The present work is not a biography, but a study of the authorship of Laurence Sterne - a singular English writer of the 18th century, rather neglected in our country and not quite well served in his own country either. Sterne, in spite of the occasional happy notices of him in recent times, is generally remembered to-day more as an object of curious interest than for a faithful critical appraisal of his work. This is because he shocked orthodox, critical and moral, conscience by turning tradition upside down. And yet, Sterne has swum 'down the gutter of Time' - to use a phrase of his own - to our age.

Sterne's work comprises *Tristram Shandy* (1750-67), *Sentimental Journey* (1768) and forty-five Sermons, besides a few Letters and three minor fragmentary pieces - namely, *The History of a Good Warm Watch-coat*, the *Journal to Eliza* and a brief incomplete autobiographical memoir. These minor writings have not been given separate chapters in the present work; but they have been drawn upon according as the occasion arose in our discussion of Sterne's authorship. Biographical material, drawn from his letters and the autobiographical fragment, has been used in the chapter on Sterne's Personality (Chap. IV), an assessment of which seemed to be necessary for a faithful appraisal of his work.

In the preparation of this work I am indebted to all those earlier writers who have thrown light on some aspect of Sterne or other. I am grateful to the Librarian and staff of the National Library, Calcutta, who greatly helped me in procuring some old out-of-print books, containing useful material, from foreign libraries. My debt to Prof. Amalendu Bose, D.Phil. (Oxon.), F.I.A.L.,
for his continued encouragement and guidance, is more than I can express in words.

The full titles of the books referred to in the present work, with the publishers' names and dates of publication, have been given in the Select Bibliography at the end.

Unless otherwise stated, page references have been taken from the following editions of Sterne's works -


A.W.C.