

Every reader is acquainted with the name of the Rev. Laurence Sterne, a witty clever Irishman. He was born at Clonmel, in Tipperary, in the year 1718. He spent his life in an atmosphere of mischievous merriment, poking fun at everybody and everything that furnished an opportunity for making a laugh. Not even the sacred character of a clergyman—he took vows in the English Church—could repress this natural levity, and he tells us in his autobiography “books, painting, *fiddling* and shooting were my amusements,” in his parish of Stillington in Yorkshire.

Such an unclerical mode of passing his time was, we suppose, the reason why he was often ill prepared to preach to his flock on Sunday. But whoever heard of a Tipperary man without his resources? “When he had little to say or little to give his people, he had recourse to the abuse of Popery. Hence he called it his ‘Cheshire Cheese.’ It had a two-fold advantage—it cost him very little, and he found by experience that nothing satisfied so well the hungry appetite of his congregation. They always devoured it greedily.”

The man who wrote this, wrote also a book called “*Tristram Shandy*,” and in obedience to the admirable principle enunciated by him above, he took to the abuse of Popery, in the form of a sentence of excommunication, supposed to have been passed, not by a Pope, but by a certain Ernulphus, Bishop of Rochester. The whole history of the thing, may be found in “*Tristram Shandy*”, pp. 78 et seq. in the edition of that work published by George Routledge & Sons, London.

Now, will anybody believe that this piece of wicked, blasphemous mockery, which has just enough of Catholic phraseology in it to deceive the very unwary, could have been published by a gentleman pretending to be a theologian, and ascribed to a reigning Pontiff. It is humiliating in the last degree to think that any one could have made such a stupid mistake; and if it is not a mistake—if the writer knew what it was when he had it published, we know of no words strong enough to condemn such foul dealing. We are inclined to think, however, that it was your correspondent's learning, not his honesty, that was at fault, and so dismiss the painful thing from our mind with just one observation, that however the Lecturer may have succeeded in proving Papal Infallibility, the correspondent has been most triumphantly successful in showing himself fallible, very fallible indeed! And if his theological knowledge is at all equal to his critical scholarship, that promised book of his will be a gem in its way.

Of course, for reasons that this Letter will make obvious to every one, I take no notice at all of the first half of his Letter. Indeed, there is not a word in it that does not go rather to prove than to disprove our claim, provided of course, it be admitted that God, and not man, made the church.

Your obedient servant,

M. J. FERGUSON

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#### LETTER No. 2 OF MR. FERGUSON.

(From “*Owen Sound Times*” of March 10th, 1871.)

To the Editor of the Times:

DEAR SIR,—We suppose we must answer the *theology* of Mr. Stephen's letter, not because it contains a single sentiment of any weight