

abandoned the desire to regain his daughter for a companion for his declining years. In 1766 his health was so precarious that he was compelled to try the effect of the climate of Italy. Upon his return, in the same year, he visited his wife and daughter, and tried to persuade them to accompany him to England. His mention of this meeting with his wife is very characteristic of their relations: 'Poor woman! she was very cordial, etc., and begs to stay another year or so.' Of his daughter he says, 'My Lydia pleases me much; I found her greatly improved in everything I wished her.' He was unsuccessful in his endeavours to bring them back with him, but in October, 1767, his wife yielded to his solicitations, and the pair joined him at Coxwold. It would appear from Sterne's letters, that his wife distinctly gave him to understand, that this was merely a visit, and not a permanent resumption of their relations as man and wife. In writing of Lydia, he says: 'She is all Heaven could give me in a daughter, but like other blessings not given, but lent; for her mother loves France, and this dear part of me must be torn from my arms to follow her mother.' Perhaps if Mrs. Sterne had known how short a time remained to the unhappy Yorick, during which the ministrations of either wife or daughter could avail, she would have been less unrelenting. We should feel more inclined to blame her persistency, however, if we did not know that six months had barely elapsed since Sterne had closed his correspondence with Mrs. Draper. It must have been shortly after their arrival, that Sterne wrote the short and incomplete memoir of his life, to which he appended the remark—'I have set down these particulars relating to my family and self, for my Lydia, in case hereafter she might have a curiosity, or a kinder motive to know them.' The desire to leave this record of himself for his daughter was perhaps prompted by

something like a prophetic instinct of his approaching end; and this renders it the more melancholy that he makes no affectionate reference to his wife, in what he designed to be his last words to his daughter. He concludes thus: 'She and yourself are at length come, and I have had the inexpressible joy of seeing my girl everything I wished her.' It was impossible, however, for him to praise the daughter so highly without at the same time passing an unconscious encomium upon the mother whose training had made her what she was.

In the last week of 1767, Sterne went up to London to watch *The Sentimental Journey* through the press. He was even then in a very feeble state of health, having just recovered from an illness which, as he says, 'had worn him to a shadow'; indeed, writing in the last week of December, he says the fever had only just left him, but that he purposes starting for London almost directly. A journey undertaken at such a time, by a man whose constitution, never very robust, had been seriously undermined by gaiety and excitement, could only have been rendered innocuous by the utmost precaution. Sterne—true to his careless, unthinking nature—when once he found himself in his beloved London, went about and visited as though he had been in the best of health. The inevitable consequence ensued. On the 20th February, within a month of his death, in a simple, loving letter to his daughter, he says:—'This vile influenza—be not alarmed, I think I shall get the better of it, and shall be with you both the first of May; and if I escape, 'twill not be for a long period, my child, unless a quiet retreat and peace of mind can restore me.' He was then almost within sight of a quieter retreat than any this world can offer. His hopes of recovery proved delusive, and he rapidly grew worse; but the near approach of death did not unman him, nor render him forgetful