

huge extinct animal are rather creditable to the ingenuity of natives of America, or of barbarians of the Old World; but their late continuance in the midst of European culture shows how recently the principles of comparative anatomy obtained their present hold on the public mind. A tooth weighing 4½ lb, and a thigh-bone 17 feet long, having been found in New England in 1712 (they were probably mastodon), Dr Increase Mather thereupon communicated to the Royal Society of London his confirmation from them of the existence of men of prodigious stature in the antediluvian world (see the *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. xxiv p. 85; D. Wilson, *Prehistoric Man*, vol. i. p. 54). The giants in the streets of Basel and supporting the arms of Lucerne appear to have originated from certain fossil bones found in 1577, examined by the physician Felix Plater, and pronounced to have belonged to a giant some 16 or 19 feet high. These bones have since been referred to a very different geological genus, but within the present century Plater's giant skeleton was accepted as a genuine relic of the giants who once inhabited the earth. See the dissertation of Le Cat, cited in the 5th edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1817). (E. B. T.)

GIANTS CAUSEWAY, a promontory of columnar basalt, situated on the coast of Antrim in the north of Ireland. It is divided by whin-dykes into the Little Causeway, the Middle Causeway or "Honeycomb," as it is locally termed, and the Larger or Grand Causeway. The pillars composing it are close-fitting and for the most part somewhat irregular hexagons, made up of articulated portions varying from a few inches to some feet in depth, and concave or convex at the upper and lower surfaces. In diameter the pillars vary from 15 to 20 inches, and in height some are as much as 20 feet. The Great Causeway is chiefly from 20 to 30, and for a few yards in some places nearly 40 feet in breadth, exclusive of outlying broken pieces of rock. It is highest at its narrowest part. At about half a dozen yards from the cliff, widening and becoming lower, it extends outwards into a parade or platform, which has a slight seaward inclination, but is easily walked on, and for nearly 100 yards is always above water. At the distance of about 150 yards from the cliff it turns a little to the eastward for 20 or 30 yards, and then sinks into the sea. The neighbouring cliffs exhibit in many places columns similar to those of the Giant's Causeway, a considerable exposure of them being visible at a distance of about 100 rods in the bay to the eastward. A group of these columns, from their arrangement, have been fancifully named the "Giant's Organ." The most remarkable of the cliffs is the Pleaskein, the upper pillars of which have the appearance of a colonnade, and are 60 feet in height; beneath these is a mass of coarse black amygdaloid, of the same thickness, underlain by a second range of basaltic pillars, from 40 to 50 feet in height. Near the Giant's Causeway are the ruins of the castles of Dunseverick and Dunluce, situated high above the sea on insulated crags, and the swinging bridge of Carrick-a-Rede, spanning a chasm of 80 feet deep, and connecting a rock, which is used as a salmon-fishing station, with the mainland. Fairhead, a promontory composed of columnar greenstone, the highest point on the coast, has an altitude of 550 feet.

See Hamilton, *Letters from the Coast of Antrim*; Dubourdieu, *Statistical Survey of Antrim*; and articles ANTRIM and GEOLOGY.

GIARRE, a town of Sicily, in the province of Catania, between Etna and the sea, with a station on the railway from Messina to Catania, distant from the former 40 miles, and from the latter nearly 19. It is a flourishing place of 6956 inhabitants, according to the census of 1871, or of 9990 if the suburbs of Macchia, St Giovanni, and St Alfio are included; but it has little to show except a handsome modern church, and is mainly of interest as the point from

which tourists start to visit the remains of the gigantic chestnut tree of the hundred horses (*di cento cavalli*).

GIAVENO, a market-town of Italy, in the province of Turin, and circondario of Susa, about 16 miles W. of Turin, at the foot of the Cottian Alps, and on the left bank of the Sangone, a head water of the Po. It possesses a fine old castle, an almshouse, a gymnasium, a children's asylum, several well-built churches, and an ancient abbatial residence; and its inhabitants manufacture paper and silk, and maintain a trade in wine and timber. Population of the town in 1871 5722, and of the commune 9638.

GIB, ADAM (1714-1788), the leader of the Antiburgher section of the Scottish Secession Church, was born April 14, 1714, in the parish of Muckhart, Perthshire, and, on the completion of his literary and theological studies at Edinburgh and Perth, was licensed as a preacher in 1740. In the following year he was ordained minister of the large Secession congregation of Bristo, Edinburgh, being the first in the city inducted into such a charge; and there his powerful intellect and his intensity of character soon secured for him a position of considerable prominence. In 1742 he caused some stir by the publication of an invective entitled *A warning against countenancing the ministrations of Mr George Whitefield*; and in 1745 he was almost the only minister of Edinburgh who continued to preach, and to preach against rebellion, while the troops of Charles Edward were in occupation of the town. When in 1747 "the Associate Synod," by a narrow majority, decided not to give full immediate effect to a judgment which had been passed in the previous year against the lawfulness of the "Burgess Oath,"¹ Gib led the protesting minority, who forthwith separated from their brethren and formed the Antiburgher Synod. It was chiefly under his influence that it was agreed by this ecclesiastical body at subsequent meetings to summon to the bar their "Burgher" brethren, and finally to depose and excommunicate them for contumacy. In 1765 he made a vigorous and able reply to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, which had stigmatized the Secession as "threatening the peace of the country;" and this apology was further developed in his *Display of the Secession Testimony*, published in 1774. From 1753 (when after protracted litigation he was compelled to leave the Bristo church) till within a short period of his death, which took place June 18, 1788, he preached regularly in Nicolson Street church, which is said to have been filled every Sunday with an audience of 2000 persons. Besides other publications, he wrote a volume of *Sacred Contemplations* (1786), to which was appended an "Essay on Liberty and Necessity" in reply to Lord Kames.

GIBBON. See APE, vol. ii. p. 150.

GIBBON, EDWARD (1737-1794), one of the most celebrated historians of any age or country, was also his own historian. He has left us one of the most piquant autobiographies ever written. In the following sketch the chief incidents of his life will be condensed from that authentic source. For more than facts, even for the setting of these, it is needless to say that it would be unwise to trust to any man's autobiography—though Gibbon's is as frank as most. There are points on which vanity will say too much, and perhaps others on which modesty will say too little.

Gibbon was descended, he tells us, from a Kentish family of considerable antiquity; among his remoter ancestors he reckons the Lord High Treasurer Fiennes, Lord Say and Sele, whom Shakespeare has immortalized in his *Henry VI*.

¹ This was an oath imposed upon all burgesses of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, and some other towns, by which they "professed and allowed the true religion presently professed within this realm, and authorized by the laws thereof." The question was whether these words implied an approbation of the Established Church, with all its "corruptions."

His grandfather was a man of ability, an enterprising merchant of London, one of the commissioners of customs under the Tory ministry during the last four years of Queen Anne, and, in the judgment of Lord Bolingbroke, as deeply versed in the "commerce and finances of England" as any man of his time. He was not always wise, however, either for himself or his country; for he became deeply involved in the South Sea Scheme, in the disastrous collapse of which (1720) he lost the ample wealth he had amassed. As a director of the company, moreover, he was suspected of fraudulent complicity, taken into custody, and heavily fined; but £10,000 was allowed him out of the wreck of his estate, and with this his skill and enterprise soon constructed a second fortune. He died at Putney in 1736, leaving the bulk of his property to his two daughters—nearly disinheriting his only son, the father of the historian, for having married against his wishes. This son (by name Edward) was educated at Westminster¹ and Cambridge, but never took a degree, travelled, became member of Parliament, first for Petersfield (1734), then for Southampton (1741), joined the party against Sir Robert Walpole, and (as his son confesses, not much to his father's honour) was animated in so doing by "private revenge" against the supposed "oppressor" of his family in the South Sea affair. If so, revenge, as usual, was blind; for Walpole had sought rather to moderate than to inflame public feeling against the projectors.

The historian was born at Putney, Surrey, April 27 (Old Style), 1737. His mother, Judith Porten, was the daughter of a London merchant. He was the eldest of a family of six sons and a daughter, and the only one who survived childhood; his own life in youth hung by so mere a thread as to be again and again despaired of. His mother, between domestic cares and constant infirmities (which, however, did not prevent an occasional plunge into fashionable dissipation in compliance with her husband's wishes), did but little for him. The "true mother of his mind as well as of his health" was a maiden aunt—Catherine Porten by name—with respect to whom he expresses himself in language of the most grateful remembrance. "Many anxious and solitary days," says Gibbon, "did she consume with patient trial of every mode of relief and amusement. Many wakeful nights did she sit by my bedside in trembling expectation that each hour would be my last." As circumstances allowed, she appears to have taught him reading, writing, and arithmetic—acquisitions made with so little of remembered pain that "were not the error corrected by analogy," he says, "I should be tempted to conceive them as innate." At seven he was committed for eighteen months to the care of a private tutor, John Kirkby by name, and the author, among other things, of a "philosophical fiction," entitled the *Life of Automathes*. Of Kirkby, from whom he learned the rudiments of English and Latin grammar, he speaks gratefully, and doubtless truly, so far as he could trust the impressions of childhood. With reference to *Automathes* he is much more reserved in his praise, denying alike its originality, its depth, and its elegance; but, he adds, "the book is not devoid of entertainment or instruction."

In his ninth year (1746), during a "lucid interval of comparative health," he was sent to a school at Kingston-upon-Thames; but his former infirmities soon returned, and his progress, by his own confession, was slow and unsatisfactory. "My timid reserve was astonished by the crowd and tumult of the school; the want of strength and activity disqualified me for the sports of the play-field. . . . By the common methods of discipline, at the expense

¹ The celebrated William Law had been for some time the private tutor of this Edward Gibbon, who is supposed to have been the original of the rather clever sketch of "Flatus" in the *Serious Call*.

of many tears and some blood, I purchased the knowledge of the Latin syntax," but manifestly, in his own opinion, the *Arabian Nights*, Pope's *Homer*, and Dryden's *Virgil*, eagerly read, had at this period exercised a much more powerful influence on his intellectual development than Phædrus and Cornelius Nepos, "painfully construed and darkly understood."

In December 1747 his mother died, and he was taken home. After a short time his father removed to the "rustic solitude" of Buriton (Hants), but young Gibbon lived chiefly at the house of his maternal grandfather, at Putney, where, under the care of his devoted aunt, he developed, he tells us, that passionate love of reading "which he would not exchange for all the treasures of India," and where his mind received its most decided stimulus. Of 1748 he says, "This year, the twelfth of my age, I shall note as the most propitious to the growth of my intellectual stature." After detailing the circumstances which unlocked for him the door of his grandfather's "tolerable library," he says, "I turned over many English pages of poetry and romance, of history and travels. Where a title attracted my eye, without fear or awe I snatched the volume from the shelf." In 1749, in his twelfth year, he was sent to Westminster, still residing, however, with his aunt, who, rendered destitute by her father's bankruptcy, but unwilling to live a life of dependence, had opened a boarding-house for Westminster school. Here in the course of two years (1749-50), interrupted by danger and debility, he "painfully climbed into the third form;" but it was left to his riper age to "acquire the beauties of the Latin and the rudiments of the Greek tongue." The continual attacks of sickness which had retarded his progress induced his aunt, by medical advice, to take him to Bath; but the mineral waters had no effect. He then resided for a time in the house of a physician at Winchester; the physician did as little as the mineral waters; and, after a further trial of Bath, he once more returned to Putney, and made a last futile attempt to study at Westminster. Finally, it was concluded that he would never be able to encounter the discipline of a school; and casual instructors, at various times and places, were provided for him. Meanwhile his indiscriminate appetite for reading had begun to fix itself more and more decidedly upon history; and the list of historical works devoured by him during this period of chronic ill-health is simply astonishing. It included, besides Hearne's *Ductor Historicus* and the successive volumes of the *Universal History*, which was then in course of publication, Littlebury's *Herodotus*, Spelman's *Xenophon*, Gordon's *Tacitus*, an anonymous translation of Procopius; "many crude lumps of Speed, Rapin, Mezeray, Davila, Machiavel, Father Paul, Bower, &c., were hastily gulped. I devoured them like so many novels; and I swallowed with the same voracious appetite the descriptions of India and China, of Mexico and Peru." His first introduction to the historic scenes the study of which afterwards formed the passion of his life took place in 1751, when, while along with his father visiting a friend in Wiltshire, he discovered in the library "a common book, the continuation of Echard's *Roman History*." "To me the reigns of the successors of Constantine were absolutely new; and I was immersed in the passage of the Goths over the Danube, when the summons of the dinner bell reluctantly dragged me from my intellectual feast." Soon afterwards his fancy kindled with the first glimpses into Oriental history, the wild "barbaric" charm of which he never ceased to feel. Ockley's book on the Saracens "first opened his eyes" to the striking career of Mahomet and his hordes; and with his characteristic ardour of literary research, after exhausting all that could be learned in English of the Arabs and Persians, the

Tartars and Turks, he forthwith plunged into the French of D'Herbelot, and the Latin of Pocock's version of Abulfaragius, sometimes understanding them, but oftener only guessing their meaning. He soon learned to call to his aid the subsidiary sciences of geography and chronology, and before he was quite capable of reading them had already attempted to weigh in his childish balance the competing systems of Scaliger and Petavius, of Marsham and Newton. At this early period he seems already to have adopted in some degree the plan of study he followed in after life, and recommended in his *Essai sur l'Étude*—that is, of letting his subject rather than his author determine his course, of suspending the perusal of a book to reflect, and to compare the statements with those of other authors,—so that he often read portions of many volumes while mastering one.

Towards his sixteenth year he tells us "nature displayed in his favour her mysterious energies," and all his infirmities suddenly vanished. Thenceforward, while never possessing or abusing the insolence of health, he could say "few persons have been more exempt from real or imaginary ills." His unexpected recovery revived his father's hopes for his education, hitherto so much neglected if judged by ordinary standards; and accordingly in January 1753 he was placed at Esher, Surrey, under the care of Dr Francis, the well known translator of Horace. But Gibbon's friends in a few weeks discovered that the new tutor preferred the pleasures of London to the instruction of his pupils, and in this perplexity decided to send him prematurely to Oxford, where he was matriculated as a gentleman commoner of Magdalen College, 3d April, 1752. According to his own testimony, he arrived at the university "with a stock of information which might have puzzled a doctor, and a degree of ignorance of which a school-boy might be ashamed." And indeed his huge wallet of scraps stood him in little stead at the trim banquets to which he was invited at Oxford, while the wandering habits by which he had filled it absolutely unfitted him to be a guest. He was not well grounded in any of the elementary branches, which are essential to university studies, and to all success in their prosecution. It was natural therefore that he should dislike the university, and as natural that the university should dislike him. Many of his complaints of the system were certainly just; but it may be doubted whether any university system would have been profitable to him, considering his antecedents. He complains especially of his tutors, and in one case with abundant reason; but, by his own confession, they might have recriminated with justice, for he indulged in gay society, and kept late hours. His observations, however, on the defects of the English university system, some of which have only very recently been removed, are acute and well worth pondering, however little relevant to his own case. He remained at Magdalen about fourteen months. "To the university of Oxford," he says, "I acknowledge no obligation; and she will as cheerfully renounce me for a son as I am willing to disclaim her for a mother. I spent fourteen months at Magdalen College; they proved the fourteen months the most idle and unprofitable of my whole life."

But thus "idle" though he may have been as a "student," he already meditated authorship. In the first long vacation—during which he, doubtless with some sarcasm, says that "his taste for books began to revive"—he contemplated a treatise on the age of Sesostris, in which (and it was characteristic) his chief object was to investigate not so much the events as the probable epoch of the reign of that semi-mythical monarch, whom he was inclined to regard as having been contemporary with Solomon. "Unprovided with original learning, unformed in the habits of thinking unskilled in the arts of composition, I

resolved to write a book;" but the discovery of his own weakness, he adds, was the first symptom of taste. On his first return to Oxford the work was "wisely relinquished," and never afterwards resumed. The most memorable incident, however, in Gibbon's stay at Oxford was his temporary conversion to the doctrines of the church of Rome. The bold criticism of Middleton's recently (1749) published *Free Enquiry into the Miraculous Powers which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church*, appears to have given the first shock to his Protestantism, not indeed by destroying his previous belief that the gift of miraculous powers had continued to subsist in the church during the first four or five centuries of Christianity, but by convincing him that within the same period most of the leading doctrines of popery had been already introduced both in theory and in practice. At this stage he was introduced by a friend (Mr. Molesworth) to Bossuet's *Variations of Protestantism*, and *Exposition of Catholic Doctrines* (see Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, c. xv., note 79). "These works," says he, "achieved my conversion, and I surely fell by a noble hand." In bringing about this "fall," however, Parsons the Jesuit appears to have had a considerable share; at least Lord Sheffield has recorded that on the only occasion on which Gibbon talked with him on the subject he imputed the change in his religious views principally to that vigorous writer, who, in his opinion, had urged all the best arguments in favour of Roman Catholicism. But be this as it may, he had no sooner adopted his new creed than he resolved to profess it; "a momentary glow of enthusiasm" had raised him above all temporal considerations, and accordingly, on June 8, 1753, he records that having "privately abjured the heresies" of his childhood before a Catholic priest of the name of Baker, a Jesuit, in London, he announced the same to his father in an elaborate controversial epistle which his spiritual adviser much approved, and which he himself afterwards described to Lord Sheffield as having been "written with all the pomp, the dignity, and self-satisfaction of a martyr."

The elder Gibbon heard with indignant surprise of this act of juvenile apostasy, and, indiscreetly giving vent to his wrath, precipitated the expulsion of his son from Oxford, a punishment which the culprit, in after years at least, found no cause to deplore. In his *Memoirs* he speaks of the results of his "childish revolt against the religion of his country" with undisguised self-gratulation. It had delivered him for ever from the "port and prejudice" of the university, and led him into the bright paths of philosophic freedom. That his conversion was sincere at the time, that it marked a real if but a transitory phase of genuine religious conviction, we have no reason to doubt, notwithstanding the scepticism he has himself expressed. "To my present feelings it seems incredible that I should ever believe that I believed in transubstantiation," he indeed declares; but his incredulous astonishment is not unmingled with undoubting pride. "I could not blush that my tender mind was entangled in the sophistry which had reduced the acute and manly understandings of a Chillingworth or a Bayle." Nor is the sincerity of the Catholicism he professed in these boyish days in any way discredited by the fact of his subsequent lack of religion. Indeed, as one of the acutest and most sympathetic of his critics has remarked, the deep and settled grudge he has betrayed towards every form of Christian belief, in all the writings of his maturity, may be taken as evidence that he had at one time experienced in his own person at least some of the painful workings of a positive faith.

But little time was lost by the elder Gibbon in the formation of a new plan of education for his son, and in devising some method which if possible might effect the cure of his "spiritual malady." The result of deliberation, aided by the

advice and experience of Lord Eliot, was that it was almost immediately decided to fix Gibbon for some years abroad under the roof of M. Pavilliard, a Calvinist minister at Lausanne. In as far as regards the instructor and guide thus selected, a more fortunate choice could scarcely have been made. From the testimony of his pupil, and the still more conclusive evidence of his own correspondence with the father, Pavilliard seems to have been a man of singular good sense, temper, and tact. At the outset, indeed, there was one considerable obstacle to the free intercourse of tutor and pupil: M. Pavilliard appears to have known little of English, and young Gibbon knew practically nothing of French. But this difficulty was soon removed by the pupil's diligence; the very exigencies of his situation were of service to him in calling forth all his powers, and he studied the language with such success that at the close of his five years' exile he declares that he "spontaneously thought" in French rather than in English, and that it had become more familiar to "ear, tongue, and pen." It is well known that in after years he had doubts whether he should not compose his great work in French; and it is certain that his familiarity with that language, in spite of considerable efforts to counteract its effects, tinged his style to the last.

Under the judicious regulations of his new tutor a methodical course of reading was marked out, and most ardently prosecuted; the pupil's progress was proportionably rapid. With the systematic study of the Latin, and to a slight extent also of the Greek classics, he conjoined that of logic in the prolix system of Crousaz; and he further invigorated his reasoning powers, as well as enlarged his knowledge of metaphysics and jurisprudence, by the perusal of Locke, Grotius, and Montesquieu. He also read largely, though somewhat indiscriminately, in French literature, and appears to have been particularly struck with Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, which he tells us he reperused almost every year of his subsequent life with new pleasure, and which he particularly mentions as having been, along with Bletier's *Life of Julian* and Giannone's *History of Naples*, a book which probably contributed in a special sense to form the historian of the Roman empire. The comprehensive scheme of study included mathematics also, in which he advanced as far as the conic sections in the treatise of L'Hôpital. He assures us that his tutor did not complain of any inaptitude on the pupil's part, and that the pupil was as happily unconscious of any on his own; but here he broke off. He adds, what is not quite clear from one who so frankly acknowledges his limited acquaintance with the science, that he had reason to congratulate himself that he knew no more. "As soon," he says, "as I understood the principles, I relinquished for ever the pursuit of the mathematics; nor can I lament that I desisted before my mind was hardened by the habit of rigid demonstration, so destructive of the finer feelings of moral evidence, which must, however, determine the actions and opinions of our lives."

Under the new influences which were brought to bear on him, he in less than two years resumed his Protestantism. "He is willing," he says, to allow M. Pavilliard a "handsome share in his reconversion," though he maintains, and no doubt rightly, that it was principally due "to his own solitary reflections." He particularly congratulated himself on having discovered the "philosophical argument" against transubstantiation, "that the text of Scripture which seems to inculcate the real presence is attested only by a single sense—our sight, while the real presence itself is disproved by three of our senses—the sight, the touch, and the taste." Before a similar mode of reasoning, all the other distinctive articles of the Romish creed "disappeared like a dream"; and "after a full conviction," on Christmas day, 1754, he received the sacrament in the church of Lausanne.

Although, however, he adds that at this point he suspended his religious inquiries, "acquiescing with implicit belief in the tenets and mysteries which are adopted by the general consent of Catholics and Protestants," his readers will probably do him no great injustice if they assume that even then it was rather to the negations than to the affirmations of Protestantism that he most heartily assented.

With all his devotion to study at Lausanne¹ (he read ten or twelve hours a day), he still found some time for the acquisition of some of the lighter accomplishments, such as riding, dancing, drawing, and also for mingling in such society as the place had to offer. In September 1755 he writes to his aunt, "I find a great many agreeable people here, see them sometimes, and can say upon the whole, without vanity, that, though I am the Englishman here who spends the least money, I am he who is most generally liked." Thus his "studious and sedentary life" passed pleasantly enough, interrupted only at rare intervals by boyish excursions of a day or a week in the neighbourhood, and by at least one memorable tour of Switzerland, by Basel, Zürich, Lucerne, and Bern, made along with Pavilliard in the autumn of 1755. The last eighteen months of this residence abroad saw the infusion of two new elements—one of them at least of considerable importance—into his life. In 1757 Voltaire came to reside at Lausanne; and although he took but little notice of the young Englishman of twenty, who eagerly sought and easily obtained an introduction, the establishment of the theatre at Monrepos, where the brilliant versifier himself declaimed before select audiences his own productions on the stage, had no small influence in fortifying Gibbon's taste for the French theatre, and in at the same time abating that "idolatry for the gigantic genius of Shakespeare which is inculcated from our infancy as the first duty of an Englishman." In the same year—apparently about June—he saw for the first time, and forthwith loved, the beautiful, intelligent, and accomplished Mademoiselle Susan Curchod, daughter of the pasteur of Crassier. That the passion which she inspired in him was tender, pure, and fitted to raise to a higher level a nature which in some respects was much in need of such elevation will be doubted by none but the hopelessly cynical; and probably there are few readers who can peruse the paragraph in which Gibbon "approaches the delicate subject of his early love" without discerning in it a pathos much deeper than that of which the writer was himself aware. During the remainder of his residence at Lausanne he had good reason to "indulge his dream of felicity"; but on his return to England, "I soon discovered that my father would not hear of this strange alliance, and that without his consent I was myself destitute and helpless."

¹ The *Journal* for 1755 records that during that year, besides writing and translating a great deal in Latin and French, he had read, amongst other works, Cicero's *Epistolæ ad Familiāres*, his *Brutus*, all his *Orations*, his dialogues *De Amicitia* and *De Senectute*, Terence (twice), and Pliny's *Epistles*. In January 1756 he says:—"I determined to read over the Latin authors in order, and read this year Virgil, Sallust, Livy, Velleius Paterculus, Valerius Maximus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Quintus Curtius, Justin, Florus, Plautus, Terence, and Lucretius. I also read and meditated Locke *Upon the Understanding*." Again in January 1757 he writes:—"I began to study algebra under M. de Traytorrens, went through the elements of algebra and geometry, and the three first books of the Marquis de l'Hôpital's *Conic Sections*. I also read Tibullus, Catullus, Propertius, Horace (with Dacier's and Torrentius's notes), Virgil, Ovid's *Epistles*, with Mezière's commentary, the *Ars Amandi*, and the *Elegies*; likewise the *Augustus* and *Tiberius* of Suetonius, and a Latin translation of Dion Cassius from the death of Julius Cæsar to the death of Augustus. I also continued my correspondence, begun last year, with M. Allamand of Bex, and the Professor Breiting of Zurich, and opened a new one with the Professor Gesner of Göttingen. N.B.—Last year and this I read St John's Gospel, with part of Xenophon's *Cyropædia*, the *Iliad*, and Herodotus; but, upon the whole, I rather neglected my Greek."

After a painful struggle I yielded to my fate; I sighed as a lover, I obeyed as a son; my wound was insensibly healed by time, absence, and the habits of a new life."¹

In 1758 he returned with mingled joy and regret to England, and was kindly received at home. But he found a stepmother there; and this apparition on his father's hearth at first rather appalled him. The cordial and gentle manners of Mrs Gibbon, however, and her unremitting care for his happiness, won him from his first prejudices, and gave her a permanent place in his esteem and affection. He seems to have been much indulged, and to have led a very pleasant life of it; he pleased himself in moderate excursions, frequented the theatre, mingled, though not very often, in society; was sometimes a little extravagant, and sometimes a little dissipated, but never lost the benefits of his Lausanne exile; and easily settled into a sober, discreet, calculating Epicurean philosopher, who sought the *summum bonum* of man in temperate, regulated, and elevated pleasure. The first two years after his return to England he spent principally at his father's country seat at Buriton, in Hampshire, only nine months being given to the metropolis. He has left an amusing account of his employments in the country, where his love of study was at once inflamed by a large and unwonted command of books and checked by the necessary interruptions of his otherwise happy domestic life. After breakfast "he was expected," he says, to spend an hour with Mrs Gibbon; after tea his father claimed his conversation; in the midst of an interesting work he was often called down to entertain idle visitors; and, worst of all, he was periodically compelled to return the well-meant compliments. He mentions that he dreaded the "recurrence of the full moon," which was the period generally selected for the more convenient accomplishment of such formidable excursions.

His father's library, though large in comparison with that he commanded at Lausanne, contained, he says, "much trash;" but a gradual process of reconstruction transformed it at length into that "numerous and select" library which was "the foundation of his works, and the best comfort of his life both at home and abroad." No sooner had he returned home than he began the work of accumulation, and records that, on the receipt of his first quarter's allowance, a large share was appropriated to his literary wants. "He could never forget," he declares, "the joy with which he exchanged a bank note of twenty pounds for the twenty volumes of the *Memoirs* of the Academy of Inscriptions," an Academy which has been well characterized (by Sainte-Beuve) as Gibbon's intellectual fatherland. It may not be uninteresting here to note the principles which guided him both now and afterwards in his literary purchases. "I am not conscious," says he, "of having ever bought a book from a motive of ostentation; every volume, before it was deposited on the shelf, was either read or sufficiently examined;" he also mentions that he soon adopted the tolerating maxim of the elder Pliny, that no book is ever so bad as to be absolutely good for nothing.

In London he seems to have seen but little select society, —partly from his father's taste, "which had always preferred the highest and the lowest company," and partly from his own reserve and timidity, increased by his foreign education, which had made English habits unfamiliar, and the very language in some degree strange. And thus he was led to draw that interesting picture of the literary recluse among the crowds of London: "While coaches were rattling through Bond Street, I have passed many a solitary evening in my lodging with my books. My studies were

¹ The affair, however, was not finally broken off till 1763. Mdlle. Curchod soon afterwards became the wife of Necker, the famous financier; and Gibbon and the Neckers frequently afterwards met on terms of mutual friendship and esteem.

sometimes interrupted with a sigh, which I breathed towards Lausanne; and on the approach of spring I withdrew without reluctance from the noisy and extensive scene of crowds without company, and dissipation without pleasure." He renewed former acquaintance, however, with the "poet" Mallet, and through him gained access to Lady Hervey's circle, where a congenial admiration, not to say affectation, of French manners and literature made him a welcome guest. It ought to be added that in each of the twenty-five years of his subsequent acquaintance with London "the prospect gradually brightened," and his social as well as his intellectual qualities secured him a wide circle of friends. In one respect Mallet gave him good counsel in those early days. He advised him to addict himself to an assiduous study of the more idiomatic English writers, such as Swift and Addison,—with a view to unlearn his foreign idiom, and recover his half-forgotten vernacular,—a task, however, which he never perfectly accomplished. Much as he admired these writers, Hume and Robertson were still greater favourites, as well from their subject as for their style. Of his admiration of Hume's style, of its nameless grace of simple elegance, he has left us a strong expression, when he tells us that it often compelled him to close the historian's volumes with a mixed sensation of delight and despair.

In 1761 Gibbon, at the age of twenty-four, after many delays, and with many flutterings of hope and fear, gave to the world, in French, his maiden publication, an *Essai sur l'Étude de la Littérature*, which he had composed two years before. It was published partly in compliance with his father's wishes, who thought that the proof of some literary talent might introduce him favourably to public notice, and secure the recommendation of his friends for some appointment in connexion with the mission of the English plenipotentiaries to the congress at Augsburg which was at that time in contemplation. But in yielding to paternal authority, Gibbon frankly owns that he "complied, like a pious son, with the wish of his own heart."

The subject of this youthful effort was suggested, its author says, by a refinement of vanity—"the desire of justifying and praising the object of a favourite pursuit," namely, the study of ancient literature. Partly owing to its being written in French, partly to its character, the *Essai* excited more attention abroad than at home. Gibbon has criticized it with the utmost frankness, not to say severity; but, after every abatement, it is unquestionably a surprising effort for a mind so young, and contains many thoughts which would not have disgraced a thinker or a scholar of much maturer age. His account of its first reception and subsequent fortunes in England deserves to be cited as a curious piece of literary history. "In England," he says, "it was received with cold indifference, little read, and speedily forgotten. A small impression was slowly dispersed; the bookseller murmured, and the author (had his feelings been more exquisite) might have wept over the blunders and baldness of the English translation. The publication of my history fifteen years afterwards revived the memory of my first performance, and the essay was eagerly sought in the shops. But I refused the permission which Becket solicited of reprinting it; the public curiosity was imperfectly satisfied by a pirated copy of the booksellers of Dublin; and when a copy of the original edition has been discovered in a sale, the primitive value of half-a-crown has risen to the fanciful price of a guinea or thirty shillings."²

Sometime before the publication of the essay, Gibbon

² The *Essai*, in a good English translation, now appears in the *Miscellaneous Works*. Villemain finds in it "peu de vues, nulle originalité surtout, mais une grande passion littéraire, l'amour des recherches savantes et du beau langage." Sainte-Beuve's criticism is almost identical with Gibbon's own; but though he finds that "La

had entered a new and, one might suppose, a very uncongenial scene of life. In an hour of patriotic ardour he became (June 12, 1759) a captain in the Hampshire militia, and for more than two years (May 10, 1760, to December 23, 1762) led a wandering life of "military servitude." Hampshire, Kent, Wiltshire, and Dorsetshire formed the successive theatres of what he calls his "bloodless and inglorious campaigns." He complains of the busy idleness in which his time was spent; but, considering the circumstances, so adverse to study, one is rather surprised that the military student should have done so much, than that he did so little; and never probably before were so many hours of literary study spent in a tent. In estimating the comparative advantages and disadvantages of this wearisome period of his life, he has summed up with the impartiality of a philosopher and the sagacity of a man of the world. Irksome as were his employments, grievous as was the waste of time, uncongenial as were his companions, solid benefits were to be set off against these things: his health became robust, his knowledge of the world was enlarged, he wore off some of his foreign idiom, got rid of much of his reserve; he adds—and perhaps in his estimate it was the benefit to be most prized of all—"the discipline and evolutions of a modern battalion gave me a clearer notion of the phalanx and the legion, and the captain of the Hampshire grenadiers (the reader may smile) has not been useless to the historian of the Roman empire."

It was during this period that he read Homer and Longinus, having for the first time acquired some real mastery of Greek; and after the publication of the *Essai*, his mind was full of projects for a new literary effort. The Italian expedition of Charles VIII. of France, the crusade of Richard I., the wars of the barons, the lives and comparisons of Henry V. and the emperor Titus, the history of the Black Prince, the life of Sir Philip Sydney, that of Montrose, and finally that of Sir W. Raleigh, were all of them seriously contemplated and successively rejected. By their number they show how strong was the impulse to literature, and by their character, how determined the bent of his mind in the direction of history; while their variety makes it manifest also that he had then at least no special purpose to serve, no preconceived theory to support, no particular prejudice or belief to overthrow.

The militia was disbanded in 1762, and Gibbon joyfully shook off his bonds; but his literary projects were still to be postponed. Following his own wishes, though with his father's consent, he had early in 1760 projected a Continental tour as the completion "of an English gentleman's education." This had been interrupted by the episode of the militia; now, however, he resumed his purpose, and left England in January 1763. Two years were "loosely defined as the term of his absence," which he exceeded by half a year—returning June 1765. He first visited Paris, where he saw a good deal of D'Alembert, Diderot, Barthélemy, Raynal, Helvétius, Baron d'Holbach, and others of that circle, and was often a welcome guest in the saloons of Madame Geoffrin and Madame du Deffand.¹ Voltaire was at Geneva, Rousseau at Montmorency, and Buffon he neglected to visit; but so congenial did he find the society for which his education had so well prepared him, and into which some literary reputation had already preceded him, that he declared, "Had I been rich and inde-

pendent, I should have prolonged and perhaps have fixed my residence at Paris."

¹ Her letters to Walpole about Gibbon contain some interesting remarks by this "aveugle clairvoyante," as Voltaire calls her; but they belong to a later period (1777).

pendent, I should have prolonged and perhaps have fixed my residence at Paris."

From France he proceeded to Switzerland, and spent nearly a year at Lausanne, where many old friendships and studies were resumed, and new ones begun. His reading was largely designed to enable him fully to profit by the long contemplated Italian tour which began in April 1764, and lasted somewhat more than a year. He has recorded one or two interesting notes on Turin, Genoa, Florence, and other towns at which halt was made on his route; but Rome was the great object of his pilgrimage, and the words in which he has alluded to the feelings with which he approached it are such as cannot be omitted from any sketch of Gibbon, however brief. "My temper is not very susceptible of enthusiasm, and the enthusiasm which I do not feel I have ever scorned to affect. But at the distance of twenty-five years I can neither forget nor express the strong emotions which agitated my mind as I first approached and entered the Eternal City. After a sleepless night, I trod with a lofty step the ruins of the forum; each memorable spot; where Romulus stood, or Tully spoke, or Cæsar fell, was at once present to my eye; and several days of intoxication were lost or enjoyed before I could descend to a cool and minute investigation." Here at last his long yearning for some great theme worthy of his historic genius was gratified. The first conception of the *Decline and Fall* arose as he lingered one evening amidst the vestiges of ancient glory. "It was at Rome, on the 15th of October 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind."

The five years and a half which intervened between his return from this tour, in June 1765, and the death of his father, in November 1770, seem to have formed the portion of his life which "he passed with the least enjoyment, and remembered with the least satisfaction." He attended every spring the meetings of the militia at Southampton, and rose successively to the rank of major and lieutenant-colonel commandant; but was each year "more disgusted with the inn, the wine, the company, and the tiresome repetition of annual attendance and daily exercise." From his own account, however, it appears that other and deeper causes produced this discontent. Sincerely attached to his home, he yet felt the anomaly of his position. At thirty, still a dependant, without a settled occupation, without a definite social status, he often regretted that he had not "embraced the lucrative pursuits of the law or of trade, the chances of civil office or India adventure, or even the fat slumbers of the church." From the emoluments of a profession he "might have derived an ample fortune, or a competent income, instead of being stinted to the same narrow allowance, to be increased only by an event which he sincerely deprecated." Doubtless the secret fire of a consuming, but as yet ungratified, literary ambition also troubled his repose. He was still contemplating "at an awful distance" *The Decline and Fall*, and meantime revolved some other subjects, that seemed more immediately practicable. Hesitating for some time between the revolutions of Florence and those of Switzerland, he consulted M. Deyverdun, a young Swiss with whom he had formed a close and intimate friendship during his first residence at Lausanne, and finally decided in favour of the land which was his "friend's by birth" and "his own by adoption." He executed the first book in French; it was read (in 1767), as an anonymous production, before a literary society of foreigners in London, and condemned. Gibbon sat and listened unobserved to their strictures. It never got beyond that rehearsal; Hume, indeed, approved of the performance, only deprecating as

unwise the author's preference for French; but Gibbon sided with the majority.

In 1767 also he joined with M. Deyverdun in starting a literary journal under the title of *Mémoires Littéraires de la Grande Bretagne*. But its circulation was limited, and only the second volume had appeared (1768) when Deyverdun went abroad. The materials already collected for a third volume were suppressed. It is interesting, however, to know that in the first volume is a review by Gibbon of Lord Lyttelton's *History of Henry II.*, and that the second volume contains a contribution by Hume on Walpole's *Historic Doubts*.

The next appearance of the historian made a deeper impression. It was the first distinct print of the lion's foot. "Ex ungue leonem" might have been justly said, for he attacked, and attacked successfully, the redoubtable Warburton. Of the many paradoxes in the *Divine Legation*, few are more extravagant than the theory that Virgil, in the sixth book of his *Æneid*, intended to allegorize, in the visit of his hero and the Sibyl to the shades, the initiation of Æneas, as a lawgiver, into the Eleusinian mysteries. This theory Gibbon completely exploded in his *Critical Observations* (1770),—no very difficult task, indeed, but achieved in a style, and with a profusion of learning, which called forth the warmest commendations both at home and abroad. Warburton never replied; and few will believe that he would not, if he had not thought silence more discreet. Gibbon, however, regrets that the style of his pamphlet was too acrimonious; and this regret, considering his antagonist's slight claims to forbearance, is creditable to him. "I cannot forgive myself the contemptuous treatment of a man who, with all his faults, was entitled to my esteem; and I can less forgive, in a personal attack, the cowardly concealment of my name and character."

Soon after his "release from the fruitless task of the Swiss revolution" in 1768, he had gradually advanced from the wish to the hope, from the hope to the design, from the design to the execution of his great historical work. His preparations were indeed vast. The classics, "as low as Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, and Juvenal," had been long familiar. He now "plunged into the ocean of the Augustan history," and "with pen almost always in hand," pored over all the original records, Greek and Latin, between Trajan and the last of the Western Cæsars. "The subsidiary rays of medals and inscriptions, of geography and chronology, were thrown on their proper objects; and I applied the collections of Tillemont, whose inimitable accuracy almost assumes the character of genius, to fix and arrange within my reach the loose and scattered atoms of historical information." The Christian apologists and their pagan assailants; the Theodosian Code, with Godefroy's commentary; the *Annals and Antiquities* of Muratori, collated with "the parallel or transverse lines" of Sigonius and Maffei, Pagi and Baronius, were all critically studied. Still following the wise maxim which he had adopted as a student, "multum legere potius quam multa," he reviewed again and again the immortal works of the French and English, the Latin and Italian classics. He deepened and extended his acquaintance with Greek, particularly with his favourite authors Homer and Xenophon; and, to crown all, he succeeded in achieving the third perusal of Blackstone's *Commentaries*.

The course of his study was for some time seriously interrupted by his father's illness and death in 1770, and by the many distractions connected with the transference of his residence from Buriton to London. It was not, indeed, until October 1772 that he found himself at last independent, and fairly settled in his house and library, with full leisure and opportunity to set about the composition of the first volume of his history. Even then it appears from his own confession that he long brooded over the chaos of

materials he had amassed before light dawned upon it. At the commencement, he says, "all was dark and doubtful"; the limits, divisions, even the title of his work were undetermined; the first chapter was composed three times, and the second and third twice, before he was satisfied with his efforts. This prolonged meditation on his design and its execution was ultimately well repaid by the result: so methodical did his ideas become, and so readily did his materials shape themselves, that, with the above exceptions, the original MS. of the entire six quartos was sent uncopied to the printers. He also says that not a sheet had been seen by any other eyes than those of author and printer, a statement indeed which must be taken with a small deduction; or rather we must suppose that a few chapters had been submitted, if not to the "eyes," to the "ears" of others; for he elsewhere tells us that he was "soon disgusted with the modest practice of reading the manuscript to his friends." Such, however, were his preliminary difficulties that he confesses he was often "tempted to cast away the labour of seven years"; and it was not until February 1776 that the first volume was published. The success was instant, and, for a quarto, probably unprecedented. The entire impression was exhausted in a few days; a second and a third edition were scarcely adequate to the demand. The author might almost have said, as Lord Byron after the publication of *Childe Harold*, that "he awoke one morning and found himself famous." In addition to public applause, he was gratified by the more select praises of the highest living authorities in that branch of literature: "the candour of Dr Robertson embraced his disciple;" Hume's letter of congratulation "overpaid the labour of ten years." The latter, however, with his usual sagacity, anticipated the objections which he saw could be urged against the famous fifteenth and sixteenth chapters. "I think you have observed a very prudent temperament; but it was impossible to treat the subject so as not to give grounds of suspicion against you, and you may expect that a clamour will arise."

The "clamour" thus predicted was not slow to make itself heard. Within two years the famous chapters had elicited what might almost be called a library of controversy. The only attack, however, to which Gibbon deigned to make any reply was that of Davies, who had impugned his accuracy or good faith. His *Vindication* appeared in February, 1779; and, as Milman remarks, "this single discharge from the ponderous artillery of learning and sarcasm laid prostrate the whole disorderly squadron" of his rash and feeble assailants.¹

¹ For a very full list of publications in answer to Gibbon's attack on Christianity reference may be made to the *Bibliographer's Manual*, pp. 885-6 (1858). Of these the earliest were Watson's *Apology* (1776), Salisbury's *Strictures* (1776), and Chelsum's (anonymous) *Remarks* (1776). In 1778 the *Few Remarks* by a Gentleman (Francis Eyre), the *Reply of Loftus*, the *Letters of Aphorpe*, and the *Examination of Davies* appeared. Gibbon's *Vindication* (1779) called forth a *Reply* by Davies (1779), and *A Short Appeal to the Public* by Francis Eyre (1779). Laughton's polemical treatise was published in 1780, and those of Milner and Taylor in 1781. Chelsum returned to the attack in 1785 (*A Reply to Mr Gibbon's Vindication*), and Sir David Dalrymple (*An Inquiry into the Secondary Causes, &c.*) made his first appearance in the controversy in 1786. Travis's *Letters on 1 John v. 7* are dated 1784; and Spedalieri's *Confutazione dell'Esame del Cristianismo fatto da Gibbon* was published in Rome (2 vols. 4to) in the same year. It is impossible not to concur in almost every point with Gibbon's own estimate of his numerous assailants. Their crude productions, for the most part, were conspicuous rather for insolence and abusiveness than for logic or learning. Those of Bishop Watson and Lord Hailes were the best, but simply because they contented themselves with a dispassionate exposition of the general argument in favour of Christianity. The most foolish and discreditable was certainly that of Davies; his unworthy attempt to depreciate the great historian's learning, and his captious, cavilling, acrimonious charges of petty inaccuracies and discreditable falsification gave the object of his attack an easy triumph.

Two years before the publication of this first volume Gibbon was elected member of parliament for Liskeard (1774). His political duties did not suspend his prosecution of his history, except on one occasion, and for a little while, in 1779, when he undertook, on behalf of the ministry, a task which, if well performed, was also, it must be added, well rewarded. The French Government had issued a manifesto preparatory to a declaration of war, and Gibbon was solicited by Chancellor Thurlow and Lord Weymouth, secretary of state, to answer it. In compliance with this request he produced the able *Mémoire Justificatif*, composed in French, and delivered to the courts of Europe; and shortly afterwards he received a seat at the Board of Trade and Plantations,—little more than a sinecure in itself, but with a very substantial salary of nearly £800 per annum. His acceptance displeased some of his former political associates, and he was accused of "deserting his party." In his *Mémoire*, indeed, Gibbon denies that he had ever enlisted with the Whigs. A note of Fox, however, on the margin of a copy of *The Decline and Fall* records a very distinct remembrance of the historian's previous vituperation of the ministry; within a fortnight of the date of his acceptance of office, he is there alleged to have said that "there was no salvation for this country until six heads of the principal persons in administration were laid upon the table." Lord Sheffield merely replies, somewhat weakly it must be said, that his friend never intended the words to be taken literally. More to the point is the often-quoted passage from Gibbon's letter to Deyverdun, where the frank revelation is made: "You have not forgotten that I went into parliament without patriotism and without ambition, and that all my views tended to the convenient and respectable place of a lord of trade."

In April 1781 the second and third quartos of his *History* were published. They excited no controversy, and were comparatively little talked about—so little, indeed, as to have extorted from him a half murmur about "coldness and prejudice." The volumes, however, were bought and read with silent avidity. Meanwhile public events were developing in a manner that had a considerable influence upon the manner in which the remaining years of the historian's life were spent. At the general election in 1780 he had lost his seat for Liskeard, but had subsequently been elected for Lymington. The ministry of Lord North, however, was tottering, and soon after fell; the Board of Trade was abolished by the passing of Burke's bill in 1782, and Gibbon's salary vanished with it,—no trifle, for his expenditure had been for three years on a scale somewhat disproportionate to his private fortune. He did not like to depend on statesmen's promises, which are proverbially uncertain of fulfilment; he as little liked to retrench; and he was wearied of parliament, where he had never given any but silent votes. Urged by such considerations, he once more turned his eyes to the scene of his early exile, where he might live on his decent patrimony in a style which was impossible in England, and pursue unembarrassed his literary studies. He therefore resolved to fix himself at Lausanne.

A word only is necessary on his parliamentary career. Neither nature nor acquired habits qualified him to be an orator; his late entrance on public life, his natural timidity, his feeble voice, his limited command of idiomatic English, and even, as he candidly confesses, his literary fame, were all obstacles to success. "After a fleeting, illusive hope, prudence condemned me to acquiesce in the humble station of a mute. . . . I was not armed by nature and education with the intrepid energy of mind and

¹ In 1775 he writes to Holroyd, "I am still a mute; it is more tremendous than I imagined; the great speakers fill me with despair; the bad ones with terror."

voice—'Vincentem strepitus et natum rebus agendis.' Timidity was fortified by pride, and even the success of my pen discouraged the trial of my voice." His repugnance to public life had been strongly expressed to his father in a letter of a very early date, in which he begged that the money which a seat in the House of Commons would cost might be expended in a mode more agreeable to him. Gibbon was eight-and-thirty when he entered parliament; and the obstacles which even at an earlier period he had not had courage to encounter were hardly likely to be vanquished then. Nor had he much political sagacity. He was better skilled in investigating the past than in divining the future. While Burke and Fox and so many great statesmen proclaimed the consequences of the collision with America, Gibbon saw nothing but colonies in rebellion, and a paternal Government justly incensed. His silent votes were all given on that hypothesis. In a similar manner, while he abhorred the French Revolution when it came, he seems to have had no apprehension, like Chesterfield, Burke, or even Horace Walpole, of its approach; nor does he appear to have at all suspected that it had had anything to do with the speculations of the philosophic coteries in which he had taken such delight. But while it may be doubted whether his presence in Parliament was of any direct utility to the legislative business of the country, there can be no question of the present advantage which he derived from it in the prosecution of the great work of his life,—an advantage of which he was fully conscious when he wrote: "The eight sessions that I sat in parliament were a school of civil prudence, the first and most essential virtue of an historian."

Having sold all his property except his library—to him equally a necessary and a luxury—Gibbon repaired to Lausanne in September 1783, and took up his abode with his early friend Deyverdun, now a resident there. Perfectly free from every engagement but those which his own tastes imposed, easy in his circumstances, commanding just as much society, and that as select, as he pleased, with the noblest scenery spread out at his feet, no situation can be imagined more favourable for the prosecution of his literary enterprise; a hermit in his study as long as he chose, he found the most delightful recreation always ready for him at the threshold. "In London," says he, "I was lost in the crowd; I ranked with the first families in Lausanne, and my style of prudent expense enabled me to maintain a fair balance of reciprocal civilities. . . . Instead of a small house between a street and a stable-yard, I began to occupy a spacious and convenient mansion, connected on the north side with the city, and open on the south to a beautiful and boundless horizon. A garden of four acres had been laid out by the taste of M. Deyverdun; from the garden a rich scenery of meadows and vineyards descends to the Leman Lake, and the prospect far beyond the lake is crowned by the stupendous mountains of Savoy." In this enviable retreat, it is no wonder that a year should have been suffered to roll round before he vigorously resumed his great work,—and with many men it would never have been resumed in such a paradise. We may remark in passing that the retreat was often enlivened, or invaded, by friendly tourists from England, whose "frequent incursions" into Switzerland our recluse seems half to lament as an evil. Among his more valued visitors were M. and Mme. Necker; Mr Fox also gave him two welcome "days of free and private society" in 1788. Differing as they did in politics, Gibbon's testimony to the genius and character of the great statesman is highly honourable to both: "Perhaps no human being," he says, "was ever more perfectly exempt from the taint of malevolence, vanity, or falsehood."

When once fairly reseat at his task, he proceeded in this delightful retreat leisurely, yet rapidly, to its comple-

tion. The fourth volume, partly written in 1782, was completed in June 1784; the preparation of the fifth volume occupied less than two years; while the sixth and last, begun 18th May, 1786, was finished in thirteen months. The feelings with which he brought his labours to a close must be described in his own inimitable words: "It was on the day, or rather night, of the 27th of June 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summer house in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a *berceau* or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and, perhaps, the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future date of my *History*, the life of the historian must be short and precarious."

Taking the manuscript with him, Gibbon, after an absence of four years, once more visited London in 1787; and the 51st anniversary of the author's birthday (27th April 1788) witnessed the publication of the last three volumes of *The Decline and Fall*. They met with a quick and easy sale, were very extensively read, and very liberally and deservedly praised for the unflagging industry and vigour they displayed, though just exception, if only on the score of good taste, was taken to the scoffing tone he continued to maintain in all passages where the Christian religion was specially concerned, and much fault was found with the indecency of some of his notes.¹

He returned to Switzerland in July 1788, cherishing vague schemes of fresh literary activity; but genuine sorrow caused by the death of his friend Deyverdun interfered with steady work, nor was it easy for him to fix on a new subject which should be at once congenial and proportioned to his powers; while the premonitory mutterings of the great thunderstorm of the French Revolution, which reverberated in hollow echoes even through the quiet valleys of Switzerland, further troubled his repose. For some months he found amusement in the preparation of the delightful *Memoirs* (1789) from which most of our knowledge of his personal history is derived; but his letters to friends in England, written between 1788 and 1793 occasionally betray a slight but unmistakable tone of *ennui*. In April 1793 he unexpectedly received tidings of the death of Lady Sheffield; and the motive of friendship thus supplied combined with the pressure of public events to urge him homewards. He arrived in England on the following June, and spent the summer at Sheffield Place, where his presence was even more highly prized than it had ever before been. Returning to London early in November, he found it necessary to consult his physicians for a symptom which, neglected since 1761, had gradually become complicated with hydrocele, and was now imperatively demanding surgical aid; but the painful operations which had to be performed did not interfere with his customary cheerfulness, nor did they prevent him from paying a Christmas visit to Sheffield Place. Here, however, fever made its appearance; and a removal to London (January 6, 1794) was considered imperative. Another operation brought him some relief; but a relapse occurred

¹ An anonymous pamphlet, entitled *Observations on the three last volumes of the Roman History*, appeared in 1788; Disney's *Sermon, with Strictures*, in 1790; and Whitaker's *Review*, in 1791. With regard to the second of the above complaints, surprise will probably be felt that it was not extended to portions of the text as well as to the notes.

during the night of the 15th, and on the following day he peacefully breathed his last. His remains were laid in the burial place of the Sheffield family, Fletching, Sussex, where an epitaph by Dr Parr describes his character and work in the language at once of elegance, of moderation, and of truth.

The personal appearance of Gibbon as a lad of sixteen is brought before us somewhat dimly in M. Pavilliard's description of the "thin little figure, with a large head, disputing and arguing, with the greatest ability, all the best arguments that had ever been used in favour of popery." What he afterwards became has been made more vividly familiar by the clever silhouette prefixed to the *Miscellaneous Works* (Gibbon himself, at least, we know, did not regard it as a caricature), and by Sir Joshua Reynolds's portrait so often engraved. It is hardly fair perhaps to add a reference to Suard's highly-coloured description of the short Silenus-like figure, not more than 56 inches in height, the slim legs, the large turned-in feet, the shrill piercing voice; but almost every one will remember, from Croker's *Boswell*, Colman's account of the great historian "tapping his snuff-box, smirking and smiling, and rounding his periods" from that mellifluous mouth. It has already been seen that Gibbon's early ailments all left him on the approach of manhood; thenceforward, "till admonished by the gout," he could truly boast of an immunity well-nigh perfect from every bodily complaint; an exceptionally vigorous brain, and a stomach "almost too good," united to bestow upon him a vast capacity alike for work and for enjoyment. This capacity he never abused so as to burden his conscience or depress his spirits. "The madness of superfluous health I have never known." To illustrate the intensity of the pleasure he found alike in the solitude of his study and in the relaxations of genial social intercourse, almost any page taken at random, either from the *Life* or from the *Letters*, would suffice; and many incidental touches show that he was not a stranger to the delights of quiet contemplation of the beauties and grandeurs of nature. His manners, if formal, were refined; his conversation, when he felt himself at home, interesting and unaffected; and that he was capable alike of feeling and inspiring a very constant friendship there are many witnesses to show. That his temperament at the same time was frigid and comparatively passionless cannot be denied; but neither ought this to be imputed to him as a fault; hostile criticisms upon the grief for a father's death, that "was soothed by the conscious satisfaction that I had discharged all the duties of filial piety," seem somewhat out of place. His most ardent admirers, however, are constrained to admit that he was deficient in large-hearted benevolence; that he was destitute of any "enthusiasm of humanity"; and that so far as every sort of religious yearning or aspiration is concerned, his poverty was almost unique. Gibbon was such a man as Horace might have been, had the Roman Epicurean been fonder of hard intellectual work, and less prone than he was to the indulgence of emotion.

Of Gibbon's mental qualities it is interesting to read the estimate formed and recorded by himself on his twenty-sixth birthday [May 8th, N.S., 1762]: "Wit I have none. My imagination is rather strong than pleasing. My memory both capacious and retentive. The shining qualities of my understanding are extensiveness and penetration; but I want both quickness and exactness." Twenty-six years afterwards, he wrote on the same subject in his *Memoirs*:—"The original soil has been highly improved by cultivation; but it may be questioned whether some flowers of fancy, some grateful errors, have not been eradicated with the weeds of prejudice." No student of *The Decline and Fall* will accuse its author of immodesty or vanity in these self-appreciations, but will rather be surprised that he should have so considerably underestimated both his endowments

and his acquirements. Of the kind and amount of varied ability displayed in that truly immortal work it would be almost impossible to speak in language of exaggerated praise,—the grandeur and vastness of conception, the artistic grouping, the masterly fulness and accuracy of detail, the richness and vividness of description, the coruscating liveliness, the polished sarcasm, the pungent wit. The history of Rome is, for the many centuries which Gibbon treats, the history of the world; and it is nothing less than astonishing that he should have been able to work with so much ease the vast and incongruous materials into such a unity of design. It is the amplest historic canvas ever spread, the largest historic painting ever executed by a single hand; and only a comprehensive and orderly intellect of the highest rank could have grappled as Gibbon has done with the task of blending that vast array of nations, in all their varieties of costume, habit, language, and religion, into one picturesque and harmonious whole. If Gibbon had ever been conscious of any inexactitude in his mental habit, it was a defect which he very early and very successfully remedied. No man could declare more honestly than he that "curiosity as well as duty had led him carefully to examine all the original documents that could illustrate the subject which he had undertaken to treat." With incredible labour he was able to bring at last to his great life-work a mind capable equally of ascending to the most comprehensive, and of descending to the most minute surveys; of appreciating the beautiful and sublime in classic literature, and yet of delighting in the verbal criticism, the tedious collation, and dry antiquarian research by which the text is established or illustrated; of celebrating the more imposing events of history with congenial pomp of description, and of investigating with the dullest plodder's patience and perseverance the origin of nations, the emigrations of obscure tribes, and the unpromising yet instructive problems which ethnology presents. In his pages the widest deductions of historic philosophy alternate with attempts to fix the true reading of an obscure passage or a minute point of chronology or geography. It may even be said that in these last investigations he took almost as much delight as in depicting the grander scenes of history, and surrendered himself as absolutely for the time to the early migrations of the Goths and Scythians as to the campaigns of Belisarius or the conquests of the Saracens. Never has historian evinced greater logical sagacity in making comparatively obscure details yield important inferences, or held with firmer hand the balance in the case of conflicting probabilities; by no one has sounder judgment or greater self-control been, on the whole, more uniformly exhibited in cases where it is so easy for learned enthusiasm to run into fanciful hypotheses.

While thus entitled to great and manifold praise, *The Decline and Fall* has not been, and can never be, exempt from a certain measure of just censure. Even when the occasional Gallicisms and grammatical absurdities pointed out by the industry of critics have been willingly overlooked, there yet remains something to be said on the defects of its style. Precise, energetic, massive it is; splendid, when the pictorial demands of the narrative require it, as that of Livy; and sometimes, where profound reflections are to be concisely expressed, as sententious and graphic as that of Tacitus. But with all its great merits it is too often formal and inflexible, and is apt to pall on the ear by the too frequent recurrence of the same cadence at equal intervals, and the too unsparring use of antithesis. It is not veined marble, but an exquisite tessellation; not the fluent naturally-winding stream, but a stately aqueduct, faced with stone, adorned with wooded embankments, or flowing over noble arches, but an aqueduct still. It is a just criticism of Sir James Mackintosh

that probably no great writer ever derived less benefit from his professed models. Pascal, Voltaire, Hume, were his delight; and he acknowledges, as so unsuccessful a pupil well might, that he often closed the pages of the last with a feeling of despair. Addison and Swift he read for the very purpose of improving his acquaintance with idiomatic English, yet, as the above critic remarks, "with so little success, that in the very act of characterizing these writers, he has deviated not a little from that beautiful simplicity which is their peculiar distinction."

In a work of such extent it is a venial fault that the workmanship should not in all parts be equally perfect; "aliquando bonus dormitat." That Gibbon has sometimes failed in that lucidity of statement which is one of his very strongest characteristics has often been successfully pointed out; and special reference may be made to the 59th chapter, where he treats of the crusades. In this instance by "a brief parallel" he has sought to save himself "the repetition of a tedious narrative," but has only succeeded in presenting a superficial sketch that cannot be otherwise characterized than as confused and badly written. Nor has his penetration enabled him in all cases to reach the true significance of some of the grander facts which, in order to the adequate discharge of his task, it was of the highest importance that he should have rightly understood. Here it is not necessary to adduce any minor instances, when it can be shown that he is out of harmony with the truth, or at least with the truth as apprehended by the 19th century, in a matter so fundamental as his conception of that empire which declined and fell, and of that Christianity which, as he rightly supposes, contributed to its overthrow.

In Mirabeau's correspondence there occurs a letter to Sir Samuel Romilly containing the following criticism:—"I have never been able to read the work of M. Gibbon without being astounded that it should ever have been written in English; or without being tempted to turn to the author and say, 'You an Englishman? No, indeed! That admiration for an empire of more than two hundred millions of men, where not one had the right to call himself free; that effeminate philosophy which has more praise for luxury and pleasures than for all the virtues; that style always elegant and never energetic, reveal at the most the elector of Hanover's slave.'" Here Mirabeau speaks in his own language what every one who in the least values the characteristic features of modern political life must, however inarticulately, have often felt. Gibbon's enthusiasm for the empire of Trajan and the Antonines—that "solid fabric of human greatness"—is undisguised and perfectly sincere; to his thinking, if the earth ever enjoyed a golden age, it was then. The world was happy because it was under a government which it could never think of questioning or resisting,—happy because for once it had got rid of all unavailing enthusiasms, whether political or religious. Whether it was happy, and whether any happiness it really possessed was not rather in spite of than because of the prevalent political and religious indifference, are questions which not many historians will care to answer as Gibbon did. It is manifest, however, that to him, thinking of the Roman empire as he did, it was well nigh impossible to be just to Christianity. He could never forgive a religion which, in his opinion, had overthrown "the solid fabric of human greatness," and given to the world the sorry sight of bare-footed friars chanting psalms on the spot where once had been the august worship in which everybody took part and positively no one believed. This explains why one who can treat each and all of the ethnic religions with the cold impartiality of a Chinese literatus²

¹ See Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries*, viii. 460.

² "Il a du lettré chinois dans sa manière d'apprécier les religions."—Sainte-Beuve.