

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— VOS ADESTE  
RISUS, BLANDITIÆ, PROCACITATES,  
LUSUS, NEQUITIÆ, FACETIÆQUE,  
JOCI, DELICIÆQUE ET ILLECEBRÆ.

Buchanan.

THIS is almost the only fatirical and ethical writer of note, who wants a commentator. The works of Rabelais, Butler, Pope, Swift, and many others, are over-loaded with explanations, while Sterne remains, in many places, unintelligible to the greater number of his readers. I would gladly discharge this debt of gratitude, to an Author who has afforded me much delight; but my leisure hours can but produce some general traces, or occasional hints, that amount only to an amusing relaxation. Some person whose zeal is greater, and his literary repose complete, may work the mine I have opened, with profit and splendor.

Indeed, there is some danger in attempting to detect the sources, from which Sterne drew his rich singularities. It has been fashionable of late, to decry the analysis of objects of admiration, and those who wish to trace the mysteries of wit and literary



literary pleasure, are held to be profane dissectors, who mangle the carcase of learning, out of spleen and idle curiosity.\* Besides, the originality of Sterne has scarcely been made a problem; on the contrary, he is considered as the inventor of a new style in our language. I cannot help thinking, however, with honest Mungo in the farce, that it imports us little to hear what we do not understand; and though far beneath the dignity of Horace or Pope,† who professed to admire nothing, I think it very unphilosophical, to let wonder conquer reason, especially in the closet.

To be too curious in the survey of beautiful performances, is to invite disgust. The colossal statues of Phidias, though polished to perfection without, bore a rude appearance to those who examined them

\* It has been said, that a learned Gentleman intends to re-publish Joe Miller's Jests, with illustrations from the Greek writers. I expect impatiently the restoration of several of his Irish stories to Hierocles the Philosopher, from whose *Αἰεὶα* those ridiculous blunders have wandered abroad, and having lost their original country, are most unfairly quartered upon Ireland.

† Nil admirari prope res est una, Numici,  
Solaque, quæ possit facere et servare beatum.

Hor. Ep. Lib. 1. Ep. vi.

For fools admire, but men of sense approve.

Pope,



within:\* but if a limb, or a feature of a work, should appear to be purloined from the labours of a former artist, it would be right to look for his mark.

In tracing some of Sterne's ideas to other writers, I do not mean to treat him as a Plagiarist; I wish to illustrate, not to degrade him. If some instances of copying be proved against him, they will detract nothing from his genius, and will only lessen that imposing appearance he sometimes assumed, of erudition which he really wanted.

It is obvious to every one, who considers Tristram Shandy as a general Satire, levelled chiefly against the abuse of speculative opinions, that Rabelais furnished Sterne with the general character, and even many particular ideas, of his work. From that copious fountain of learning, wit and whim, our author drew deeply. Rabelais, stored with erudition, poured lavishly out, what Sterne directed and expanded with care, to enrich his pages.

\* ἐκείνων γὰρ ἕκαστος τὰ ἐκτὸς, ὁ μὲν Ποσειδῶν, ἢ Ζεὺς ἐστὶ πάγκαλος, χρυσοῦ καὶ ἐλέφαντος ξυνειργασμένον, \*\*\*  
\*\*\*\* ἣν δὲ ὑποκύψας ἴδῃς τὰ ἐνδοθεν, ὅφει μοχλοῦς τινος, καὶ γόμφου, καὶ ἥλως διαμπὰξ πεπερωνημένους, καὶ κορμῆς καὶ σφῆνας, καὶ πίτλαν ὑπόπηλον, καὶ τοιαύτην τινὰ πολλὴν ἀμορφίαν ὑποικέσθωσαν.

Lucian. Ονειρ: ἢ Ἀλεκτρ:



pages\*. And to this appropriation, we owe many of his most pleasing fallies. For being bounded in his literary acquirements, his imagination had freer play, and more natural graces. He seized the grotesque objects of obsolete erudition, presented by his original, with a vigour untamed by previous labour, and an ardour unabated by familiarity with literary folly. The curious Chapters on Noses † afford the strongest proof of this remark. About the  
time

\* καθάπερ ἐν πολλῶν ναμάτων εἰ τις κορίσας ῥῆνμα τι, εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν μετοχετεύσει.

Dionys. Halicarn. Αρχ: Κρις:

† Sterne would have made much of a passage in the Memoirs of La Porte: it respects the views of *Mademoiselle* to a marriage with Louis 14th.—“ Je dis “ tout cela à la Reine, qui se mocqua de moi, me disant: “ ce n’est pour son nez, quoiqu’il soit bien grand.”—

Mem. de la Porte, p. 275.

The following precious anecdote on this subject, occurs in the curious Miscellany published under the assumed name of Vigneul Marville: “ Les nés camus deplaisent, et “ sont de mauvaise augure. Le Connétable Anne de “ Montmorency étoit camus; et on l’appelloit à la Cour, “ le Camus de Montmorency. Le Duc de Guise, fils “ de celui qui fut tué à Blois, étoit aussi camus; et j’ai “ connu un Gentilhomme qui ayant une vénération singulière pour ces deux Maisons de Guise et de Montmorency, ne se pouvoit consoler de ce qu’il s’y étoit “ trouvé deux camus, comme si ce défaut en diminueoit le “ lustre.” Tom. 1. p. 140.

“ He”



time when Sterne wrote, it was not forgotten indeed, that the physiognomy of the Nose had been a kind of fashionable subject among Philosophers; but little was written, and little remains on the controversy, and what Sterne gives us, is founded on the following passage of Rabelais: “Pourquoy, “dit Gargantua, est ce que frere Jean a si beau “nez? Par ce (repondit Grangousier) qu’ainfi “Dieu l’a voulu, lequel nous fait en telle forme, “& telle fin, selon son divin arbitre, que fait un “potier ses vaisseaux. Par ce (dit Ponocrates) “qu’il fut des premiers à la foire des nez. Il “print de plus beaux & des plus grands. Trut “avant (dit le moine) selon la vraye Philosophie “Monastique, c’est, par ce que ma Nourrice avoit “les tetins molets, en l’allaitant, mon nez y “enfondroit comme en beurre, et la s’eslevoit et “croissoit comme la paste dedans la mets. Les “durs tetins des Nourrices font les enfans camus. “Mais gay, gay, ad formam nasi cognoscitur ad “te levavi.”\*

G

“Now

“He” (Mr. Shandy) “would often declare, in speaking his thoughts upon the subject, that he did not conceive how the greatest family in England could stand it out against an uninterrupted succession of six or seven short noses.”—Trif. Shandy, vol. 3. chap. 33. This is a curious coincidence; I pretend to call it no more.—But it must be added, that Marville’s Miscellanies appear to have been much read, about the time when Sterne wrote.

\* Liv. 1. Chap. xli.



“ Now Ambrose Paræus convinced my Father  
 “ that the true and efficient cause of what had  
 “ engaged so much the attention of the world,  
 “ and upon which Prignitz and Scroderus had wasted  
 “ so much learning and fine parts—was neither this  
 “ nor that—but that the length and goodness of the  
 “ nose, was owing simply to the softness and flac-  
 “ cidity of the nurse’s breast—as the flatness and  
 “ shortness of puerile noses was, to the firmness and  
 “ elastic repulsion of the same organ of nutrition  
 “ in the heal and lively—which, though happy  
 “ for the woman, was the undoing of the child,  
 “ inasmuch as his nose was so snubbed, so rebuffed,  
 “ so rebated, and so refrigerated thereby, as never  
 “ to arrive *ad mensuram suam legitimam*;—but that  
 “ in case of the flaccidity and softness of the nurse  
 “ or mother’s breast—by sinking into it, quoth  
 “ Paræus, as into so much butter, the nose was  
 “ comforted, nourished, &c.”\*

“ ——— the causes of short and long noses. There  
 “ is no cause but one, replied my uncle Toby,—  
 “ why one man’s nose is longer than another’s, but  
 “ because that God pleases to have it so. That is  
 “ Grangousier’s solution, said my Father.—’Tis  
 “ he, continued my Uncle Toby, looking up,  
 “ and not regarding my father’s interruption, who  
 “ makes us all, and frames and puts us together, in  
 “ such

\* *Tristram Shandy*, vol. iii. chap. 38.



“such forms and proportions, and for such ends,  
“as is agreeable to his infinite wisdom.”\*

I wish Sterne had known enough of Taliacotius to have done him justice, on the subject of noses. The practice of that extraordinary man, which has been obscured by misplaced raillery, and the imputation of follies entirely foreign to his method, deserves to be better known.† It was both rational and successful; and it is a considerable addition to his fame, that he anticipated later Physiologists in some surprising and important facts respecting the re-union of living parts.—Sterne has played unaccountably with the public curiosity, on the subject of a very silly book, which he attempts to pass off as curious, merely because it is obscure. This is the more surprising, because his fiction of Slawkenbergius is admirable. Mr. Shandy has the good fortune, we are told, to get *Bruscambille's Prologue on Noses* almost for nothing—that is, for three half crowns.“ There are not three *Bruscambilles* in Christ-  
“endom—said the stall-man, except what are  
“chained up in the libraries of the curious.”—This is well calculated to excite the appetites of epicures in literature, which perhaps was all the Author intended; and which is ill supported by the work in question. That no future Collector

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may

\* Id. Chap. 41.

† See his Book, De Curtorum Chirurgia.



may sigh for Bruscambille, I will give as much of his Prologue on Noses as deserves the patience of a Reader. I shall only premise, that the book consists of a set of prose discourses, printed at Cologne, in 1741, which seem to have ushered in comedy,\* farce, or puppet-show, according to the exigencies of the night: they resemble the Prologues of Terence, only in the freedom with which Mons. Bruscambille treats his audience.

“ Je n'entreprend point de faire ici une ample  
 “ description des differens nez, avec les proprietez  
 “ singulieres qui leur sont annexées; j'en dirois  
 “ peut etre trop des grands nez au préjudice des  
 “ nez mediocres, des petits nez, des nez cornus,  
 “ des nez plats, & autres de toute sorte d'espece,  
 “ je me contente de dire que les grands nez ont  
 “ beaucoup d'avantage sur les petits pour les odeurs  
 “ dont ils sont l'organe naturel, d'autant que par  
 “ leur capacité plus etendue ils peuvent recevoir  
 “ plus de vapeurs odoriférentes & que celles qui  
 “ montent de bas en haut leur peuvent moins  
 “ echapper qu'aux petits nez: en un mot, Messieurs,  
 “ si c'est quelque chose de beau, de bon, de louable,  
 “ d'avantageux en tout genre d'avoir du nez, il le  
 “ doit

\* The first is entitled, *Premier Prelude, en forme de Galimatias, pour l'ouverture du Theatre*. Several others are said to be *en forme de Galimatias*, but the specification was needless.



“ doit être encore plus d'avoir du grand nez,” &c. Jam fatis.\*

The mock quotations, explanatory of the *Promontory of Noses*, in Slawkenbergius's tale, are merely designed to cover the use made of Rabelais's proverb; “ il fut à la foire des nez.” Sterne has diverted himself sometimes with references to some parts of this author, that appear ænigmatical enough. For instance; “ Who was Tickletoby's Mare?”† I believe many of Rabelais's readers would be puzzled to answer. Sterne alludes to the story of poor Tappecoue,‡ who fell a sacrifice to the resentment of the devils of Poictiers.

At other times, Sterne indulges in all the Galimatias of the old Frenchman. — “ Bon jour! “ good morrow!—so you have got your cloak on “ betimes! but 'tis a cold morning, and you judge “ the matter rightly—'tis better to be well mounted “ than go o' foot—and obstructions in the glands “ are dangerous—And how goes it with thy Con- “ cubine—thy wife—and thy little ones o' both sides? “ and when did you hear from the old gentleman “ and lady,” &c.||

I believe

\* *Pensées Facétieuses de Bruscombille.* P. 48.

† Chap. 36. vol. ii. Tr. Shandy.

‡ Rabelais. Liv. IV. Chap. XIII. That strange fellow, Sir Thomas Urquhart, the Romancer of Crichton, translates this word, Tickletoby.



I believe this brilliant passage is founded on the Prologue to Rabelais's fourth Book. Some of Sterne's other imitations do him more credit; but in the eighth volume of *Tristram* he was not very nice in taking assistance. "Gens de Bien, says Rabelais, "Dieu vous sauve et gard. Ou estes vous? je ne peux vous voir. Attendez que je chauffe mes lunettes. Ha, ha, bien & beau s'en va Quaresme, je vous voy. Et doncques? Vous avez eu bonne vinee, a ce que l'on m'a dit. ---- Vous, vos femmes, enfans, parens et familles estes en fantè desiree. Cela va bien, cela est bon, cela me plaist—" &c. Certainly this trash must be one of those passages, escaped, as Rabelais declares that he wrote 'en mangeant et buvant,' after he had taken a cup too much.

Perhaps it would do violence to the analogy, to say that the exquisite dialogues, scattered through *Tristram Shandy*, took any colour from those delivered by Rabelais.—At least, it would appear to be refining too far. Yet the contrast and contention of characters and professions so striking in both romances; the strong ridicule thrown upon the love of hypothesis; and the art with which absurdities in every walk of science are exposed, have always impressed me with a general idea of resemblance; and have recalled *Pantagruel*, *Panurge* and *Epistemon*, in many of the *Shandean* conversations. If there be any degree of imitation in this respect, it is greatly to Sterne's honour. A higher polish was  
never



never given to rugged materials. But there can be no doubt respecting Sterne's obligations to another Author, once the favourite of the learned and witty, though now unaccountably neglected. I have often wondered at the pains bestowed by Sterne, in ridiculing opinions not fashionable in his day, and have thought it singular, that he should produce the portrait of his Sophist, Mr. Shandy, with all the stains and mouldiness of the last century about him. For the love of scarce and whimsical books, was no vice of the time when Tristram Shandy appeared. But I am now convinced, that all the singularities of that character were drawn from the perusal of *Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy*; not without reference,\* however, to the peculiarities of Burton's life, who is alledged to have fallen a victim to his astrological studies. We are told, accordingly, that Mr. Shandy had faith in astrology.†

The *Anatomy of Melancholy*, though written on a regular plan, is so crouded with quotations, that the reader is apt to mistake it for a book of common-places. The opinions of a multitude of Authors are collected, under every division, without arrangement, and without much nicety of selection, to undergo a general sentence; for the bulk of the materials

\* Even the name of Democritus junior, affected by Burton, may have led to Sterne's assumption of the title of Yorick. Burton too was a Clergyman.

† Vol. iii, Chap. 23. Vol. v, Chap. 28.



materials enforces brevity on the writer. In the course of a moderate folio, Burton has contrived to treat a great variety of topics, that seem very loosely connected with his subject; and, like Bayle, when he starts a train of quotations, he does not scruple to let the digression outrun the principal question. Thus, from the Doctrines of Religion, to Military Discipline; from inland Navigation, to the Morality of Dancing Schools, every thing is discussed and determined. The quaintness of many of his divisions seems to have given Sterne the hint of his ludicrous titles to several Chapters;\* and the risible effect resulting from Burton's grave endeavours, to prove indisputable facts by weighty quotations, he has happily caught, and sometimes well burlesqued. This was the consequence of an opinion, prevalent in the last age, which a late writer has attempted to re-establish respecting History; that authorities are facts.

But where the force of the subject opens Burton's own vein of Prose, we discover valuable sense and brilliant expression. The proof of this will appear in those passages, which Sterne has borrowed from him without variation. Burton was likewise a Poet; a copy of verses in Latin, and another in English, prefixed to his book, afford no mean proofs of his

\* The Tale of a Tub, and the Memoirs of Scriblerus, must come in for a share of this influence.



genius.\* The Anatomy of Melancholy has always been a source of surreptitious learning; Anthony a-Wood speaks of it, as a compilation highly useful to Gentlemen who were negligent at College; and Archbishop Herring alledged that the wits who flourished under Queen Anne and George the First, were under great obligations to it.† In  
H literature,

\* The late Mr. Warton, in his edition of Milton's Smaller Poems, has noticed the analogy between these English verses, and the Allegro & Penferoso. Burton alternates them, thus:

When I go musing all alone,  
Thinking of divers things fore-known,  
When I build Castles in the air,  
Void of Sorrow, void of Fear,  
Pleasing myself with phantoms sweet,  
Methinks the time runs very fleet.  
All my joys to this are folly,  
Nought so sweet as melancholy.

When I go walking all alone,  
Recounting what I have ill done,  
My thoughts on me then tyrannize,  
Fear and sorrow me surprize;  
Whether I tarry still or go  
Methinks the time moves very slow.  
All my griefs to this are jolly,  
Nought so sad as melancholy, &c.

There is a direct imitation of these verses in Voltaire's  
' Jean qui pleure, et Jean qui rit.'

† Biograph. Dict. Art. Burton (Rob.)

The story of Dr. Parnell's beautiful allegory on Man, is taken from Burton, p. 64.



literature, the springs are commonly more copious than their derived streams, and are therefore more highly honoured. But though this applies to Burton, and most of his imitators, it fails in respect of *Tristram Shandy*, where, though much is directly drawn from our Author, there are many delightful windings, widely distant from his influence. I would therefore beware of imitating the rashness of a Traveller, who should fancy he had discovered the secret head of a mighty river, while, deceived by imperfect intelligence, he had only explored the source of an auxiliary stream.

The first four chapters of *Tristram Shandy*, are founded on some passages in Burton, which I shall transcribe. Sterne's improvements I shall leave to your recollection.

“ Filii ex senibus nati raro sunt firmi tempera-  
 “ menti, &c. Nam spiritus cerebri si tum malè  
 “ afficiantur, tales procreant, & quales fuerint  
 “ affectus, tales filiorum, ex tristibus tristes, ex  
 “ jucundis jucundi nascuntur [Cardan.] “ If she”  
 (the mother) “ be over-dull, heavy, angry, peevish,  
 “ discontented and melancholy, not only at the  
 “ time of conception, but even all the while she  
 “ carries the child in her womb (saith Fernelius)  
 “ her son will be so likewise, and worse, as Lem-  
 “ nius adds, &c. - - - - So many ways are we  
 “ plagued and punished for our fathers defaults;\*  
 “ infomuch

\* This idea runs through *Tristram Shandy*.



“ infomuch that as Fernelius truly faith, it is the  
 “ greatest part of our felicity to be well-born, and  
 “ it were happy for human kind,\* if only such  
 “ parents as are sound of body and mind, should be  
 “ suffered to marry. Quanto id diligentius in  
 “ procreandis liberis observandum.”† I cannot help  
 thinking, that the first chapter or two of the  
 Memoirs of Scriblerus whetted Sterne’s invention,  
 in this, as well as in other instances of Mr. Shandy’s  
 peculiarities.

The forced introduction of the sneer at the term  
 non-naturals,‡ used in medicine, leads us back to  
 Burton, who has insisted largely and repeatedly,  
 on the abuse of th functions so denominated.

It is very singular, that in the introduction to  
 the Fragment on Whiskers, which contains an evi-  
 dent Copy, Sterne should take occasion to abuse  
 Plagiarists. “ Shall we for ever make new books,  
 “ as Apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring  
 “ only out of one vessel into another?” Ex ore

H 2

tuo

\* See Tristram Shandy, Vol. viii. Chap. 33.

† Anat. of Melanch. p. 37. Edit. 1676.

Quanto id diligentius in liberis procreandis cavendum,  
 sayeth Cardan. Trif. Shandy, Vol. vi. Ch. 33.

‡ Tr. Sh. Vol. i. Chap. 23.—“ Why the most natural  
 actions of a Man’s life should be called his non-naturals, is  
 another question.”—See Burton, p. 39. The solution might  
 be easily given, if it were worth repeating.



tuo—" Shall we be destined to the days of eternity,  
 " on holidays, as well as working-days, to be  
 " shewing the relics of learning, as monks do the  
 " relics of their saints—without working one—one  
 " single miracle with them?"—Here we must acquit  
 Sterne: he has certainly done wonders, wherever  
 he has imitated or borrowed.—

" One denier, cried the order of mercy—one  
 " single denier, in behalf of a thousand patient  
 " captives, whose eyes look towards heaven and  
 " you for their redemption.

" —— The Lady Bauffiere rode on.

" Pity the unhappy, said a devout, venerable,  
 " hoary-headed man, meekly holding up a box,  
 " begirt with iron, in his wither'd hands—I beg  
 " for the unfortunate—good, my lady, 'tis for a  
 " prison—for an hospital—'tis for an old man—a  
 " poor man undone by shipwreck, by suretyship,  
 " by fire—I call God and all his angels to witness—  
 " 'tis to clothe the naked—to feed the hungry—  
 " 'tis to comfort the sick and the broken-hearted.

" —— The Lady Bauffiere rode on.

" A decayed kinsman bowed himself to the ground.

" —— The Lady Bauffiere rode on.

" He ran begging bare-headed on one side of her  
 " palfrey, conjuring her by the former bonds of  
 " friendship, alliance, consanguinity, &c.—cousin,  
 " aunt, sister, mother—for virtue's sake, for your  
 " own,



“ own, for mine, for Christ’s sake, remember me—  
 “ pity me.

“ ——— The Lady Bauffiere rode on.”\*

The citation of the original passage from Burton will confirm all I have said of his stile.

“ *A poor decay’d kinsman of his sets upon him by the*  
 “ *way in all his jollity, and runs begging bare-headed by*  
 “ *him, conjuring him by those former bonds of friendship,*  
 “ *alliance, consanguinity, &c. uncle, cousin, brother,*  
 “ *father, - - - shew some pity for Christ’s sake, - pity a*  
 “ *sick man, an old man, &c. he cares not, ride on:*  
 “ *pretend sickness, inevitable loss of limbs, plead suretyship,*  
 “ *or shipwreck, fires, common calamities, shew thy wants*  
 “ *and imperfections, - - - swear, protest, take God and*  
 “ *all his angels to witness, quære peregrinum, thou art a*  
 “ *counterfeit crank, a cheater, he is not touched with it,*  
 “ *pauper ubique jacet, ride on, he takes no notice of it.*  
 “ *Put up a supplication to him in the name of a thousand*  
 “ *orphans, an hospital, a spittle, a prison as he goes by,*  
 “ *they cry out to him for aid: ride on - - - - Shew*  
 “ *him a decay’d haven, a bridge, a school, a fortification,*  
 “ *&c. or some public work; ride on. Good your worship,*  
 “ *your honour, for God’s sake, your Country’s sake:*  
 “ *ride on.”†*

This curious Copy is followed up, in Tristram Shandy, by a Chapter, and that a long one, written almost

\* Tristram Shandy, Vol. v. Chap. 1.

† Anat. of Melanch. p. 269.



almost entirely from Burton. It is the Consolation of Mr. Shandy, on the death of Brother Bobby.

“ When Agrippina was told of her son’s death, Tacitus informs us, that, not being able to moderate the violence of her passions, she abruptly broke off her work.” This quotation did not come to Sterne from Tacitus. “ *Mezentius would not live after his son - - - And Pompey’s wife cry’d out at the news of her husband’s death, Turpe mori post te, &c.—as Tacitus of Agrippina, not able to moderate her passions: So when she heard her Son was slain, she abruptly broke off her work, changed countenance and colour, tore her hair, and fell a roaring downright.*”\*

“ ’Tis either Plato,” says Sterne,” or Plutarch, or Seneca, or Xenophon, or Epictetus, or Theophrastus, or Lucian—or some one, perhaps of later date—either Cardan, or Budæus, or Petrarch, or Stella—or possibly it may be some divine or father of the Church, St. Austin, or St. Cyprian, or Bernard, who affirms, that it is an irresistible and natural passion, to weep for the loss of our friends or children—and Seneca, (I’m positive) tells us somewhere, that such griefs evacuate themselves best by that particular channel. And accordingly, we find that David wept for his son Absalom—Adrian for his Antinous†—  
“ Niobe

\* Anat. of Melanch. p. 213.

† The time has been, when this conjunction with the King of Israel would have smelt a little of the faggot.



“ Niobe for her children—and that Apollodorus  
 “ and Crito both shed tears for Socrates before his  
 “ death.” — This is well rallied, as the following  
 passage will evince; but Sterne should have con-  
 sidered how much he owed to poor old Burton.

“ *Death and departure of friends are things generally grie-*  
 “ *vous; Omnium quæ in vita humana contingunt, luctus*  
 “ *atque mors sunt acerbissima, [Cardan. de Consol.*  
 “ *lib. 2.] the most austere and bitter accidents that can*  
 “ *happen to a man in this life, in æternum valedicere, to*  
 “ *part for ever, to forsake the world and all our friends,*  
 “ *'tis ultimum terribilium, the last and the greatest terrour,*  
 “ *most irksome and troublesome unto us, &c.—Nay many*  
 “ *generous spirits, and grave staid men otherwise, are so*  
 “ *tender in this, that at the loss of a dear friend they will*  
 “ *cry out, roar, and tear their hair, lamenting some*  
 “ *months after, howling O hone, as those Irish women,*  
 “ *and Greeks at their Graves, commit many indecent*  
 “ *actions,*” &c.\* All this is corroborated by quo-  
 tations from Ortellius, Catullus, Virgil, Lucan and  
 Tacitus. I take them in the order assigned them  
 by Burton. For he says with great probability of  
 himself, that he commonly wrote as fast as possible,  
 and poured out his quotations just as they happened  
 to occur to his memory. But to proceed with Mr.  
 Shandy's Consolation.

“ 'Tis

\* Anat. of Melanch. p. 213.



“ 'Tis an inevitable chance—the first statute in  
 “ Magna Charta—it is an everlasting act of Par-  
 “ liament, my dear brother—all must die.”\*

“ *'Tis an inevitable chance, the first statute in Magna  
 “ Charta, an everlasting act of Parliament, all must  
 “ die.*†

“ When Tully was bereft of his dear daughter  
 “ Tullia, at first he laid it to his heart—he listened  
 “ to the voice of Nature, and modulated his own  
 “ unto it, &c.—But as soon as he began to look  
 “ into the stores of Philosophy, and consider how  
 “ many excellent things might be said upon the  
 “ occasion—nobody upon earth can conceive, says  
 “ the great orator, how joyful, how happy it made  
 “ me.”||

“ *Tully was much grieved for his daughter Tulliola's  
 “ death at first, until such time that he had confirmed his  
 “ mind with some philosophical precepts, then he began to  
 “ triumph over fortune and grief, and for her reception into  
 “ heaven to be much more joyed than before he was troubled  
 “ for her loss.*‡

Sterne is uncharitable here to poor Cicero.—

“ Kingdoms and provinces, and towns and cities,  
 “ have they not their periods?” Where is Troy,  
 and

\* Tristram Shandy, Vol 5th. Chap. 3.

† Anat. of Melancholy, p. 215.

|| Sterne.

‡ Burton.



“ and Mycene, and Thebes, and Delos, and Persepolis, and Agrigentum. - - - What is become, brother Toby, of Nineveh, and Babylon, of Cyzicum and Mytilene; the fairest towns that ever the sun rose upon, are now no more.”\*

“ *Kingdoms, Provinces, Towns and Cities,*” says Burton, “ *have their periods, and are consumed. In those flourishing times of Troy, Mycene was the fairest city in Greece, - - - but it, alas, and that Assyrian Ninive are quite overthrown. The like fate hath that Egyptian and Bæotian Thebes, Delos, the common Council-house of Greece, and Babylon, the greatest City that ever the Sun shone on, hath now nothing but walls and rubbish left.*”

- - - And where is Troy itself now, Persepolis, Carthage, Cizicum, Sparta, Argos, and all those Grecian Cities?

Syracuse and Agrigentum, the fairest towns in Sicily, which had sometimes seven hundred thousand inhabitants, are now decayed. Let us follow Sterne again. “ *Returning out of Asia, when I sailed from Ægina towards Megara, I began to view the Country round about. Ægina was behind me, Megara was before, Pyræus on the right hand, Corinth on the left. What flourishing towns now prostrate on the earth! Alas! alas! said I to myself, that a man should disturb his soul for the loss of a Child, when so much as this lies awfully buried in his presence. Remember, said I to myself again—remember that thou art a Man.*”

I

This



This is, with some slight variations, Burton's translation of Servius's letter. Sterne alters just enough, to shew that he had not attended to the original. Burton's version follows.

*"Returning out of Asia, when I sailed from Ægina toward Megara, I began to view the Country round about. Ægina was behind me, Megara before, Pyræus on the right hand, Corinth on the left; what flourishing towns heretofore, now prostrate and overwhelmed before mine eyes? Alas, why are we men so much disquieted with the departure of a friend, whose life is much shorter? When so many goodly Cities lie buried before us. Remember, O Servius, thou art a Man; and with that I was much confirm'd, and corrected myself."*

"My Son is dead," says Mr. Shandy, "so much the better,\* 'tis a shame, in such a tempest, to have but one Anchor."

*I—but he was most dear and loving friend, quoth Burton, my sole friend—Thou maist be ashamed, I say with Seneca, to confess it, in such a tempest as this, to have but one anchor.*

"But," continues Mr. Shandy, "he is gone for ever from us! be it so. He is got from under the hands of his barber before he was bald. He is but risen from a feast before he was surfeited—from a banquet before he had got drunken. The Thracians wept when a child was born, and feasted and made merry when a man went out

\* This is an awkward member of the sentence.



“ out of the world, and with reason. Is it not  
 “ better not to hunger at all, than to eat? not to  
 “ thirst, than to take physic to cure it? Is it not  
 “ better to be freed from cares and agues, love and  
 “ melancholy, and the other hot and cold fits of  
 “ life,† than, like a galled traveller, who comes  
 “ weary to his inn, to be bound to begin his journey  
 “ afresh?”

I shall follow Burton's collections as they stand in his own order.‡ “ *Thou dost him great injury to desire his longer life. Wilt thou have him crazed and sickly still, like a tired traveller that comes weary to his Inn, begin his journey afresh? - - - he is now gone to eternity - - - - as if he had risen, saith Plutarch, from the midst of a feast, before he was drunk - - - Is it not much better not to hunger at all, than to eat: not to thirst, than to drink to satisfy thirst; not to be cold, than to put on clothes to drive away cold? You had more need rejoice that I am freed from diseases, agues, &c. The Thracians wept still when a child was born, feasted and made mirth when any man was buried: and so should we rather be glad for such as die well, that they are so happily freed from the miseries of this life.* ||

I 2

Again—

† This approaches to one of Shakespeare's happy expressions:

Duncan is in his grave :

After *Life's fitful fever* he sleeps well.

‡ Sterne has commonly reversed the arrangement, which produces a strong effect in the comparison.

|| Anat. of Mel. p. 216.



Again—"Consider, brother Toby,—when we are, death is not, and when death is, we are not"—So Burton translates a passage in Seneca: *When we are, death is not; but when death is, then we are not.*\* The original words are, *quum nos sumus, mors non adest; cum vero mors adest, tum nos non sumus.*

"For this reason, continued my father, 'tis  
 "worthy to recollect, how little alteration in great  
 "men the approaches of death have made. Vespasian died in a jest - - - - - Galba with a  
 "sentence—Septimius Severus in a dispatch; Tiberius in dissimulation, and Cæsar Augustus in a  
 "compliment." This conclusion of so remarkable a Chapter is copied, omitting some quotations, almost verbatim, from Lord Verulam's Essay on Death.

We must have recourse to Burton again, for part of the Tristia-Pædia. "O blessed health! cried  
 "my father, making an exclamation, as he turned  
 "over the leaves to the next Chapter,—thou art  
 "above all gold and treasure; 'tis thou who enlargest the soul,—and openest all its powers to  
 "receive instruction, and to relish virtue.—He  
 "that has thee, has little more to wish for;—and  
 "he that is so wretched as to want thee,—wants  
 "every thing with thee.†

*O blessed health! says Burton, thou art above all gold  
 and*

\* P. 213.

† Chap. 33, vol. 5.



and treasure; [Ecclesiast.] the poor man's riches, the rich man's bliss, without thee there can be no happiness.\*

*O beata sanitas, te presente, amœnum  
Ver floret gratiis, absque te nemo beatus.*

But I should, in order, have noticed first an exclamation at the end of Chapter ix. in the spirit of which no body could expect Sterne to be original. “ Now I love you for this—and ’tis this  
“ delicious mixture within you, which makes you  
“ dear Creatures what you are—and he who hates  
“ you for it—all I can say of the matter is, That  
“ he has a pumpkin for his head, or a pippin for  
“ his heart,—and whenever he is dissected ’twill be  
“ found so.”—Burton’s Quotation is: *Qui vim non  
sensit amoris, aut lapis est, aut bellua*: which he translates thus: *He is not a man, a block, a very stone, aut  
Numen, aut Nebuchadnezzar, he hath a gourd for his head,  
a pippin for his heart, that hath not felt the power of it.*

In Chap 36, vol. vi. Sterne has picked out a few quotations from Burton’s Essay on Love-Melancholy,† which afford nothing very remarkable except Sterne’s boldness in quoting quotations.

By help of another extract‡ from Burton, Sterne makes a great figure as a curious Reader: “ I hate  
“ to make mysteries of nothing;—’tis the cold  
“ cautiousness

\* Page 104.      *ibid.*      Page 276.

† See Burton, page 310, & seq.

‡ Trist. Shandy, vol. vii. c. 13.



"cautiousness of one of those little souls from  
 "which Lessius (lib. 13. de moribus divinis, ch.  
 "24.) has made his estimate, wherein he setteth  
 "forth, That one Dutch mile, cubically multi-  
 "plied, will allow room enough, and to spare,  
 "for eight hundred thousand millions, which he  
 "supposes to be as great a number of souls (count-  
 "ing from the fall of Adam) as can possibly be  
 "damn'd to the end of the world. - - - I am  
 "much more at a loss to know what could be  
 "in Franciscus Ribera's head, who pretends that  
 "no less a space than one of two hundred  
 "Italian miles, multiplied into itself, will be suffi-  
 "cient to hold the like number—he certainly must  
 "have gone upon some of the old Roman souls,"  
 &c.

The succeeding raillery is very well, but unfair  
 with respect to the mathematical Theologist, as the  
 original passage will prove. "*Franciscus Ribera, in*  
*cap. 14. Apocalypf. will have Hell a material and local*  
*fire in the centre of the earth, 200 Italian miles in diameter,*  
*as he defines it out of those words, Exivit sanguis de*  
*terra—per Stadia mille sexcenta, &c. But Lessius, lib.*  
*13. de moribus divinis, cap. 24. will have this local hell*  
*far less, one Dutch mile in diameter, all filled with fire and*  
*brimstone; because, as he there demonstrates, that space*  
*cubically multiplied will make a sphere able to hold eight hundred*  
*thousand millions of damned bodies, (allowing each body six*  
*foot square) which will abundantly suffice."* [ I believe  
 the damn'd, upon Lessius's scheme, would be less  
 crowded



crouded, than the victims of the African Slave-trade have often been, on the middle passage.] “*Cum certum sit, inquit, facta subductione, non futuros centies mille millones damnandorum.\**

Again, at the end of the same Chapter in Tristram Shandy; “but where am I? and into what a “delicious riot of things am I rushing? I—I who “must be cut short in the midst of my days,” &c. Burton concludes his Chapter “on Maids’, Nunns’, “and Widows’ Melancholy,” in the same manner. “*But where am I? into what subject have I rushed? What have I to do?”† &c.*

I shall just observe by the way, that a pretty passage in the *Story of the King of Bohemia and his seven castles*; — “MODESTY scarce touches with a “finger what LIBERALITY offers her with both hands “open”—alludes to a picture of Guido’s, the design of which it describes tolerably well.

*Retournons a nos moutons*, as Rabelais would say; in matters of painting, it is dangerous for a man to trust his own eyes, till he has taken his degree of Connoisseur.

It confirms me strongly in the belief that the character of Mr. Shandy is a personification of the authorship of Burton, when I find such a passage as the following in Sterne. “There is a Philippic in “verse on somebody’s eye or other, that for two  
“ or

\* Anat. of Melanch. p. 156.

† Page 124.



“ or three nights together had put him by his rest :  
 “ which, in his first transport of resentment against  
 “ it, he begins thus :

“ A Devil 'tis—and mischief such doth work,  
 “ As never yet did Pagan, Jew, or Turk.”

This choice couplet is quoted by Burton\* from some bad Poet, now unknown, of whose name he only gives the initials.

“ Hilarion the hermit, in speaking of his abstinence, his watchings, flagellations, and other instrumental parts of his religion,—would say—  
 “ tho' with more facetiousness than became an hermit—That they were the means he used, to  
 “ make his *afs* (meaning his body) leave off kicking.”†

“ By this means Hilarion made his *Afs*, as he call'd his own body, leave kicking (so Hierome relates of him in his life) when the Devil tempted him to any foul offence.”‡

“ I wish, Yorick, said my father, you had read  
 “ Plato; for there you would have learnt that there  
 “ are two Loves— --- of these Loves, according  
 “ to Ficinus's comment upon Velasius, the one is  
 “ rational—the other is natural—the first ancient—  
 “ without

\* Page 331.

† Tr. Shandy, vol. viii. chap. 31.

‡ Burton, p. 333.



“ without mother—where Venus has nothing to  
 “ do: the second, begotten of Jupiter and  
 “ Dione—”\*

† *One Venus is ancient, without a Mother, and descended from Heaven, whom we call cælestial. The younger begotten of Jupiter and Dione, whom commonly we call Venus. Ficinus, in his comment upon this place, cap. 8. following Plato, called these two loves, two Devils, or good and bad Angels according to us, which are still hovering about our souls ‡*

That part of the letter to Uncle Toby, which consists of obsolete medical practices, is taken from one of the Chapters on the Cure of Love-Melancholy. || Many curious quotations might be added to what Sterne knew, out of Dr. Ferrand's *Erâto-*mania; but this Essay is already long enough.

There is another writer, whose pathetic manner Sterne seems to have caught; it is Marivaux,—the father of the sentimental style. A careful perusal of his writings, and of those of the younger Crebillon, might perhaps elucidate the serious parts of *Tristram Shandy*, and the *Sentimental Journey*. But I must leave this undertaking to those who have sufficient time to sacrifice to the task. From these

K

Authors,

\* *Tr. Shandy*, vol. viii. chap. 33.

† *Velasius* is quoted thro' all the preceding passages in *Burton*.

‡ P. 260.

|| P. 333 to 335.



Authors, I think, Sterne learnt to practice what Quintilian had made a precept: *Minus est totum dicere quam omnia*. With genius enough for the attempt, one has frequently failed in producing pleasure by the length of his digressions, and the other by affecting an excessive refinement and ambiguity in his language. *Les bons écrivains du siècle de Louis XIV. says Voltaire, ont eu de la force, aujourd'hui on cherche de Contorsions*. Our own writers are not free from this error; and it would not be unworthy their consideration, that a sentence, which is so much refined as to admit of several different senses, may perhaps have no direct claim to any sense.\* Sterne has seldom indulged these lapses, for which he was probably indebted to the buoyant force of Burton's firm Old-English sinews.

Whoever will take the trouble of comparing Sterne's Dialogue with his own feelings, in the  
Sentimental

\* Maynard puts this very well:

Mon ami, chaffe bien loin  
Cette noire Rhétorique,  
Tes ouvrages ont besoin  
D'un devin qui les explique.  
Si ton esprit veut cacher  
Les belles choses qu'il pense,  
Di-moi, qui peut t'empêcher  
De te servir du silence?



Sentimental Journey,† to that of Jacob with his Avarice and his Honour, in the first part of the Payfan Parvenu, will perceive a near resemblance. It would be cruel to insert the French declamation. A shorter passage from the same work will shew that the Shandean manner is very similar to that of Marivaux.

Le Directeur avoit laissé parler l'ainée sans l'interrompre, & sembloit même un peu piqué de l'obstination de l'autre.

Prenant pourtant un air tranquille et benin : ma chère Demoiselle, écoutez moi, dit il à cette cadette ; vous savez avec quelle affection particulière je vous donne mes conseils à toutes deux.

Ces derniers paroles, à toutes deux, furent partagées, de façon que la Cadette en avoit pour le moins les trois quarts & demi pour elle, et ce ne fut même que par reflexion subite, qu'il en donna le reste à l'ainée.‡

The curious hypothesis respecting Christian names, contains a just satire on what was once a popular superstition, and even cherished by the learned.

K 2

Pasquier,

† Compare also the first Conversation with Me. Freval, in the Payfan Parvenu, with a scene in the Sentimental Journey. Wherever Sterne picked up his Fragment, as he calls it, in the Sentimental Journey, on the power of Love, it is evidently ill-copied from the exordium of Lucian's admirable essay on the method of writing History.

‡ Payfan Parvenu, Partie, 2me.



Pasquier, in his *Recherches*, has a Chapter on the fortune of some Christian Names. In the present state of knowledge, it would be unpardonable to omit a remark, with which an author like Sterne would make himself very merry. It relates to the passage, in which Mr. Shandy treats the name of TRISTRAM with such indignity, and demands of his supposed Adversary, “Whether he had ever  
 “remembered,—whether he had ever read,—or  
 “whether he had ever heard tell of a man, call’d  
 “Tristram, performing any thing great or worth  
 “recording?—No,—he would say,—TRISTRAM!—  
 “The thing is impossible!” A Student of the fashionable black-letter erudition would have triumphed in proclaiming the redoubted Sir Tristram, Knight of the Round-table, and one of the most famous knights-errant upon record. Sterne might have replied:

Non scribit, cujus Carmina nemo legit ;\*

and indeed his pleasant hero has no resemblance to the *preux Chevalier*.

I am sorry to deprive Sterne of the following pretty figure, but justice must be done to every one.

“ In short, my father - - - - - advanced so very  
 “ slowly with his work, and I began to live and  
 “ get forward at such a rate, that if an event had  
 “ not

\* Martial, Lib. 2.



“ not happened - - &c. I verily believe I had  
 “ put by my father, and left him drawing a sun-  
 “ dial, for no better purpose than to be buried  
 “ under ground.”\*

Donne concludes his poem entitled *The Will*,  
 with this very thought:

And all your Graces no more use shall have  
 Than a Sun-dial in a Grave.

There is a strange coincidence between Sterne  
 and a mystic writer, in the insertion of a black page  
 in each of their works. I cannot consider it as an  
 imitation, for it must appear by this time, that  
 Sterne possessed no great store of curious reading.

Every one knows the black pages in *Tristram  
 Shandy*; that of prior date is to be found in Dr.  
 Fludd's *Utriusque cosmi Historia*,† and is emblematic  
 of the Chaos. Fludd was a man of extensive eru-  
 dition, and considerable observation, but his fancy,  
 naturally vigorous, was fermented and depraved,  
 by astrological and Cabbalistic researches. It will  
 afford a proof of his strange fancies, and at the same  
 time do away all suspicion of Sterne in this instance,  
 to quote the ludicrous coincidence mentioned by  
 Morhoff, between himself and this Author. “ Co-  
 gitandi modum in nobis et speculationes illas  
 rationum, mirificè quodam in loco, videlicet in  
 libro

\* Tr. Shandy, vol v. chap. 16.

† Page 26.



libro *de mystica cerebri anatome* [Fluddius] ob oculos ponit. Solent ab anatomicis illic delineari genitalia membra, utriusque sexus, quod processus quidam et sinus, eum in modum figurati sunt. Hic Fluddius invenit, non quod pueri in faba, illic dicit generari e cogitatione ; quod mihi mirum visum est, cum ego aliqua do joculari carmen *de Ente rationis* scriberem, et, ferente ita genio carminis, joci gratia finxissem, illic generari Entia rationis, postea cum incidi in istud Fluddii, quod ne somniando quidem cogita eram, invenisse me, serio hæc asseri a Fluddio.\*

I am not acquainted with the foundation of the curious passages respecting the possibility of baptizing infants *in utero*,† but I find that Mauriceau adverts to the circumstance, in his attack on the Cæsarian operation: “ il n’y a pas d’occasions ou  
 “ on ne puisse bien donner le Baptême à l’enfant,  
 “ durant qu’il est encore au ventre de la mere,  
 “ estant facile de porter de l’eau nette par le moyen  
 “ du Canon d’une seringue jusques sur quelque  
 “ partie de son Corps”—He then obviates a difficulty unthought of by Sterne’s Doctors ; which persuades me that this passage of Mauriceau had not occurred to him—“ et il seroit inutile d’alleguer que l’eau  
 “ n’y peut pas etre conduite, à cause que l’enfant  
 “ est envelopé de ses membranes, qui en empêchent ;  
 “ car

\* Morhoff. Polyhist. Philos. lib. ii. p. 1. cap. 15.

† Tristram Shandy, vol. i. chap. xx.



“ car ne fçait-on pas qu'on les peut rompre tres  
 “ aifément, en cas qu'elles ne le fuſſent pas, apres  
 “ quo on peut toucher effectivement ſon Corps.”\*

This writer has alſo mentioned the miſchievous effect of ſtrong preſſure applied to the heads of very young Children; which is connected with another theory that Sterne has diverted himſelf with. I have not met with the original of it in my reading, but will give a paſſage from Bulwer's *Anthropo-metamorphoſis*, analogous to Mauriceau's. †

The North-weſt paſſage to Learning, obſcurely mentioned in the *Triſtra-Pædia*, is deſcribed by Dr. Warton, in his excellent obſervations on the Genius and Writings of Pope, and was well burleſqued by Swift, in the *Voyage to Laputa*. ‡

The

\*Mauric. *Maladies des Femmes Groſſes*, p. 347 (edit. 3me. 4to. 1681.)

† I knew a Gentleman who had divers ſons, and the Midwives and Nurſes had with headbands and ſtrokings ſo alter'd the natural mould of their heads, that they proved children of a very weak underſtanding. His laſt ſon only, upon advice given him, had no reſtraint impoſed upon the natural growth of his head, but was left free from the coercive power of headbands and other artificial violence, whoſe head, although it were bigger, yet he had more wit and underſtanding than them all.

*Artificial Changeling*, p. 42.

‡ See the *Description and Print of the literary turning Machine*.



The best Commentary on Chap. 5, vol. 8th. is Montagne's essay on the subject.

There is one passage in the 7th. volume, which the circumstances of Sterne's death render pathetic. A believer in the doctrine of Pre-sentiment would think it a prop to his theory. It is as striking as Swift's Digression on Madness, in the Tale of a Tub.

“ Was I in a condition to stipulate with Death  
 “ - - - I should certainly declare against submitting  
 “ to it before my friends; and therefore I never  
 “ seriously think upon the mode and manner of  
 “ this great catastrophe, which generally takes up  
 “ and torments my thoughts as much as the catastrophe itself, but I constantly draw the curtain  
 “ across it with this wish, that the Disposer of all  
 “ things may so order it, that it happen not to  
 “ me in my own house—but rather in some decent  
 “ inn— - - - in an inn, the few cold offices I  
 “ wanted, would be purchased with a few guineas,  
 “ and paid me with an undisturbed but punctual  
 “ attention.” It is known that Sterne died in hired lodgings, and I have been told, that his attendants robbed him even of his gold sleeve-buttons, while he was expiring.

I have seen, not very long ago, a charge of plagiarism brought against Sterne, respecting his Sermons.

From what Author the passages were said to be borrowed, I do not remember; but it has long been  
 my



my opinion, that the manner, the style, and the selection of subjects for those Sermons, were derived from the excellent *Contemplations* of Bishop Hall. There is a delicacy of thought, and tenderness of expression in the good Bishop's compositions, from the transfusion of which Sterne looked for immortality.

Let us compare that singular Sermon, entitled *THE LEVITE AND HIS CONCUBINE*, with part of the Bishop's *Contemplation of the LEVITE'S CONCUBINE*, I shall follow Sterne's order.

" — Then shame and grief go with her, and  
" wherever she seeks a shelter, may the hand of  
" justice shut the door against her."\*

*What husband would not have said—She is gone, let  
shame and grief go with her; I shall find one no less pleas-  
sing, and more faithful.†*

" Our annotators tell us, that in Jewish æcono-  
" micks, these (concubines) differed little from  
" the wife, except in some outward ceremonies and  
" stipulations, but agreed with her in all the true  
" essences of marriage."‡

*The Law of God, says the Bishop, allowed the  
Levite a wife; human connivance a concubine; neither did  
the Jewish concubine differ from a wife, but in some out-  
ward compliments; both might challenge all the true essence  
of marriage.*

L

I

\* Sterne, Sermon xviii.

† Bp. Hall's Works, p. 1017.

‡ Sterne loc. citat.



I shall omit the greater part of the Levite's soliloquy, in Sterne, and only take the last sentences.

" Mercy well becomes the heart of all thy  
 " creatures, but most of thy servant, a Levite,  
 " who offers up so many daily sacrifices to thee,  
 " for the transgressions of thy people."

— " But to little purpose," he would add, " have  
 " I served at thy altar, where my business was to  
 " sue for mercy, had I not learn'd to practise it.

*Mercy, says Bp. Hall, becomes well the heart of any man, but most of a Levite. He that had helped to offer so many sacrifices to God for the multitude of every Israelite's sins, saw how proportionable it was, that man should not hold one sin unpardonable. He had served at the altar to no purpose, if he (whose trade was to sue for mercy) had not at all learned to practise it.*

It were needless to pursue the parallel.

Sterne's twelfth Sermon, on the Forgiveness of Injuries, is merely a dilated Commentary on the beautiful conclusion of the *Contemplation* 'of Joseph.'

The sixteenth Sermon contains a more striking imitation. " There is no small degree of malicious  
 " craft in fixing upon a Season to give a mark of  
 " enmity and ill-will; — a word, a look, which,  
 " at one time, would make no impression, — at  
 " another time, wounds the heart; and, like a  
 " shaft flying with the wind, pierces deep, which,  
 " with its own natural force, would scarce have reached  
 " the object aimed at."

This



This is little varied from the original: *There is no small cruelty in the picking out of a time for mischief; that word would scarce gall at one season, which at another killeth. The same shaft flying with the wind pierces deep, which against it, can hardly find strength to stick upright.\**

In Sterne's fifth Sermon, the *Contemplation of Elijah with the Sareptan*,<sup>†</sup> is close y followed. Witness this passage out of others: "The Prophet  
" follows the call of his God:—the same hand  
" which brought him to the gate of the city, had  
" led also the poor widow out of her doors, op-  
" pressed with sorrow."<sup>‡</sup>

*The Prophet follows the call of his God; the same hand that brought him to the gate of Sarepta, led also this poor widow out of her doors.†*

The succeeding passages which correspond are too long for insertion.

Sterne has acknowledged his acquaintance with this book, by the disingenuity of two ludicrous quotations in *Tristram Shandy*.||

What assistance the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau afforded Sterne, I omit to enquire. The former was the first author of this age, who introduced the terms and operations of the modern art of war into works of entertainment; but Sterne's military ardour seems to have been inspired by the prolix details of honest Tindal. Voltaire himself reviewed the first volumes of *Tristram*

L 2

Shandy,

\* Hall's *Shimei Cursing*. † Sterne.

‡ Bp. Hall, P. 1323. || Vol. 1. Chap. 22. and Vol. 7. Chap. 13



Shandy, in one of the foreign Journals, and did not charge their author with the imitation of any persons but Rabelais and Swift. He was probably not very jealous of the reputation of a modern English writer.

Such are the casual notes, with the collection of which I have sometimes diverted a vacant half-hour. They leave Sterne in possession of every praise but that of curious erudition, to which he had no great pretence, and of unparelled originality, which ignorance only can ascribe to any polished writer. It would be enjoining an impossible task, to exact much knowledge on subjects frequently treated, and yet to prohibit the use of thoughts and expressions rendered familiar by study, merely because they had been occupied by former Authors. There is a kind of imitation which the Ancients encouraged, and which even our Gothic Criticism admits, when acknowledged. But justice cannot permit the Polygraphic Copy to be celebrated at the expence of the Original.

Voltaire has compared the merits of Rabelais and Sterne, as Satirists of the Abuse of Learning, and, I think, has done neither of them justice. This great distinction is obvious; that Rabelais derided absurdities then existing in full force, and intermingled much sterling sense with the grossest parts of his book; Sterne, on the contrary, laughs at many exploded opinions, and abandoned fooleries, and contrives to degrade some of his most solemn



solemn passages by a vicious levity. Rabelais flew a higher pitch, too, than Sterne. Great part of the voyage to the *Pays de Lanternois*,\* which so severely stigmatizes the vices of the Romish Clergy of that age, was performed in more hazard of fire than water.

The follies of the Learned may as justly be corrected, as the vices of Hypocrites; but for the former Ridicule is a sufficient punishment. Ridicule is even more effectual to this purpose, as well as more agreeable than scurrility, which is generally preferred, notwithstanding, by the learned themselves in their contests, because Anger seizes the readiest weapons;

Jamque faces et saxa volant; furor arma ministrat:

And where a little extraordinary Power has accidentally been lodged in the hands of disputants, they have not scrupled to employ the most cogent methods of convincing their adversaries. Dionysius the Younger sent those Critics who disliked his verses, to work in the Quarries;† and there was a pleasant Tyrant, mentioned by Horace, who obliged his deficient debtors to hear him read his own Compositions, *amaras historias*, by way of commutation. I say nothing of the “ holy faith of pike and  
and

\* I do not recollect to have seen it observed by Rabelais's Commentators, that this name, as well as the plan of the Satire, is imitated from Lucian's *True History*. Lucian's town is called Lychnopolis.

† Plutarch.



and gun," nor of the strong cudgel with which Luther terminated a theological dispute, as I desire to avoid Religious Controversy. But it is impossible, on this subject, to forget the once celebrated Dempster, the last of the formidable sect of Hoplomachists, who fought every day, at his School in Paris, either with sword or fist, in defence of his doctrines in omni scibili.† The imprisonment of Galileo, and the example of Jordano Bruno, burnt alive for asserting the Plurality of Worlds,|| among other disgraceful instances, shew that Laughter is the best crisis of an ardent disputation.

The talents for so delicate an office as that of a literary Censor, are too great and numerous to be often assembled in one person. Rabelais wanted decency, Sterne learning, and Voltaire fidelity. Lucian alone supported the character properly, in those pieces which appear to be justly ascribed to him. As the narrowness of Party yet infests Philosophy, a writer with his qualifications would still do good service in the Cause of Truth. For wit and good sense united, as in him they eminently were, can attack nothing successfully which ought not to be demolished.

AN

† Jan. Nic. Erythræ. Pinacothie:

|| . Brucker. Hist. Critic. Philosoph. Tom. v. P. 28, 29.

The famous Scioppius published a shocking letter of exultation on this execution.





Ferriar, John. 1793. "Comment's on Sterne." *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester* 4(1), 45–86.

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