

he finds that the immortal Nelson was a good fly-fisher, and even continued the pursuit with his left-hand ! How will the bachelor and old maid feel strengthened in their affection for the feline race, when they learn that Lord Heathfield, the gallant defender of Gibraltar, was so fond of cats, that he suffered numbers of these animals, young and old, to gambol about him, even when most actively engaged on the bastions of the fortress. In fact, a feeling somewhat similar to that which leads us to the looking-glass, attracts our attention to Biography, the looking-glass of the inward man ;—and that biographical work which places the subject before us in his chamber and in his garden, as well as in the cabinet and in the battle, will always be perused with delight. The critics may rail against Memoirs and Portrait Painting, as excluding their more dignified sisters, History and Historical Painting, from the rank they ought to hold in the public estimation ;—but the critics will brandish their nettle-rods in vain. History is frequently indebted to Biography for its most touching and graphic passages ; and, as an elegant critic very justly observes, “ the original intention of this excellent historian (Hume) to write only the reigns of the Stuarts, has given to his work those lively dashes of biography, which have greatly contributed to render it so popular and interesting.” The same remark may with equal justice be applied to Lord Clarendon, in whose pages the principal characters of the day stand out most boldly and plainly exhibited in *alto rilievo* to the mental vision, though somewhat invested with the hues which the allowable prejudices of the noble historian threw around them. The able critic just quoted, observes more at large, that “ it is worth while to remark with what advantage this spirit of Biography will sometimes enter into the plan of History, the most attractive and animated parts of which are often those partial delineations of select and favourite characters, where the vehemence of admiration overcomes the general sobriety and equal tenour of historical representation ; and the heat of the writer’s bosom prevails above the ceremony of rules, and

shows itself in bold and enthusiastic touches of extraordinary splendor.”

Forty years ago, the Periodicals of the day contained very severe censures on the uses, or rather the abuses, to which Biography was prostituted. At that period, a mania for reading the Lives of swindlers and Newgate heroes seized upon one portion of the public ; while, on the other hand, the enthusiastic and over-religious part of the community ran into the opposite extreme of cant ; and a youth, with a little smattering of learning, and a habit of quoting Scripture upon almost every occasion, was—on his death by consumption, or some other interesting disease,—canonized as a Saint, and exalted far above the merits of the talented and excellent Kirk White.

Partiality of friendship, or inconsiderate affection, will, even in these days, raise a pompous monument to the memory of him who, when alive, occupied but little of the public notice, and whose life was a link of particulars, only interesting to those more immediately connected with him. But the number of such instances is trifling, when compared with those, where a surviving relative or friend has not only gratified his personal feelings, but has conferred a benefit upon the community, by a memoir of the idol of his affections. The Memoirs and Correspondence of the late Lords Collingwood and Rodney by their respective sons-in-law ;—the Lives of Bishop Heber, Sir Stamford Raffles, and Sir Edward J. Smith, by their respective widows ;—and the Biography of Sir David Baird, compiled by Theodore Hooke, from papers and documents furnished by the widow of the deceased hero, are works of a sterling nature, illustrative of history, inculcative of morality, and fascinating records of the domestic lives of the great and good.

A perusal of the first volume of The Georgian Æra has elicited the foregoing desultory remarks. The memoirs comprised in this volume are arranged in classes, and have been compiled with accuracy and care. Although the plan of the work does not admit of the devotion of a large space to each individual memoir, yet The Georgian Æra possesses far higher merits than mere