

—and with justice. In the eighteenth century Fielding attempted to give a picture of English life as it was, Hume of English life as it had been; beyond question Fielding's is the truer work, as time has shown it to be the more enduring. Each generation of Englishmen finds it necessary to re-write the history of England: each generation of scholars, the histories of Greece and Rome; for each sees the inadequacy of its predecessors' attempts. But that inadequacy lies not in the incompetence of the writers, but in the insufficiency of their data. That an historian should give us an absolutely true, or even an approximately true picture of the actual Brutus, for example, on the data which are left us, is an impossibility; but Shakespeare, like the geometer, makes his own hypotheses. He assigns a certain character to Brutus, and selects certain men and circumstances to act upon it in such a way that the assassination of Cesar is the result. The representation is absolutely true, not as a picture of the historic Brutus,—that the poet does not attempt,—but of how a certain character, under the influence of certain circumstances, would have acted. The truth of the picture comes from the poet's control over his facts, as the truth of geometry comes from the arbitrary nature of its assumptions. In a certain sense, truth may be denied to the results of geometry, inasmuch as they correspond to nothing in reality; while, in another sense, they possess the highest truth, and, applied to the concrete world, as in astronomy, give results the most accurate which science has attained. There is a certain analogy to this in the work of the poet. The truths of history and biography are