

BIOGRAPHY

I

Introduction: Biography is to be read with individual needs and interests in mind, and to be used as one would use one's acquaintances.

I. Historical background of biography.

A. Up to end of 17th century, biography was considered a form of history.

1. Biographers were called historiographers.
2. Bacon classified them as writers of
 - a. History and
 - b. Narrative.

B. Subjects of biographies were either heroes or saints.

1. Since purpose was avowedly a moral one.
 - a. Stir the reader to emulate or
 - b. Avoid the errors of the subject

2. Plutarch.

- a. Purpose in writing biography was
 - (1) An admiration of things done, and
 - (2) A desire to imitate them.
- a. Admired vigor and energy.
 - (1) Influence resulted towards democracy.
 - (2) French and American revolutionists carried and quoted him.

3. ^{for} Necessity of meeting the requirements of secular or ecclesiastical "history", men deceived themselves as to the significance of their deeds and visions.

cf. Duchess of Newcastle.

cf. Plutarch's Life of Pericles.

C. Emergence of MAN as subject of biography.

1. "Pageantry of life bs taken away" -Dryden
2. Gradual dawning of the recognition of human qualities in saint and heroes.
 - a. Men are drawn as they are rather than as they ought to be, or might have been.
 - b. Acknowledgment of possibilities of autobiography.
 - c. Embryo fiction character assumes shape.
3. Samuel Johnson.

- a. Piety and heroism not the only thing.
- b. Any man interesting in human relationships.
- c. Character, not poetry, which Johnson wanted.

(1) "We owe more to truth and virtue than to the memory of the dead."

(2) To have validity, biography must be true.

4. Boswell's Life of Johnson

- a. Research and patience.
- b. Sincerity and discretion.

D. Revolt against Johnson's maxims brought about the Victorian method in history.

- a. Achievement rather than conduct.
- b. Works rather than character.

E. Lockhart's life of Scott.

1. Revolutionary in revelations.
 - a. Carlyle upheld Lockhart's precepts.
- (1) Exposed the "mealy-mouthed" Victorian biography.