

cowled skeletons, and monstrous helmets, followed, a few years later, the *Old English Baron* of Miss Clara Reeve, who made her marvels slightly more credible, an innovation which Walpole, perhaps not unnaturally, regarded as insipid. After Miss Reeve came the greater Mrs Radcliffe, and the closing century 'supp'd full with horrors.' Clanging portals, echoing corridors, hollow voices, haunted chambers, moth-eaten manuscripts, and daggers that dripped blood became the order of the day. To make the Gothic compound more heady, the tear of sensibility was freely mingled with the goblet, and the sophisticated draught held the drugged public captive until the secret was explained, generally and in this Mrs Radcliffe, too, differed from Walpole—by simple and natural causes. A quiet home-keeping lady, who described Switzerland and Italy without visiting those countries, Ann Radcliffe must have possessed considerable powers of imagination, and certainly moves a terror skilfully. The influence of *The Italian* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is to be traced in Lewis, Matarin, and others, and even in the great Wizard of the North himself. As might be anticipated, Gothic romance did not escape the satirist. It was broadly burlesqued in the *Horace* of E. S. Barrett, and, with a finer touch, in the admirable *Northanger Abbey* of Jane Austen, which, although not published until 1818, had been actually written very soon after the first appearance of *The Italian*.

The Novel, as the chief gift of the Eighteenth Century to English letters, has, of necessity, occupied exceptional space; and, for its further modification under the pens of Holcroft and Godwin, Henry Mackenzie and Moore, the reader must be referred to the different accounts of those writers. We may now turn to another development of the plain-sailing, prosaic spirit, which, through all its permutations, remains the leading characteristic of the epoch. Hitherto History in England had been little but chronicle and compilation, uncritical and unscientific. In the Eighteenth Century, however, there arose three writers who raised it at once to a definite art. The first of these, in point of time, was Hume. For research, as we understand it now, he cared but little. But he gave to his *History of England* the charm of a sequent narrative and an effortless style which was as pleasant to read as a fairy-tale. After Hume comes Robertson

with histories of Scotland, of Charles V., of America, a writer whose style was almost equal to that of his predecessor, and whose standard of investigation was somewhat higher. But both Hume and Robertson are only pioneers of the greater Gibbon. *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, with its majestic march, its splendid sonority, and its sustained accomplishment, rises far beyond the flight of either, and perhaps even now constitutes the greatest gift of Clío to our literature. Patient inquiry, insight, breadth of view, and minuteness of detail are all united in this twenty years' labour. It was a new thing when it appeared; it is a new thing still; and it is not easy to conceive that a labour so concentrated and so continuous, so sustained and so single-minded, can fail of length of days.

From the history of a people to the history of one person, whether recounted by himself or by another, the transition is easy. That the Eighteenth Century can claim to have originated any particular form of Biography or Autobiography, in the sense that it can claim to have originated the modern Novel or the modern Essay, would be too much to contend. But that, in an age of prose, biographies and memoirs should abound is not surprising; and, from Aune onwards, they were not to seek. There were short biographies such as Goldsmith's *Nash* and Johnson's *Savage*,—to say nothing of the admirable *Lives of the Poets*; there were lengthy biographies such as Hawkesworth's *Swift* and Hawkins's *Johnson*; there were respectable and academic performances such as Middleton's *Cicero*, Carte's *Ormonde*, Lyttelton's *Henry II.*, and Harte's ill-fated *Gustavus Adolphus*; there were also personal records as dissimilar as Gibber's *Autobiography* and Hume's account of *My Own Life*. But in the last decade of the century appeared two works, each of which, in its special kind, remains unrivalled. One is Gibbon's *Autobiography*, as compiled by his friend Lord Sheffield from the different sketches left by the historian, and since (1896) separately published. The version which has been so long familiar will, however, probably retain its charm, in spite of the editing to which it now appears to have been subjected; and what its writer calls 'the review of his moral and literary character,' although incomplete, must survive many memoirs that are professedly finished from headline to imprint. Nothing can be more interesting than Gibbon's account of the cir-