

*For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.*

**T**HERE is a fashion in literature, and some by the influence of fashion operating in their favour have engaged a greater share of attention, and received more praise than their merits entitle them to. In this predicament, I rank Laurence Sterne. Some thirty years ago, his writings were the echo of every tongue, and the literary world was inundated by writings in imitation of his manner. Many a page was disfigured by the dash which by the courtesy of those times was taken for wit; though among the herd of imitators, it often concealed obscenity, and still more frequently dulness.

"Tristram Shandy," is a strange compound of wit and obscenity. The "Sentimental Journey," was generally allowed to contain pathetic touches; but if some anecdotes, which I lately met with, in "The Repository of Theology and General Literature," a very respectable periodical publication, are true, and I see no reason to doubt their authenticity, Sterne was far from possessing a feeling heart, and consequently in his affectation of pathos, must have been only an actor. Take away his sensibility and what remains of him?

The first anecdote of Sterne is contained in a letter from a correspondent, which gives the following extract from a letter written by a person of the name of Watson, to George Whateley esq. the correspondent of Doctor Franklin, and is as follows: *Jan. 10th. 1776.*

"Shall I tell you what York scandal says? viz. that Sterne, when possessed of preferment of £300 a year, would not pay £10 to release his mother out of Ousebridge prison, when poverty was her only fault, and her character so good, that two of her neighbours clubbed to set her at liberty, to gain a livelihood, as she had been accustomed to do, by taking in washing. Yet this was the man whose fine feelings gave the world the story of *Le Fevre*, and the *Sentimental Journey*. Do you not feel as if something hurt you more than a cut across your finger, on reading this? Talking on benevolence, or writing about it, in the most pathetic manner, and doing all the good you

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can, without show and parade, are very different things."

The second anecdote is contained in a letter to the Editor of the Monthly Repository.

"SIR,

*Wem. Shropshire.*

I was not so much surprized as probably most of your readers, at the mortifying account which has been published in your work, of the brutality of Sterne to his mother. For, above forty years ago, as I was travelling in a coach from Bath to London, my companion, a Doctor Marriot, who was his near neighbour, gave me such a character of the man, as filled me with unfavourable impressions of him ever since. Being then a young man, and, like most other young men, being too forward to show my opinion of men and books, I began to express my high admiration of the writings of Sterne, and to pass unqualified eulogiums on him, as a man possessed of the finest feelings and philanthropy. As soon as I had ended my frothy declamation, the Doctor very placidly told me, that I did not know the man as well as he did, that he was his very near neighbour, and that of all the men he ever knew, he was the most devoid of the feelings of humanity, or of every thing we call sympathy. As a proof of this, the Doctor told me that his daughter had some acquaintance with Miss Sterne, and therefore that she frequently passed an afternoon at his house; that Miss Sterne was subject to violent epileptic fits; that she had lately been seized with one of these which was accompanied with such alarming symptoms, as made him and his daughter apprehend she was dying; that they therefore sent to Mr. Sterne, to apprize him of the circumstance, and to come to them immediately.

After waiting for some time in anxious expectation, the gentleman made his appearance, and seeing his daughter agonized upon the floor, and seemingly ready to expire, he coldly observed, that she would be well again presently, and that he could not stop a moment, being engaged to play the first fiddle at York that night. Thus he took his leave, and hastily hurried out of the house. We cannot therefore conclude with any certainty what a man feels from the pathos of his

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writings, unless we have an intimate acquaintance with the man himself; unless we can prove from his actions that his high-wrought descriptions are the index of his mind. It is even possible, as the philosopher Moyes asserted, that a man of no feeling may succeed best in giving us a finished picture of distress. How is this to be accounted for, unless it be, that because they have no interest in what they deliver, they are not hurried on by any real passion, they take time to dress it to the popular taste, by ornamenting it with all the nicknackery which it will bear? The man, however, who feels and suffers in a high degree must express himself strongly on the subject which affects him, though he does not go out of his way to introduce any artful embellishment. I intended to have attempted to explain this, but rather wish to have this done by some of your ingenious Correspondents. I shall only observe, that, notwithstanding all the admiration which Sterne's Maria has produced, he could not, to save his life, have written any thing equal to David's Lamentation over Absalom. He would, like Dr. Swift, if in his situation, have been proud and witty, even when deploring the death of his lovely Stella. W. HAZLETT."

If these anecdotes which tend to place the character of Sterne in a new point of view, are thought worthy of a place in the Belfast Monthly Magazine, they are submitted to its service.

A READER,

*To the Editor of the Belfast Magazine.*

SIR,

AS I perceive you wish to pay particular attention to every subject connected with the *rural economy* of Ireland, perhaps the following cheap and simple method of dying woollen stuffs an excellent and permanent black, without the aid of copperas, may be acceptable to many of your readers. It is extracted from one of the most valuable publications, that the present age has produced; and I have been assured by a very respectable and intelligent lady, who made an experiment, according to the directions, that it is infinitely preferable to the method commonly practised in ma-

ny parts of Great Britain, and Ireland. By this method, the texture of the cloth is not in the smallest degree injured, but continues to the last, soft and silky, without that hardness to the touch which it acquires, when dyed by means of copperas; besides it is not by any means, so liable to fade, as when dyed in the common way. The method is as follows. "Let the stuff to be dyed be well washed in soap and water, and afterwards completely dried. Then of the common broad leaved sorrel, or as it is vulgarly called in some parts, *sourack*, boil as much as shall make a decoction of sufficient quantity to let the stuff to be dyed, lie in it open and easy to be stirred; the greater the quantity of sorrel that is used, the better will the colour be; and therefore if the pot, or caldron, will not hold enough at once, when part has been sufficiently boiled, it must be taken out and wrung, and a fresh quantity to be boiled in the same juice or decoction. When the liquor is made sufficiently acid, strain it from the sorrel through a sieve, put the cloth or yarn into it, and let it boil two hours, stirring it frequently. If stockings be among the stuff to be dyed, it will be expedient, after they have been an hour in the boiling liquor, to turn them inside out, and at the end of the second hour, let the whole be poured into a tub or any other vessel. The pot, or caldron must then be washed, and clean water put into it, with half a pound of logwood-chips, for every pound of dry yarn, or cloth. The logwood and water should boil slowly for four hours; and then the cloth or yarn being wrung from the sour liquor, and put into the logwood decoction, the whole must be suffered to boil slowly for four hours more; stockings, if there be any, turned inside out at the end of two hours. Of this last decoction there must, as of the former, be enough to let the cloth lie open, and easy to be stirred, while boiling. At the end of the four hours, the cloth must be taken out, and among the boiling liquor, first removed from the fire, must be poured an English gallon of stale urine for every pound of dry yarn, or cloth to be dyed. When this compound liquor has been well stirred,