

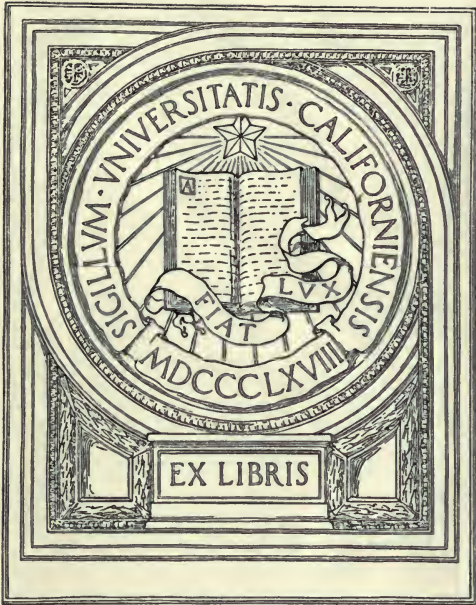
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A POLITICAL ROMANCE

&c.

A Political Romance

BY

LAURENCE STERNE

[1759]

An Exact Reprint of the First Edition

With an Introduction by

WILBUR L. CROSS

Author of "The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne"



BOSTON

THE CLUB OF ODD VOLUMES

1914

A Political Romance

L. ALMOND WATSON

[1927]

An Exact Reproduction of the First Edition

With an Introduction by

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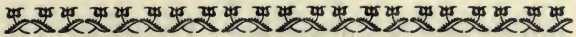


THE CLUB OF ODD VOLUMES
OF BOSTON

BOSTON

The Club of Odd Volumes

1914



INTRODUCTION

THE first edition of *A Political Romance* (1759), reprinted here for the first time, is a rare pamphlet from the pen of Laurence Sterne. Indeed, it was supposed until recently that this specimen of Sterne's humor, antedating *Tristram Shandy*, existed in no other form than the one given it the year after Sterne's death in an edition brought out by a London bookseller named Murdoch, with the assistance perhaps of John Hall-Stevenson, the author's intimate friend. The title-page of that edition runs:—

“A Political Romance, Addressed to——
—— Esq. of York. London Printed and
fold by J. Murdoch, bookfeller, opposite
the New Exchange Coffe-houfe in the
Strand. MDCCLXIX.”

It is a duodecimo volume, having an “Advertisment” (pp. iv–ix) and a list of the characters in the allegory with their real names opposite (p. x). The *Romance* itself covers forty-seven pages. In the “Advertisment” the editor or bookseller says: “This little piece was written by Mr. *Sterne* in the year 1759, but for private

reasons was then suppressed. The recovery of this satirical performance from oblivion, as worthy of so masterly a pen, will, it is hoped, be a sufficient excuse, with all lovers of literary merit, for thus bringing it to public view."

Murdoch's edition, several times reprinted by other booksellers, was afterwards incorporated in the humorist's collected works of 1780, with a new title: *The History of a Good Warm Watch-Coat... A Political Romance*. All subsequent editors have taken the text as they found it here, and have interpreted Murdoch's remark that the pamphlet was suppressed to mean that it was not published during the author's lifetime. It was laid by, even the biographers have declared, in Sterne's desk, and at most circulated only in manuscript. Hall-Stevenson, it has been assumed, had one of the manuscripts, which he placed in Murdoch's hand for publication.

A clue to the existence of an edition of *A Political Romance* earlier than Murdoch's was derived from *A Memoir of the York Press*, 1868, by Robert Davies, a most accurate antiquary. While he was writing his book he had access to the valuable collection of Edward Hailstone, Esq., of Horton Hall, Bradford, England, and there he saw a copy of the first edition bearing the date 1759. On Mr. Hailstone's death in 1890, this copy came to the Li-

brary of the Dean and Chapter of York, where it was uncovered in September, 1905. A few weeks later another copy was found in a volume of pamphlets at the York Subscription Library. Still another copy, bound with other tracts, was discovered the next year in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge. So far as it is known, no other copies are extant. In none of the three cases was the librarian aware that he had in his possession an anonymous *jeu d'esprit* by Laurence Sterne.

Our reprint is from a beautiful transcript of the Hailstone volume made by Miss Elizabeth Hastings of London. She followed the text line by line and page by page, and the present edition reproduces so accurately the typography and the paging of the original that no bibliographical description is needed here. By comparing the reprint with the usual text of the *Romance*, the reader may see how ruthlessly Murdoch mutilated Sterne. To be brief, he "corrected" the humorist's English, substituting "elegant" phrases for quaint and homely idioms, and cut away the entire *Key* and two long letters that go with it. — "Alas! Poor Yorick!"

To understand Sterne's humorous pamphlet, one must have in mind the circumstances in which it was written; otherwise nothing can be made of it. After graduating from Jesus Col-

lege, Cambridge, Sterne entered the ministry of the Church of England and settled as Vicar of Sutton-on-the-Forest—a small village eight miles to the north of the city of York. Through the influence of his uncle, Dr. Jaques Sterne, Precentor to York Minster and Archdeacon of Cleveland, he was appointed, early in 1741, a prebendary in the Cathedral. Thenceforth to the end of his life he was a member of the York Chapter, composed of the Dean, canons, and prebendaries, for the management of all affairs connected with the Cathedral. Within the Chapter there was a good deal of maneuvering, whenever a small office fell vacant, in the interest of friends; and at times friction arose between the Dean and the Archbishop over the real or apparent encroachment on each other's rights.

The first Archbishop of York that concerns us was Matthew Hutton, who disliked Sterne and took sides against him in a quarrel that sprang up between Laurence and his uncle Jaques. In the spring of 1757, Archbishop Hutton was translated to the see of Canterbury. His successor at York was Dr. John Gilbert, for some years Bishop of Salisbury. He was an amiable gentleman, most friendly towards Sterne, but without the strong hand necessary to check intrigues. Physical infirmities coming upon him, he rarely left his palace at

Bishopthorpe, two miles south of York. With the Dean — Dr. John Fountayne — Sterne had been acquainted since their college days together at Cambridge. They were fast friends. The Dean spent much of his time at Melton Manor, the family seat in South Yorkshire, and so could not always know, any more than the Archbishop, what occurred at York. He was a colorless, good-natured ecclesiastic, inclined, however, to insist upon his prerogatives.

The diocese had an arch intriguer in Dr. Francis Topham, the leading ecclesiastical lawyer at York, the official adviser to the Archbishop, to the Dean, and to many of the minor clergy. Never satisfied with the positions that he held, he was always scheming for more. In the autumn of 1748, he fomented a quarrel between Archbishop Hutton and Dean Fountayne over the appointment of preachers to the Cathedral. The Dean, it was averred, ordered the pulpit locked against a prebendary chosen for the day by the Chancellor of the diocese. For his defence of the Archbishop's rights on this and other occasions, Dr. Topham was appointed, in 1751, Commissary and Keeper-General of the Exchequer and Prerogative Courts of the Archbishop of York, — the most comfortable legal office within the gift of his Grace. Near the same time, the Commissaryship of the Dean and Chapter, worth twenty

pounds a year, fell vacant by the death of Dr. Mark Braithwaite, an advocate in the ecclesiastical court. Dr. Topham made a grasp for that office, but missed. The place was given to William Stables, another ecclesiastical lawyer. Thereupon Dr. Topham made a grasp for the Commissaryship of the Peculiar Court of Pickering and Pocklington, which had likewise become vacant by the death of Dr. Mark Braithwaite. This office, valued at six pounds a year, he missed also; the Dean generously presented it to his friend Laurence Sterne. Over these appointments Dr. Topham raised a loud clamor. Had not the Chapter been packed against him, he declared, he would have got the first; and had the Dean kept his solemn promise, he would have got the second. The quarrel rose to its height at a dinner of the York clergy, where the Dean and Sterne denounced him as a liar.

Thereafter, Dr. Topham kept reasonably quiet for several years — until the advent of Dr. Gilbert in 1757. On first meeting the new Archbishop, the lawyer told him that he would find it very difficult to live upon good terms with the Dean and Chapter, for they were a set of strange people. The Archbishop, however, might be assured that he would have a zealous champion in all disputes which might arise. Needless to say, Dr. Topham saw to it that petty disputes did arise over questions con-

cerning leases of Cathedral property and the proper method of inducting prebendaries. It was not his intent to force these differences to a breach between the Dean and the Archbishop; but rather to ingratiate himself into favor at the palace so that Dr. Gilbert might be kindly disposed to a new and questionable scheme on which his heart was now set. On searching the records, he had discovered that the patent of the Commissaryship of the Exchequer and Prerogative Courts — his best paying office — had formerly been granted and enjoyed for *two* lives instead of for one life, as was then the custom. He naturally wished a revival of the good old times. So he went to the Archbishop in the summer of 1758, and asked him for permission to open his patent of the office, which read for one life only, and “to add the life of *another proper person* to it,” meaning thereby, as it quickly transpired, the name of his own son. That son, then a mere boy, lived to be Edward Topham, playwright and libertine.

The Archbishop was inclined to agree to the plan out of gratitude to Dr. Topham for his many services; but the Dean and Chapter, whose concurrence was necessary to complete the transaction, were hostile to the proposal. That the question of the appointment, which threatened to divide the Church of York, might be settled peaceably, the Dean, Dr. Topham,

and several others were summoned by the Archbishop to meet at Bishopthorpe on November 7, 1758, for a general conference. The two chief dignitaries, who had been misrepresented, each to each, by the intriguing lawyer, found themselves agreeably of one opinion: that it was inadvisable, notwithstanding ancient precedent, to grant the valuable patent for more than one life. The lawyer, enraged at this decision, says Sterne, "huffed and bounced most terribly," threatening everybody from the Archbishop down to a timid surgeon, one Isaac Newton, who gave the story of the conference to the coffee-houses. Nothing coming of these angry violences, Dr. Topham decided to appeal to the public against the Dean, whom he charged with working upon the sick man at Bishopthorpe. So, during the second week in December, was launched his anonymous pamphlet entitled *A Letter address'd to the Reverend the Dean of York; In which is given A full Detail of some very extraordinary Behaviour of his, in relation to his Denial of a Promise made by him to Dr. Topham*. Though the sixpenny pamphlet set out to deal principally with the commissaryship that fell to Sterne, it nevertheless touched upon all the quarrels of a dozen years. Two weeks later, the Dean had ready his retort courteous, which bore the title: *An Answer to a Letter Address'd to the Dean of*

York, in the Name of Dr. Topham. A feature of this very skilful reply was a formal declaration, signed by Laurence Sterne, as to what took place at the clerical dinner when Dr. Topham was proved to be a liar. In concluding his open letter, the Dean announced that he had taken leave of Dr. Topham "once for all." Thus apparently sure of the last word, the lawyer poured forth the phials of his wrath in *A Reply to the Answer to a Letter lately addressed to the Dean of York*. With considerable humor "a late notable performance," supposed to be the Dean's, was described as "the child and offspring of many parents." Mr. Sterne and some others, it was intimated, had been called in by the Dean for "correcting, revising, ornamenting, and embellishing" his well-known faint and nerveless style.

Some parts of the Dean's pamphlet were without doubt Sterne's; but they count for nothing in comparison with *A Political Romance*, all his own, which he sent to the printer late in January, 1759. Dr. Topham had written in anger; the Dean replied soberly; Sterne turned the whole controversy into ridicule. "Above five hundred copies" of Sterne's pamphlet, it was said, "were struck off"; and "what all the serious arguments in the world could not effect, this brought about." At once Sterne had at his feet both friends and enemies, begging that

the *Romance* be suppressed. Dr. Topham sent word that he was ready, on this condition, to "quit his pretensions." Certain members of the York Chapter told Sterne that this humorous recital of their disputes would never do. The Archbishop and the Dean were, to say truth, each handsomely complimented by the way; but the laugh was, after all, on them as well as on Dr. Topham; the publication, from any point of view, was, they thought, offensive to the dignity of the Church. Sterne heeded the advice of his brethren. With his assent, an official of the Cathedral bought up the copies remaining in the book-stalls and burned them with those still at the printer's. That was the current story thirty years after. But several copies must have been sold beyond recovery; and Sterne himself managed in some way to keep from the flames "three or four" other copies, which he guarded for the delight of his friends. It is perhaps one of these copies that is reprinted here.

Sterne cast his amusing narrative in the form of an allegory, having in mind Swift's *Voyage to Lilliput*. That seeming great things may appear as small as they really are, the diocese of York is cut down to a country parish, and Archbishop Gilbert is thereby reduced to the rank of a village parson. The late parson is Archbishop Hutton. The Dean, Dr. John Foun-

tayne, shorn of his surname, becomes merely John the parish clerk; and the members of the Chapter figure as the church-wardens. Incidentally Mark Braithwaite appears as Mark Slender, and William Stables as William Doe. Dr. Topham, renamed Trim, because he receives so thorough a trimming at the last, is degraded to sexton and dog-whipper of the parish; and Sterne himself is slightly disguised under the name of Lorry Slim.

As of the characters, so of the incidents, which cover the bickerings of ten years, from 1748 to 1758. In the dispute over the height of John's desk, everybody would see a comical version of the quarrel that Dr. Topham stirred up between Archbishop Hutton and Dean Fountayne over the key to the Cathedral pulpit. When Trim, clad in an old coat, hat, and wig, emerges from the vicarage and struts across the churchyard, bawling out to John, "See here, my Lad! how fine I am!" — that is Sterne's way of saying that Dr. Topham has obtained from the Archbishop the patent of the Prerogative Courts in defiance of the Dean's protest. The pair of black plush breeches which Trim begs John to let him have for God's sake, is the Commissaryship of Pickering and Pocklington that the Dean refused him and bestowed upon Sterne. Similarly, the green pulpit-cloth and old velvet cushion, which Trim

eyed with envy, stand for the Commissaryship of the Dean and Chapter that went to William Stables. The numerous semi-legal offices that Dr. Topham already held are symbolized, for example, in the "pindar's place," worth forty shillings a year, in the six shillings and eight pence that he receives for oiling and winding up the clock, in the six pounds a year paid him for catching the moles of the parish, and in the thirteen shillings and four pence given to his wife for washing and darning the church linen.

The old garments and worn pulpit decorations being divided up among the contestants, the parish fell back into its usual monotonous drone, and would have droned on forever had not the old parson left his flock for a better living and his place been supplied by a new incumbent. Then was struck up a lively tune. Trim at once hastens to the rectory to sell himself into servitude. He blacks the parson's shoes, greases his boots, runs to the town for eggs, catches his horse and rubs him down; and on one occasion, when the parson cuts his finger in paring an apple, goes half a mile to inquire of an old woman what is good to staunch blood, and returns with a cobweb in his breeches' pocket. All these incidents are a burlesque of Dr. Topham's endless visits to Bishopthorpe immediately after the new Archbishop had settled at the palace.

As a reward for running on the parson's errands, Trim merely requested that he might have an old watch-coat which had long hung up in the church, apparently of no use to anybody. He wished to take it home and have it made over into an under-petticoat for his wife and a jerkin for himself before winter should come on. The parson told him he was welcome to it with all his heart and soul, provided it were in the power of his Reverence to make the gift. As to that, it would be necessary to consult the parish registry. Some days later, just as the parson had discovered that the watch-coat was an ancient possession of great value and dignity, Trim popped in with it already ripped into two parts and cut out for the petticoat and jerkin. Enraged at Trim's impudence, the parson commanded him to lay down the bundle and to wait upon him the next morning in company with John the parish clerk, the churchwardens, and one of the sidesmen. The next morning at eleven, passions ran high at the rectory. Trim pleaded the parson's promise, and, failing there, enumerated his humble services as the parson's man. But all in vain. The "pimping, pettyfogging, ambidextrous fellow . . . was kick'd out of doors; and told, at his peril, never to come there again."

The allegory here is clear enough. By the watch-coat Sterne intends the Commissaryship

of the Exchequer and Prerogative Courts; its being ripped up for a petticoat and a jerkin means that Dr. Topham made out a new patent for the office, in which he inserted the name of his own son as his successor, and then brought it to Archbishop Gilbert for his approval and signature. The hot scene at the parsonage the next morning is the conference held at Bishopthorpe on November 7, 1758. It is probable that Sterne, a most active member of the York Chapter, was present on that occasion, and so witnessed Dr. Topham's utter rout and angry departure.

The *Key* which Sterne appended to the *Romance* belongs to a kind of humor common in the eighteenth century, a late survival of which may be seen in the Pickwick Club. Specifically, it was developed from Swift's "Grand Committee" that sat upon the meaning of "A Tale of a Tub." Sterne's "Political Club," however, is much more than an imitation of Swift. For years Sterne spent many evenings, when in York, at a convivial club that met at Sunton's Coffee-House in Coney Street. Here were discussed the questions of the day, national and local. It was also a gossip-shop for rumor, scandal, and salacious stories and jests. The "Political Club," which devoted an entire session to the *Romance*, was, I take it, a burlesque of the transactions of Sterne's own club.

Under the disguise of a surgeon, lawyer, apothecary, undertaker, and the president who loved an hypothesis better than his life, he probably drew little portraits of the members — their mannerisms and favorite gestures, and their vehemence in the expression of their opinions. What kind of men they were further than this or what names they bore — we may never know, except, to be sure, that the Vicar of Sutton is among them. He is the parson of the parish, smart in repartee and ready to defend by a counter-jest an attack upon the cloth, just as was related in many an anecdote of Sterne once current and as may be seen in the character he drew of himself in Parson Yorick.

To these obscure associates Sterne had been long known for his overpowering sense of humor. "He loved a jest in his heart." He had contributed political paragraphs to York and London newspapers, and had read to his friends his quaint verses occasioned by hearing the great bell of the Cathedral toll for the dead; but it was really *A Political Romance* that first revealed to the author and his club that he could write "so as to make his reader laugh." Having once discovered his talent, Sterne immediately sat down to *Tristram Shandy*, and within a year entered upon his fame.

WILBUR L. CROSS.

August 20, 1914.

A
Political Romance,

Addressed
To ———, Esq;

O F
Y O R K.

To which is subjoined a

K E Y.

*Ridiculum acri
Fortius et melius magnas plerumque secat Res.*



Y O R K:
Printed in the Year MDCCLIX.

[Price ONE SHILLING.]

Political Romance

Author

By _____

18__

NEW YORK

Published by _____

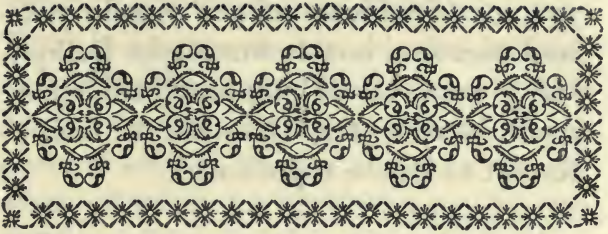
Y. R. E.

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NEW YORK

Printed at the _____



A

POLITICAL ROMANCE, &c.

S I R,

IN my last, for want of something better to write about, I told you what a World of Fending and Proving we have had of late, in this little Village of ours, about an *old-cast-Pair-of-black-Plush-Breeches*, which *John*, our Parish-Clerk, about ten Years ago, it seems, had made a Promise of to one *Trim*, who is our Sexton and Dog-Whipper.—— To this you write me Word, that you have had more than either one or two Occasions to know a good deal of the shifty Behaviour of this said Master *Trim*, — and that

A

you

you are astonifhed, nor can you for your Soul conceive, how fo worthlefs a Fellow, and fo worthlefs a Thing into the Bargain, could become the Occafion of fuch a Racket as I have reprefented.

Now, though you do not fay expreffly, you could wifh to hear any more about it, yet I fee plain enough that I have raifed your Curiofity; and therefore, from the fame Motive, that I flightly mentioned it at all in my laft Letter, I will, in this, give you a full and very circumftantial Account of the whole Affair.

But, before I begin, I muft firft fet you right in one very material Point, in which I have miffed you, as to the true Caufe of all this Uproar amongft us;— which does not take its Rife, as I then told you, from the Affair of the *Breeches*;— but, on the contrary, the whole Affair of the *Breeches* has taken its Rife from it:— To underftand which, you muft know, that the firft Beginning of the Squabble was not between *John* the Parifh-Clerk and *Trim* the Sexton, but betwixt the Parfon of the Parifh and the faid Mafter *Trim*,
about

about an old *Watch-Coat*, which had many Years hung up in the Church, which *Trim* had fet his Heart upon ; and nothing would serve *Trim* but he must take it home, in order to have it converted into a *warm Under-Petticoat* for his Wife, and a *Jerkin* for himself, against Winter ; which, in a plaintive Tone, he most humbly begg'd his Reverence would consent to.

I need not tell you, Sir, who have so often felt it, that a Principle of strong Compassion transports a generous Mind sometimes beyond what is strictly right,—the Parson was within an Ace of being an honourable Example of this very Crime;—for no sooner did the distinct Words—*Petticoat*—*poor Wife*—*warm*—*Winter* strike upon his Ear,——but his Heart warmed, and, before *Trim* had well got to the End of his Petition, (being a Gentleman of a frank and open Temper) he told him he was welcome to it, with all his Heart and Soul. But, *Trim*, says he, as you see I am but just got down to my Living, and am an utter Stranger to all Parish-Matters, know nothing about this old Watch-Coat you beg of me, having never seen it in my

A 2

Life,

Life, and therefore cannot be a Judge whether 'tis fit for such a Purpose; or, if it is, in Truth, know not whether 'tis mine to bestow upon you or not;— you must have a Week or ten Days Patience, till I can make some Inquiries about it;— and, if I find it is in my Power, I tell you again, Man, your Wife is heartily welcome to an Under-Petticoat out of it, and you to a Jerkin, was the Thing as good again as you represent it.

It is necessary to inform you, Sir, in this Place, That the Parson was earnestly bent to serve *Trim* in this Affair, not only from the Motive of Generosity, which I have justly ascribed to him, but likewise from another Motive; and that was by way of making some Sort of Recompence for a Multitude of small Services which *Trim* had occasionally done, and indeed was continually doing, (as he was much about the House) when his own Man was out of the way. For all these Reasons together, I say, the Parson of the Parish intended to serve *Trim* in this Matter to the utmost of his Power; All that was wanting was previously to inquire, if any one had

had a *Claim* to it;— or whether, as it had, Time immemorial, hung up in the Church, the taking it down might not raise a Clamour in the Parish. These Inquiries were the very Thing that *Trim* dreaded in his Heart.— He knew very well that if the Parson should but say one Word to the Church-Wardens about it, there would be an End of the whole Affair. For this, and some other Reasons not necessary to be told you, at present, *Trim* was for allowing no Time in this Matter;— but, on the contrary, doubled his Diligence and Importunity at the Vicarage-House;— plagued the whole Family to Death; pressed his suit Morning, Noon, and Night; and, to shorten my Story, teased the poor Gentleman, who was but in an ill State of Health, almost out of his Life about it.

You will not wonder, when I tell you, that all this Hurry and Precipitation, on the Side of Master *Trim*, produced its natural Effect on the Side of the Parson, and that was, a Suspicion that all was not right at the Bottom.

He

He was one Evening fitting alone in his Study, weighing and turning this Doubt every Way in his Mind; and, after an Hour and a half's serious Deliberation upon the Affair, and running over *Trim's* Behaviour throughout,— he was just saying to himself, *It must be so*; when a sudden Rap at the Door put an End to his Soliloquy,— and, in a few Minutes, to his Doubts too; for a Labourer in the Town, who deem'd himself past his fifty-second Year, had been returned by the Constable in the Militia-List, — and he had come, with a Groat in his Hand, to search the Parish Register for his Age. — The Parson bid the poor Fellow put the Groat into his Pocket, and go into the Kitchen: — Then shutting the Study Door, and taking down the Parish Register, — *Who knows*, says he, *but I may find something here about this self-same Watch-Coat?* — He had scarce unclasped the Book, in saying this, when he popp'd upon the very Thing he wanted, fairly wrote on the first Page, pasted to the Inside of one of the Covers, whereon was a Memorandum about the very Thing in Question, in these express Words:

ME =

M E M O R A N D A M.

The great Watch-Coat was purchased and given above two hundred Years ago, by the Lord of the Manor, to this Parish-Church, to the sole Use and Behoof of the poor Sextons thereof, and their Successors, for ever, to be worn by them respectively in winterly cold Nights, in ringing Complines, Passing-Bells, &c. which the said Lord of the Manor had done, in Piety, to keep the poor Wretches warm, and for the Good of his own Soul, for which they were directed to pray, &c. &c. &c. &c. *Just Heaven!* said the Parson to himself, looking upwards, *What an Escape have I had! Give this for an Under-Petticoat to Trim's Wife! I would not have consented to such a Desecration to be Primate of all England; nay, I would not have disturb'd a single Button of it for half my Tythes!*

Scarce were the Words out of his Mouth, when in pops *Trim* with the whole Subject of the Exclamation under both his Arms.— I say, under both his Arms;— for he had actually got it ripp'd and cut out ready, his own Jerkin under one Arm, and the Petticoat under the other, in order to be carried to the Taylor to be made up,—
and

and had juſt ſtepp'd in, in high Spirits, to ſhew the Parſon how cleverly it had held out.

There are many good Similies now ſubſiſting in the World, but which I have neither Time to recollect or look for, which would give you a ſtrong Conception of the Aſtoniſhment and honeſt Indignation which this unexpected Stroke of *Trim's* Impudence impreſſ'd upon the Parſon's Looks.— Let it ſuffice to ſay, That it exceeded all fair Deſcription,— as well as all Power of proper Reſentment,— except this, that *Trim* was ordered, in a ſtern Voice, to lay the Bundles down upon the Table,— to go about his Buſineſs, and wait upon him, at his Peril, the next Morning at Eleven precisely: Againſt this Hour like a wiſe Man, the Parſon had ſent to deſire *John* the Pariſh-Clerk, who bore an exceeding good Character as a Man of Truth, and who having, moreover, a pretty Freehold of about eighteen Pounds a Year in the Townſhip, was a leading Man in it; and, upon the whole, was ſuch a one of whom it might be ſaid,— That he rather did Honour to his Office,— than
that

that his Office did Honour to him.— Him he sends for, with the Church-Wardens, and one of the Sides-Men, a grave, knowing, old Man, to be present:— For as *Trim* had with-held the whole Truth from the Parson, touching the Watch-Coat, he thought it probable he would as certainly do the same Thing to others; though this, I said, was wise, the Trouble of the Precaution might have been spared,— because the Parson's Character was unblemish'd,— and he had ever been held by the World in the Estimation of a Man of Honour and Integrity.— *Trim's* Character, on the contrary, was as well known, if not in the World, yet, at least, in all the Parish, to be that of a little, dirty, pimping, pettifogging, ambidextrous Fellow,— who neither cared what he did or said of any, provided he could get a Penny by it.— This might, I say, have made any Precaution needless;— but you must know, as the Parson had in a Manner but just got down to his Living, he dreaded the Consequences of the least ill Impression on his first Entrance amongst his Parishioners, which would have disabled him from doing them the Good he wished;— so that, out of Regard to his Flock, more than the

necessary Care due to himself, — he was resolv'd not to lie at the Mercy of what Repentment might vent, or Malice lend an Ear to.— Accordingly the whole Matter was rehearsed from first to last by the Parson, in the Manner I've told you, in the Hearing of *John* the Parish-Clerk, and in the Presence of *Trim*.

Trim had little to say for himself, except “That the Parson had absolutely promised to befriend him and his Wife in the Affair, to the utmost of his Power: That the Watch-Coat was certainly in his Power, and that he might still give it him if he pleased.”

To this, the Parson's Reply was short, but strong, “That nothing was in his *Power* to do, but what he could do *honestly*;—That in giving the Coat to him and his Wife, he should do a manifest Wrong to the *next* Sexton; the great Watch-Coat being the most comfortable Part of the Place:—That he should, moreover, injure the Right of his own Successor, who would be just so much a worse Patron, as the Worth of the Coat amounted to;—and in

a Word, he declared that his whole Intent in promising that Coat, was Charity to *Trim*; but *Wrong* to no Man; that was a Reserve, he said, made in all Cafes of this Kind:—and he declared solemnly, *in Verbo Sacerdotis*, That this was his Meaning, and was so understood by *Trim* himself.”

With the Weight of this Truth, and the great good Sense and strong Reason which accompanied all the Parson said upon the Subject,— poor *Trim* was driven to his last Shift,— and begg'd he might be suffered to plead his Right and Title to the Watch-Coat, if not by *Promise*, at least by *Services*.— It was well known how much he was entitled to it upon these Scores: That he had black'd the Parson's Shoes without Count, and greased his Boots above fifty Times:— That he had run for Eggs into the Town upon all Occasions;— whetted the Knives at all Hours;— caught his Horse and rubbed him down:— That for his Wife she had been ready upon all Occasions to charr for them;— and neither he nor she, to the best of his Remembrance, ever took a Farthing, or any thing beyond a Mug of Ale.— To this Account of his Services he

begg'd Leave to add those of his Wishes, which, he said, had been equally great.— He affirmed, and was ready, he said, to make it appear, by Numbers of Witnesses, “ He had drank his Reverence's Health a thousand Times, (by the bye, he did not add out of the Parson's own Ale): That he not only drank his Health, but wish'd it; and never came to the House, but ask'd his Man kindly how he did; that in particular, about half a Year ago, when his Reverence cut his Finger in paring an Apple, he went half a Mile to ask a cunning Woman, what was good to stanch Blood, and actually returned with a Cobweb in his Breeches Pocket:— Nay, says *Trim*, it was not a Fortnight ago, when your Reverence took that violent Purge, that I went to the far End of the whole Town to borrow you a Close-stool,— and came back, as my Neighbours, who flouted me, will all bear witness, with the Pan upon my Head, and never thought it too much.”

Trim concluded his pathetick Remonstrance with saying, “ He hoped his Reverence's Heart would not suffer him to requite so many faithful Services by so un-
kind

kind a Return:— That if it was so, as he was the first, so he hoped he should be the last, Example of a Man of his Condition so treated.”—— This Plan of *Trim*'s Defence, which *Trim* had put himself upon, — could admit of no other Reply but a general Smile.

Upon the whole, let me inform you, That all that could be said, *pro* and *con*, on both Sides, being fairly heard, it was plain, That *Trim*, in every Part of this Affair, had behaved very ill ;—— and *one* Thing, which was never expected to be known of him, happening in the Course of this Debate to come out against him ;— namely, That he had gone and told the Parson, before he had ever set Foot in his Parish, That *John* his Parish-Clerk, his Church-Wardens, and some of the Heads of the Parish, were a Parcel of Scoundrels.— Up on the Upshot, *Trim* was kick'd out of Doors ; and told, at his Peril, never to come there again.

At first *Trim* huff'd and bounced most terribly ;— swore he would get a Warrant ;— then nothing would serve him but
he

he would call a Bye-Law, and tell the whole Parish how the Parson had misused him ;— but cooling of that, as fearing the Parson might possibly bind him over to his good Behaviour, and, for aught he knew, might send him to the House of Correction,— he let the Parson alone ; and to revenge himself, falls foul upon his Clerk, who had no more to do in the Quarrel than you or I ;— rips up the Promise of the old-cast—Pair—of—black—Plush—Breeches, and raises an Uproar in the Town about it, notwithstanding it had slept ten Years.— But all this you must know, is look'd upon in no other Light, but as an artful stroke of Generalship in *Trim*, to raise a Dust, and cover himself under the disgraceful Chastisement he had undergone.

If your curiosity is not yet satisfied,— I will now proceed to relate the *Battle* of the Breeches, in the same exact Manner I have done *that* of the Watch-Coat.

Be it known then, that, about ten Years ago, when *John* was appointed Parish-Clerk of this Church, this said Master *Trim* took no small Pains to get into *John's* good

good Graces; in order, as it afterwards appeared, to coax a Promise out of him of a Pair of Breeches, which *John* had then by him, of black Plush, not much the worse for wearing;— *Trim* only begging for God's sake to have them bestowed upon him when *John* should think fit to cast them.

Trim was one of those kind of Men who loved a Bit of Finery in his Heart, and would rather have a tatter'd Rag of a Better Body's, than the best plain whole Thing his Wife could spin him.

John, who was naturally unsuspecting, made no more Difficulty of promising the Breeches, than the Parson had done in promising the Great Coat; and, indeed, with something less Reserve,—— because the Breeches were *John's own*, and he could give them, without Wrong, to whom he thought fit.

It happened, I was going to say unluckily, but I should rather say, most luckily, for *Trim*, for he was the only Gainer by it,— that a Quarrel, about some

fix or eight Weeks after this, broke out between *the late* Parson of the Parish and *John* the Clerk. Somebody (and it was thought to be Nobody but *Trim*) had put it into the Parson's Head, "That *John's* Desk in the Church was, at the least, four Inches higher than it should be:— That the Thing gave Offense, and was indecorous, inasmuch as it approach'd too near upon a Level with the Parson's Desk itself. This Hardship the Parson complained of loudly, — and told *John* one Day after Prayers, — "He could bear it no longer:— And would have it alter'd and brought down as it should be." *John* made no other Reply, but, "That the Desk was not of his raising:— That 'twas not one Hair Breadth higher than he found it;— and that as he found it, so would he leave it:— In short, he would neither make an Encroachment, nor would he suffer one."

The *late* Parson might have his Virtues, but the leading Part of his Character was not *Humility*; so that *John's* Stiffness in this Point was not likely to reconcile Matters.— This was *Trim's* Harvest.

After

After a friendly Hint to *John* to stand his Ground, — away hies *Trim* to make his Market at the Vicarage:— What pass'd there, I will not say, intending not to be uncharitable; so shall content myself with only gueſſing at it, from the sudden change that appeared in *Trim's* Dress for the better;— for he had left his old ragged Coat, Hat and Wig, in the Stable, and was come forth strutting across the Church-yard, y'clad in a good creditable cast Coat, large Hat and Wig, which the Parson had just given him.— Ho! Ho! Hollo! *John*! cries *Trim*, in an insolent Bravo, as loud as ever he could bawl— See here, my Lad! how fine I am.— The more Shame for you, answered *John*, seriously. — Do you think, *Trim*, says he, such Finery, gain'd by such Services, becomes you, or can wear well?— Fye upon it, *Trim*;— I could not have expected this from you, considering what Friendship you pretended, and how kind I have ever been to you: — how many Shillings and Sixpences I have generously lent you in your Distresses? — Nay, it was but t'other Day that I promised you these black Plush Breeches I have on.— Rot your Breeches, quoth

Trim; for *Trim*'s Brain was half turn'd with his new Finery:— Rot your Breeches, says he, — I would not take them up, were they laid at my Door;— give 'em, and be d—d to you, to whom you like;— I would have you to know I can have a better Pair at the Parson's any Day in the Week:— *John* told him plainly, as his Word had once pass'd him, he had a Spirit above taking Advantage of his Insolence, in giving them away to another:— But, to tell him his Mind freely, he thought he had got so many Favours of that Kind, and was so likely to get many more for the same Services, of the Parson, that he had better give up the Breeches, with good Nature, to some one who would be more thankful for them.

Here *John* mentioned *Mark Slender*, (who, it seems, the Day before, had ask'd *John* for 'em) not knowing they were under Promise to *Trim*.—— “Come, *Trim*, says he, let poor *Mark* have 'em,—— You know he has not a Pair to his A——: Besides, you see he is just of my Size, and they will fit him to a T; whereas, if I give 'em to you, — look ye, they
are

are not worth much ; and, besides, you could not get your Backside into them, if you had them, without tearing them all to Pieces.”

Every Tittle of this was most undoubtedly true ; for *Trim*, you must know, by foul Feeding, and playing the good Fellow at the Parson's, was grown somewhat gross about the lower Parts, *if not higher* : So that, as all *John* said upon the Occasion was fact, *Trim* with much ado, and after a hundred Hum's and Hah's, at last, out of mere compassion to *Mark*, *signs, seals and delivers up all Right, Interest, and Pretensions whatsoever, in and to the said Breeches ; thereby binding his Heirs, Executors, Administrators, and Assignes, never more to call the said Claim in Question.*

All this Renunciation was set forth in an ample Manner, to be in pure Pity to *Mark's* Nakedness ;— but the Secret was, *Trim* had an Eye to, and firmly expected in his own Mind, the great Green Pulpit-Cloth and old Velvet Cushion, which were that very Year to be taken down ;—

which, by the Bye, could he have wheedled *John* a second Time out of 'em, as he hoped, he had made up the Loss of his Breeches Seven-fold.

Now, you must know, this Pulpit-Cloth and Cushion were not in *John's* Gift, but in the Church-Wardens, &c.— However, as I said above, that *John* was a leading Man in the Parish, *Trim* knew he could help him to them if he would:— But *John* had got a Surfeit of him;— so, when the Pulpit-cloth, &c were taken down, they were immediately given (*John* having a great say in it) to *William Doe*, who understood very well what Use to make of them.

As for the old Breeches, poor *Mark Slender* lived to wear them but a short Time, and they got into the Possession of *Lorry Slim*, an unlucky Wight, by whom they are still worn;— in Truth, as you will guess, they are very thin by this Time:— But *Lorry* has a light Heart; and what recommends them to him, is this, that, as thin as they are, he knows that *Trim*, let him say what he will to the contrary, still envies the *Possessor* of them, —
and

and, with all his Pride, would be very glad to wear them after *him*.

Upon this Footing have these Affairs slept quietly for near ten Years,—— and would have slept for ever, but for the unlucky Kicking-Bout; which, as I said, has ripp'd this Squabble up afresh: So that it was no longer than last Week, that *Trim* met and insulted *John* in the public Town-Way, before a hundred People;— tax'd him with the Promise of the old-cast-Pair-of-black-Breeches, notwithstanding *Trim*'s solemn Renunciation; twitted him with the Pulpit-Cloth and Velvet Cushion,— as good as told him, he was ignorant of the common Duties of his Clerkship; adding, very insolently, That he knew not so much as to give out a common Psalm in Tune.——

John contented himself with giving a plain Answer to every Article that *Trim* had laid to his Charge, and appealed to his Neighbours who remembered the whole Affair;— and as he knew there was never any Thing to be got in wrestling with a Chim-

Chimney-Sweeper,—he was going to take Leave of *Trim* for ever.— But, hold,— the Mob by this Time had got round them, and their High Mightinesses insisted upon having *Trim* tried upon the Spot. — *Trim* was accordingly tried; and, after a full Hearing, was convicted a second Time, and handled more roughly by one or more of them, than even at the Parson's.

Trim, says one, are you not ashamed of yourself, to make all this Rout and Disturbance in the Town, and set Neighbours together by the Ears, about an old-worn-out - Pair - of - cast - Breeches, not worth Half a Crown?— Is there a cast-Coat, or a Place in the whole Town, that will bring you in a Shilling, but what you have snapp'd up, like a greedy Hound as you are?

In the first Place, are you not Sexton and Dog-Whipper, worth Three Pounds a Year?— Then you begg'd the Church-Wardens to let your Wife have the Washing and Darning of the Surplice and Church-Linen, which brings you in Thir-

teen

teen Shillings and Four Pence.—Then you have Six Shillings and Eight Pence for oiling and winding up the Clock, both paid you at *Easter*.—The Pinder's Place, which is worth Forty Shillings a Year,—you have got that too.—You are the Bailiff, which the late Parson got you, which brings you in Forty Shillings more.—Besides all this, you have Six Pounds a Year, paid you Quarterly for being Mole-Catcher to the Parish.—Aye, says the luckless Wight above-mentioned, (who was standing close to him with his Plush Breeches on) “You are not only Mole-Catcher, *Trim*, but you catch STRAY CONIES too in the *Dark*; and you pretend a *Licence* for it, which, I trow, will be look'd into at the next Quarter Sessions.” I maintain it, I have a Licence, says *Trim*, blushing as red as Scarlet:—I have a Licence,—and as I farm a Warren in the next Parish, I will catch Conies every Hour of the Night.—*You catch Conies!* cries a toothless old Woman, who was just passing by.—

This set the Mob a laughing, and sent every Man home in perfect good Humour,
except

except *Trim*, who waddled very slowly off with that Kind of inflexible Gravity only to be equalled by one Animal in the whole Creation, — and surpassed by none.

I am,

S I R,

Yours, &c. &c.

F I N I S.



P O S T S C R I P T.

I Have broke open my Letter to inform you, that I miss'd the Opportunity of sending it by the Messenger, who I expected would have called upon me in his Return through this Village to *York*, so it has laid a Week or ten Days by me.

— I am not sorry for the Disappointment, because something has since happened, in Continuation of this Affair, which I am thereby enabled to transmit to you, all under one Trouble.

When I finished the above Account, I thought (as did every Soul in the Parish) *Trim* had met with so thorough a Rebuff from *John* the Parish-Clerk and the Town's Folks, who all took against him, that *Trim* would be glad to be quiet, and let the Matter rest.

But, it seems, it is not half an Hour ago since *Trim* fallied forth again; and, having borrowed a Sow-Gelder's Horn, with hard Blowing he got the whole Town round him, and endeavoured to raise a Disturb-

D ance,

ance, and fight the whole Battle over again:— That he had been used in the last Fray worse than a Dog;— not by *John* the Parish-Clerk, — for I shou'd not, quoth *Trim*, have valued him a Rush single Hands:— But all the Town sided with him, and twelve Men in *Buckram* set upon me all at once, and kept me in Play at Sword's Point for three Hours together. — Besides, quoth *Trim*, there were two misbegotten Knaves in *Kendal Green*, who lay all the while in Ambush in *John's* own House, and they all sixteen came upon my Back, and let drive at me together.— A Plague, says *Trim*, of all Cowards!— *Trim* repeated this Story above a Dozen Times;— which made some of the Neighbours pity him, thinking the poor Fellow crack-brain'd, and that he actually believed what he said. After this *Trim* dropp'd the Affair of the *Breeches*, and begun a fresh Dispute about the *Reading-Desk*, which I told you had occasioned some small Dispute between the *late* Parson and *John*, some Years ago.

This *Reading-Desk*, as you will observe, was but an Episode wove into the main Story by the Bye;— for the main Affair was

was

was the *Battle of the Breeches* and *Great Watch-Coat*, — However, *Trim* being at last driven out of these two Citadels, — he has seized hold, in his Retreat, of this *Reading-Desk*, with a View, as it seems, to take Shelter behind it.

I cannot say but the man has fought it out obstinately enough; — and, had his Cause been good, I should have really pitied him. For when he was driven out of the *Great Watch Coat*, — you see, he did not run away; — no, — he retreated behind the *Breeches*; — and, when he could make nothing of it behind the *Breeches*, — he got behind the *Reading-Desk*. — To what other Hold *Trim* will next retreat, the Politicians of this Village are not agreed. — Some think his next Move will be towards the Rear of the Parson's Boat; — but, as it is thought he cannot make a long Stand there, — others are of Opinion, That *Trim* will once more in his Life get hold of the Parson's Horse, and charge upon him, or perhaps behind him. — But as the Horse is not easy to be caught, the more general Opinion is, That, when he is driven out of the *Reading-Desk*, he will make his last Retreat in such a Manner as, if possible,

to gain the *Cloſe-Stool*, and defend himſelf behind it to the very laſt Drop. If *Trim* ſhould make this Movement, by my Advice he ſhould be left beſides his Citadel, in full Poſſeſſion of the Field of Battle;— where, 'tis certain, he will keep every Body a League off, and may pop by himſelf till he is weary: Beſides, as *Trim* ſeems bent upon *purging* himſelf, and may have Abundance of foul Humours to work off, I think he cannot be better placed.

But this is all Matter of Speculation.— Let me carry you back to Matter of Fact, and tell you what Kind of a Stand *Trim* has actually made behind the ſaid *Deſk*.

“ Neighbours and Townſmen all, I will be ſworn before my Lord Mayor, That *John* and his nineteen Men in *Buckram*, have abuſed me worſe than a Dog; for they told you that I play'd faſt and go-looſe with the *late* Parſon and him, in that old Diſpute of theirs about the *Reading-Deſk*; and that I made Matters worſe between them, and not better.”

Of this Charge, *Trim* declared he was as innocent as the Child that was unborn:

That

That he would be Book-sworn he had no Hand in it. He produced a strong Witness;— and, moreover, insinuated, that *John* himself, instead of being angry for what he had done in it, had actually thank'd him. Aye, *Trim*, says the Wight in the Plush Breeches, but that was, *Trim*, the Day before *John* found thee out.— Besides, *Trim*, there is nothing in that:— For, the very Year that thou wast made Town's Pinder, thou knowest well, that I both thank'd thee myself; and, moreover, gave thee a good warm Supper for turning *John Lund's* Cows and Horses out of my Hard-Corn Close; which if thou had'st not done, (as thou told'st me) I should have lost my whole Crop: Whereas, *John Lund* and *Thomas Patt*, who are both here to testify, and will take their Oaths on't, That thou thyself wast the very Man who set the Gate open; and, after all,— it was not thee *Trim*,— 'twas the Blacksmith's poor Lad who turn'd them out: So that a Man may be thank'd and rewarded too for a good Turn which he never did, nor ever did intend.

Trim could not sustain this unexpected Stroke;— so *Trim* march'd off the Field,
without

without Colours flying, or his Horn sounding, or any other Ensigns of Honour whatever.

Whether after this *Trim* intends to rally a second Time,—or whether *Trim* may not take it into his Head to claim the Victory,—no one but *Trim* himself can inform you:—However, the general Opinion, upon the whole, is this, — That, in three several pitch'd Battles, *Trim* has been so *trimm'd*, as never disastrous Hero was trimm'd before him.



THE

THE KEY.

THIS *Romance* was, by some Mis-
chance or other, dropp'd in the
Minster-Yard, York, and pick'd up by a
Member of a small Political Club in that
City; where it was carried, and publickly
read to the Members the last Club Night.

It was instantly agreed to, by a great
Majority, That it was a *Political Romance* ;
but concerning what State or Potentate,
could not so easily be settled amongst them.

The President of the Night, who is
thought to be as clear and quick-sighted
as any one of the whole Club in Things of
this Nature, discovered plainly, That the
Disturbances therein set forth, related to
those on the *Continent* :— That *Trim* could
be Nobody but the King of *France*, by
whose shifting and intriguing Behaviour,
all *Europe* was set together by the Ears :—
That *Trim's* Wife was certainly the *Em-
press*, who are as kind together, says he,
as any Man and Wife can be for their
Lives.

Lives.— The more Shame for 'em, says an Alderman, low to himself.— Agreeable to this Key, continues the President, — The *Parson*, who I think is a most excellent Character,— is His Most Excellent Majesty King *George*;— *John*, the Parish-Clerk, is the King of *Prussia*; who, by the Manner of his first entering *Saxony*, shew'd the World most evidently, — That he did know how to lead out the Psalm, and in Tune and Time too, notwithstanding *Trim's* vile Insult upon him in that Particular.— But who do you think, says a Surgeon and Man-Midwife, who sat next him, (whose Coat-Button the President, in the Earnestness of this Explanation, had got fast hold of, and had thereby partly drawn him over to his Opinion) Who do you think, M^r. President, says he, are meant by the *Church-Wardens*, *Sides-Men*, *Mark Slender*, *Lorry Slim*, &c.— Who do I think? says he, Why,— Why, Sir, as I take the Thing,— the *Church-Wardens* and *Sides-Men*, are the *Electors* and the other *Princes* who form the *Germanick Body*.— And as for the other subordinate Characters of *Mark Slim*? — the *unlucky Wight* in the Plush Breeches,— the *Parson's Man*

Man who was so often out of the Way, &c. &c. — these, to be sure are the several *Marshals* and *Generals*, who fought, or should have fought, under them the last Campaign. — The Men in *Buckram*, continued the President, are the Gros of the King of *Prussia's* Army, who was as *stiff* a Body of Men as are in the World:—And *Trim's* saying they were twelve, and then nineteen, is a Wipe for the *Brussels Gazetteer*, who, to my Knowledge, was never two Weeks in the same Story, about that or any thing else.

As for the rest of the *Romance*, continued the President, it sufficiently explains itself,—The *Old-cast-Pair-of-Black-Plush-Breeches* must be *Saxony*, which the *Elector*, you see, *has left off wearing*:— And as for the *Great Watch-Coat*, which, you know, covers all, it signifies all *Europe*; comprehending, at least, so many of its different States and Dominions, as we have any Concern with in the present War.

I protest, says a Gentleman who sat next but one to the President, and who, it seems, was the Parson of the Parish, a

Member not only of the Political, but also of a Musical Club in the next Street;— I protest, says he, if this Explanation is right, which I think it is,—— That the whole makes a very fine Symbol.—— You have always some Musical Instrument or other in your Head, I think, says the Alderman.—— Musical Instrument! replies the Parson, in Astonishment, — M^r Alderman, I mean an Allegory; and I think the greedy Disposition of *Trim* and his Wife, in ripping the *Great Watch-Coat* to Pieces, in order to convert it into a Petticoat for the one, and a Jerkin for the other, is one of the most beautiful of the Kind I ever met with; and will shew all the World what have been the true Views and Intentions of the Houses of *Bourbon* and *Austria* in this abominable Coalition,— I might have called it Whoredom:— Nay, says the Alderman, 'tis downright Adulterydom, or nothing.

This Hypothesis of the President's explain'd every Thing in the *Romance* extremely well; and, withall, was delivered with so much Readiness and Air of Certainty, as begot an Opinion in two Thirds of the Club, that M^r President was actually

ally the Author of the *Romance* himself: But a Gentleman who sat on the opposite Side of the Table, who had come piping-hot from reading the History of King *William's* and Queen *Anne's* Wars, and who was thought, at the Bottom, to envy the President the Honour both of the *Romance* and Explanation too, gave an entire new Turn to it all. He acquainted the Club, That Mr. President was altogether wrong in every Supposition he had made, except that one, where the *Great Watch-Coat* was said by him to represent *Europe*, or at least a great Part of it:— So far he acknowledged he was pretty right; but that he had not gone far enough backwards into our History to come at the Truth. He then acquainted them, that the dividing the *Great Watch-Coat* did, and could, allude to nothing else in the World but the *Partition-Treaty*; which, by the Bye, he told them, was the most unhappy and scandalous Transaction in all King *William's* Life: It was that false Step, and that only, says he, rising from his Chair, and striking his Hand upon the Table with great Violence; it was that false Step, says he, knitting his Brows

and throwing his Pipe down upon the Ground, that has laid the Foundation of all the Disturbances and Sorrows we feel and lament at this very Hour ; and as for *Trim's* giving up the *Breeches*, look ye, it is almost Word for Word copied from the *French King and Dauphin's Renunciation of Spain and the West-Indies*, which all the World knew (as was the very Case of the *Breeches*) were renounced by them on purpose to be reclaim'd when Time should serve.

This Explanation had too much Ingenuity in it to be altogether slighted ; and, in Truth, the worst Fault it had, seem'd to be the prodigious Heat of it ; which (as an Apothecary, who sat next the Fire, observ'd, in a very low Whisper to his next Neighbour) was so much incorporated into every Particle of it, that it was impossible, under such Fermentation, it should work its desired Effect.

This, however, no way intimidated a little valiant Gentleman, though he sat the very next Man, from giving an Opinion as diametrically opposite as *East* is from *West*.

This

This Gentleman, who was by much the best Geographer in the whole Club, and, moreover, second Cousin to an Engineer, was positive the *Breeches* meant *Gibraltar*; for, if you remember, Gentlemen, says he, tho' possibly you don't, the Ichnography and Plan of that Town and Fortrefs, it exactly resembles a Pair of Trunk-Hose, the two Promontories forming the two Slops, &c. &c.— Now we all know, continued he, that King *George* the First made a Promise of that important Pass to the King of *Spain*:— So that the whole Drift of the *Romance*, according to my Sense of Things, is merely to vindicate the King and the Parliament in that Transaction, which made so much Noise in the World.

A Wholesale Taylor, who from the Beginning had resolved not to speak at all in the Debate,— was at last drawn into it, by something very unexpected in the last Person's Argument.

He told the Company, frankly, he did not understand what *Ichnography* meant: — But as for the Shape of a *Pair of Breeches*, as he had had the Advantage of cutting out so many hundred Pairs in his
Life-

Life-Time, he hoped he might be allowed to know as much of the Matter as another Man.

Now, to my Mind, says he, there is nothing in all the Terraqueous Globe (a Map of which, it seems, hung up in his Work-Shop) so like a *Pair of Breeches* unmade up, as the Island of *Sicily*:— Nor is there any thing, if you go to that, quoth an honest Shoe-maker, who had the Honour to be a Member of the Club, so much like a *Jack-Boot*, to my Fancy, as the Kingdom of *Italy*.— What the Duce has either *Italy* or *Sicily* to do in the Affair? cries the President, who by this Time, began to tremble for his Hypothesis,— What have they to do?— Why, answered the *Partition-Treaty* Gentleman, with great Spirit and Joy sparkling in his Eyes,— They have just so much, Sir, to do in the Debate as to overthrow your Suppositions, and to establish the Certainty of mine beyond the Possibility of a Doubt: For, says he, (with an Air of Sovereign Triumph over the President's Politicks)— By the *Partition-Treaty*, Sir, both *Naples* and *Sicily* were the very Kingdoms made to devolve

devolve upon the *Dauphin*;— and *Trim's greasing the Parson's Boots*, is a Devilish Satyrical Stroke; for it exposes the Corruption and Bribery made Use of at that Juncture, in bringing over the several States and Princes of *Italy* to use their Interests at *Rome*, to stop the Pope from giving the Investitures of those Kingdoms to any Body else.— The Pope has not the Investiture of *Sicily*, cries another Gentleman.— I care not, says he, for that.

Almost every one apprehended the Debate to be now ended, and that no one Member would venture any new Conjecture upon the *Romance*, after so many clear and decisive Interpretations had been given. But, hold,—— Close to the Fire, and opposite to where the Apothecary sat, there sat also a Gentleman of the Law, who, from the Beginning to the End of the Hearing of this Cause, seem'd no way satisfied in his Conscience with any one Proceeding in it. This Gentleman had not yet opened his Mouth, but had waited patiently till they had all gone thro' their several Evidences on the other Side;— reserving himself, like an Expert Practitioner, for the last Word in the Debate. When the

Par-

Partition-Treaty-Gentleman had finish'd what he had to say,— He got up,— and, advancing towards the Table, told them, That the Error they had all gone upon thus far, in making out the several Facts in the *Romance*,— was in looking too high; which, with great Candor, he said, was a very natural Thing, and very excusable withall, in such a Political Club as theirs: For Instance, continues he, you have been searching the *Registers*, and looking into the *Deeds* of Kings and *Emperors*,— as if Nobody had any *Deeds* to shew or compare the *Romance* to but themselves.— This, continued the Attorney, is just as much out of the Way of good Practice, as if I should carry a Thing slap-dash into the House of Lords, which was under forty Shillings, and might be decided in the next County-Court for six Shillings and Eightpence.— He then took the *Romance* in his Left Hand, and pointing with the Fore-Finger of his Right towards the second Page, he humbly begg'd Leave to observe, (and, to do him Justice, he did it in somewhat of a *forensic Air*) That the *Parson*, *John*, and *Sexton*, shewed incontestably the Thing to be *Tripartite*; now, if you will take Notice, Gentlemen, says he,

these

these several Persons, who are Parties to this Instrument, are merely Ecclesiastical; that the *Reading-Desk*, *Pulpit-Cloth*, and *Velvet Cushion*, are tripartite too; and are, by Intendment of Law, Goods and Chattles merely of an Ecclesiastick Nature, belonging and appertaining 'only unto them,' and to them only.— So that it appears very plain to me, That the *Romance*, neither directly nor indirectly, goes upon Temporal, but altogether upon Church-Matters.— And do not you think, says he, softening his Voice a little, and addressing himself to the Parson with a forced Smile,— Do not you think Doctor, says he, That the Dispute in the *Romance*, between the *Parson* of the Parish and *John*, about the Height of *John's* Desk, is a very fine Panegyrick upon the *Humility* of *Church-Men*?— I think, says the Parson, it is much of the same Fineness with that which your Profession is complimented with, in the pimping, dirty, pettyfogging Character of *Trim*,— which, in my Opinion, Sir, is just such another Panegyrick upon the *Honesty* of *Attornies*.

Nothing whets the Spirits like an Insult:— Therefore the Parson went on with

a visible Superiority and an uncommon Acuteness.— As you are so happy, Sir, continues he, in making Applications,— pray turn over a Page or two to the black Law-Letters in the *Romance*.— What do you think of them, Sir?— Nay,— pray read the Grant of the *Great Watch-Coat*— and *Trim's* Renunciation of the *Breeches*,— Why, there is downright **Lease** and **Release** for you,— 'tis the very Thing, Man;— only with this small Difference,— and in which consists the whole Strength of the Panegyric, — That the Author of the *Romance* has convey'd and re-convey'd in about ten Lines,— what you, with the glorious Prolixity of the Law, could not have crowded into as many Skins of Parchment.

The Apothecary, who had paid the Attorney, the same Afternoon, a Demand of Three Pounds Six Shillings and Eight-Pence, for much such another Jobb,— was so highly tickled with the Parson's Repartee in that particular Point, that he rubb'd his Hands together most fervently,— and laugh'd most triumphantly thereupon.

This

This could not escape the Attorney's Notice, any more than the Cause of it did escape his Penetration.

I think, Sir, says he (dropping his Voice a Third) you might well have spared this immoderate Mirth, since you and your Profession have the least Reason to triumph here of any of us.—I beg, quoth he, that you would reflect a Moment upon the *Cob-Web* which *Trim* went so far for, and brought back with an Air of so much Importance in his Breeches Pocket, to lay upon the Parson's cut Finger.—This said Cob-Web, Sir, is a fine-spun Satyre, upon the flimsy Nature of one Half of the Shop Medicines, with which you make a Property of the Sick, the Ignorant, and the Unsuspecting.—And as for the Moral of the *Close-Stool-Pan*, Sir, 't is too plain,—Does not nine Parts in ten of the whole Practice, and of all you vend under *its Colours*, pass into and concenter in that one nasty Utensil?—And let me tell you, Sir, says he, raising his Voice,—had not your unseasonable Mirth blinded you, you might have seen that *Trim's* carrying the *Close-Stool-Pan* upon his Head the whole Length of the Town,

without blushing, is a pointed Raillery,— and one of the sharpest Sarcafms, Sir, that ever was thrown out upon you;— for it unveils the solemn Impudence of the whole Profession, who, I fee, are afhamed of nothing which brings in Money.

There were two Apothecaries in the Club, befides the Surgeon mentioned before, with a chemift and an Undertaker, who all felt themfelves equally hurt and agrieved by this discourteous Retort:— And they were all five rifing up together from their Chairs, with full Intent of Heart, as it was thought, to return the *Reproof Valiant* thereupon.— But the Prefident, fearing it would end in a general Engagement, he inflantly call'd out, *To Order*;— and gave Notice, That if there was any Member in the Club, who had not yet fpoke, and yet did defire to fpeak upon the main Subject of the Debate,— that he fhould immediately be heard.

This was a happy Invitation for a ftammering Member, who, it feems, had but a weak Voice at the beft; and having often attempted to fpeak in the Debate, but to

no Purpose, had sat down in utter Despair of an Opportunity.

This Member, you must know, had got a sad Crush upon his Hip, in the late *Election*, which gave him intolerable Anguish;— so that, in short, he could think of nothing else:— For which Cause, and others, he was strongly of Opinion, That the whole *Romance* was a just Gird at the late *York Election*; and I think, says he, that the *Promise* of the *Breeches* broke, may well and truly signify *Somebody's else Promise*, which was broke, and occasion'd so much Disturbance amongst us.

— Thus every Man turn'd the Story to what was swimming uppermost in his own Brain;— so that, before all was over, there were full as many Satyres spun out of it,— and as great a Variety of Personages, Opinions, Transactions, and Truths, found to lay hid under the dark Veil of its Allegory, as ever were discovered in the thrice-renowned History of the Acts of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*.

At the Close of all, and just before the Club was going to break up,— Mr President

dent rose from his Chair, and begg'd Leave to make the two following Motions, which were instantly agreed to, without any Division.

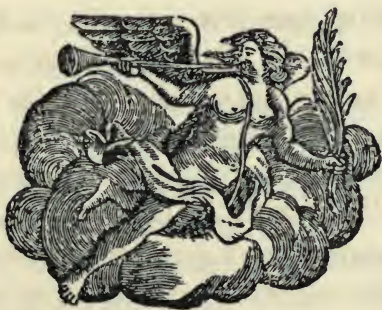
First, Gentlemen, says he, as *Trim's* Character in the Romance, of a shuffling intriguing Fellow,— whoever it was drawn for, is, in Truth, as like the *French King* as it can stare,—— I move, That the *Romance* be forthwith *printed*: For, continues he, if we can but once turn the Laugh against him, and make him ashamed of what he has done, it may be a great Means, with the Blessing of God upon our Fleets and Armies, to save the Liberties of *Europe*.

In the *second* Place, I move, That Mr Attorney, our worthy Member, be desired to take Minutes, upon the Spot, of every Conjecture which has been made upon the *Romance*, by the several Members who have spoke; which, I think, says he, will answer two good Ends:

1st, It will establish the Political Knowledge of our Club for ever, and place it in a respectable Light to all the World.

In

In the *next* Place, it will furnish what will be wanted; that is, a *Key* to the *Romance*.—— In troth you might have said a whole Bunch of *Keys*, quoth a White-smith, who was the only Member in the Club who had not said something in the Debate: But let me tell you, Mr. President, says he, That the *Right Key*, if it could but be found, would be worth the whole Bunch put together.



To _____, *Esq*;
of YORK.

SIR,

YOU write me Word that the Letter I wrote to you, and now stiled *The Political Romance* is printing; and that, as it was drop'd by Carelessness, to make some Amends, you will overlook the Printing of it yourself, and take Care to see that it comes right into the World.

I was just going to return you Thanks, and to beg, withal, you would take Care That the Child be not laid at my Door.— But having, this Moment, perused the *Reply to the Dean of York's Answer*,— it has made me alter my Mind in that respect; so that, instead of making you the Request I intended, I do here desire That the Child be filiated upon me, *Laurence Sterne*, Prebendary of *York*, &c. &c. And I do, accordingly, own it for my own true and lawful Offspring.

My Reason for this is plain;— for as, you see, the *Writer* of that *Reply*, has taken upon him to invade this *incontested*
G *Right*

Right of another Man's in a Thing of this Kind, it is high Time for every Man to look to his own — Since, upon the *same Grounds*, and with half the Degree of Anger, that he affirms the Production of that very Reverend Gentleman's to be the Child of many Fathers, some one in his Spight (for I am not without my Friends of that Stamp) may run headlong into the other Extream, and swear, That mine had no Father at all: — And therefore, to make use of *Bay's* Plea in the *Rehearsal*, for *Prince Pretty-Man*; I merely do it, as he says, “for fear it should be said to be “no Body's Child at all.”

I have only to add two Things: — First, That, at your Peril, you do not presume to alter or transpose one Word, nor rectify one false Spelling, nor so much as add or diminish one Comma or Tittle, in or to my *Romance*: For if you do, — In case any of the Descendents of *Curl* should think fit to invade my Copy-Right, and print it over again in my Teeth, I may not be able, in a Court of Justice, to swear strictly to my own Child, after you had *so large a Share* in the begetting it.

In

In the next Place, I do not approve of your *quaint Conceit*, at the Foot of the Title Page of my *Romance*,—It would only set People on smiling a Page or two before I give them Leave;—and besides, all Attempts either at Wit or Humour, in that Place, are a Forestalling of what slender Entertainment of those Kinds are prepared within: Therefore I would have it stand thus:

Y O R K:

Printed in the Year 1759.

(*Price One Shilling.*)

I know you will tell me, That it is set too high; and as a Proof, you will say, That this last *Reply* to the *Dean's Answer* does consist of near as many Pages as mine; and yet is all sold for Six-pence.—But mine, my dear Friend, is quite a *different Story*:—It is a Web wrought out of my own Brain, of twice the Fineness of this which he has spun out of his; and besides, I maintain it, it is of a more curious Pattern, and could not be afforded at the Price that his is sold at, by any *honest Workman* in *Great-Britain*.

Moreover, Sir, you do not consider, That the Writer is interested in his *Story*, and that it is his Business to set it a-going at *any Price*: And indeed, from the Information of Persons conversant in Paper and Print, I have very good Reason to believe, if he should sell every Pamphlet of them, he would inevitably be a *Great Loser* by it, This I believe verily, and am,

Dear Sir,

Your obliged Friend

Sutton on the Forest,

Jan. 20, 1759.

and humble Servant,

LAURENCE STERNE.

To

To Dr. TOPHAM.

SIR,

THOUGH the *Reply* to the *Dean of York* is not declared, in the *Title-Page*, or elsewhere, to be wrote by you, — Yet I take that Point for granted; and therefore beg Leave, in this public Manner, to write to you in Behalf of myself; with Intent to set you right in two Points where I stand concerned in this Affair; and which I find you have misapprehended, and consequently (as I hope) misrepresented.

The *First* is, in respect of some Words, made use of in the Instrument, signed by Dr. *Herring*, Mr. *Berdmore* and myself. — Namely, *to the best of our Remembrance and Belief*, which Words you have caught hold of, as implying some Abatement of our Certainty as to the Facts therein attested. Whether it was so with the other two Gentlemen who signed that Attestation with me, it is not for me to say; they are able to answer for themselves, and I desire to do so for myself; and therefore I declare to you, and to all Mankind, “That
“the Words in the first Paragraph, *to the*
“*best*

“*best of our Remembrance and Belief*, implied no Doubt remaining upon my Mind, nor any Distrust whatever of my Memory, from the Distance of Time ;— Nor, in short, was it my Intention to attest the several Facts therein, as matters of Belief— But as Matters of as much Certainty as a Man was capable of having, or giving Evidence to. In Consequence of this Explanation of myself, I do declare myself ready to attest the same Instrument over again, striking out the words *to the best of our Remembrance and Belief*, which I see, have raised this Exception to it.

Whether I was mistaken or no, I leave to better Judges ; but I understood those Words were a very common Preamble to Attestations of Things, to which we bore the clearest Evidence :— However, D^r *Topham*, as you have claimed just such another Indulgence yourself, in the Case of begging the *Dean’s* Authority to say, what, as you affirm, you had sufficient Authority to say without, as a modest and Gentleman-like Way of Affirmation ;— I wish you had spared either the one or the other of your Remarks upon these two Passages :— *Veniam petimus, demusque vicissim.*

There

There is another Observation relating to this Instrument, which I perceive has escaped your Notice; which I take the Liberty to point out to you, namely, That the Words, *To the best of our Remembrance and Belief*, if they imply any Abatement of Certainty, seem only confined to that Paragraph, and to what is immediately attested after them in it:— For in the second Paragraph, wherein the main Points are minutely attested, and upon which the whole Dispute, and main Charge against the *Dean*, turns, it is introduced thus:

“ *We do particularly remember, That as soon as Dinner was over, &c* ”

In the second Place you affirm, “ That it is not said, That M^r *Sterne* could affirm he had heard you charge the *Dean* with a Promise, in its own Nature so very extraordinary, as of the Commissaryship of the *Dean* and Chapter! ”—— To this I answer, that my true Intent in subscribing that very Instrument, and I suppose of others, was to attest this *very Thing*; and I have just now read that Part of the Instrument over; and cannot, for my Life, affirm it either more directly or expressly, than in the
Words

Words as they there stand;— therefore please to let me transcribe them.

——“ But being press’d by M^r *Sterne* “ with an undeniable Proof, That he, “ (D^r *Topham*) did propagate the said “ Story, (viz: of a *Promise from the Dean* “ to D^r *Topham of the Dean and Chap-* “ *ter’s Commissaryship*) — D^r *Topham* did “ at last acknowledge it; adding, as his “ Reason or Excuse for so doing, That he “ apprehended (or Words to that Effect) “ he had a *Promise* under the *Dean’s own* “ *Hand, of the Dean and Chapter’s Com-* “ *missaryship.*”

This I have attested, and what Weight the Sanction of an Oath will add to it, I am willing and ready to give.

As for M^r *Ricard’s* feeble Attestation, brought to shake the Credit of this firm and solemn one, I have nothing to say to it, as it is only an Attestation of M^r *Ricard’s* Conjectures upon the Subject.— But this I can say, That I had the Honour to be at the Deanery with the learned Counsel, when M^r *Ricard* underwent that *most formidable* Examination you speak of;—
and

and I solemnly affirm, That he then said, He knew nothing at all about the Matter, one Way or the other; and the Reasons he gave for his utter Ignorance, were, first, That he was then so full of Concern, at the Difference which arose between two Gentlemen, both his Friends, that he did not attend to the Subject Matter of it,—and of which he declared again he knew nothing at all. And secondly, If he had understood it then, the Distance would have put it out of his Head by this Time.

He has since scower'd his Memory, I ween; for now he says, That he apprehended the Dispute regarded something in the Dean's Gift, as he could not *naturally* suppose, &c. 'Tis certain, at the Deanery, he had *naturally* no Suppositions in his Head about this Affair; so that I wish this may not prove one of the After-Thoughts you speak of, and not so much a *natural* as an *artificial* Supposition of my good Friend's.

As for the *formidable* Enquiry you represent him as undergoing,—let me intreat you to give me Credit in what I say upon it,—namely,— That it was as much the

Reverse to every Idea that ever was couch'd under that Word, as Words can represent it to you. As for the learned Counfel and myself, who were in the Room all the Time, I do not remember that we, either of us, spoke ten Words. The Dean was the only one that ask'd Mr. *Ricard* what he remembered about the Affair of the Sessions Dinner; which he did in the most Gentleman-like and candid Manner,— and with an Air of as much Calmness and seeming Indifference, as if he had been questioning him about the News in the last *Brussels Gazette*.

What Mr. *Ricard* saw to terrify him so sadly, I cannot apprehend, unless the Dean's *Gothic Book-Cafe*,— which I own has an odd Appearance to a Stranger; so that if he came terrified in his Mind there, and with a Resolution not to *plead*, he might *naturally suppose* it to be a great Engine brought there on purpose to exercise the *Peine fort et dure* upon him.— But to be serious; if Mr. *Ricard* told you, That this Enquiry was *most formidable*, *He* was much to blame;— and if you have said it, without his express Information, then *You* are much to blame.

This

This is all, I think, in your *Reply*, which concerns me to answer:— As for the many coarse and unchristian Insinuations scatter'd throughout your *Reply*,— as it is my Duty to beg God to forgive you, so I do from my Heart: Believe me, D^r *Topham*, they hurt yourself more than the Person they are aimed at; and when the *first Transport* of Rage is a little over, they will grieve you more too.

————— *prima est hæc Ultio.*

But these I hold to be no answerable Part of a Controversy;— and for the little that remains unanswered in yours,— I believe I could, in another half Hour, set it right in the Eyes of the World.— But this is not my Business.— And if it is thought worth the while, which I hope it never will, I know no one more able to do it than the very Reverend and Worthy Gentleman whom you have so unhandfomely insulted upon that Score.

As for the *supposed Compilers*, whom you have been so wrath and so unmerciful against, I'll be answerable for it, as they are Creatures of your own Fancy, they will bear you no Malice. However, I

think the more positively any Charge is made, let it be against whom it will, the better it should be supported; and therefore I should be sorry, for your own Honour, if you have not some better Grounds for all you have thrown out about them, than the mere Heat of your Imagination or Anger. To tell you truly, your Suppositions on this Head oft put me in Mind of *Trim's* twelve Men in *Buckram*, which his disordered Fancy represented as laying in Ambush in *John* the Clerk's House, and letting drive at him all together. I am,

S I R

Your most obedient

Sutton on the Forest }
Jan. 20, 1759. }

And most humble Servant,

LAWRENCE STERNE.

P. S. I beg Pardon for *clapping* this upon the *Back* of the *Romance*, — which is done out of no Disrespect to you. — But the *Vehicle* stood ready at the Door, — and as I was to pay the whole Fare, and there was Room enough behind it, — it was the cheapest and readiest Conveyance I could think of.

F I N I S.



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