



The Expedition of Humphry Clinker

Tobias George Smollett

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Before I was born, [my aunt] had gone such lengths in the way of flirting with a recruiting officer, that her reputation was a little singed. She afterwards made advances to the curate of the parish... -from "To Sir Watkin Phillips, of Jesus college, Oxon, Bath, May 6" An often overlooked but nevertheless important name in the history of the English novel, Tobias Smollett greatly influenced Dickens, with his unsentimental depiction of poverty, and was a favorite of William Makepeace Thackeray, who called *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* "the most laughable story that has ever been written since the goodly art of novel-writing began." An early example of the epistolary novel, consisting entirely of letters written between its characters, this is Smollett's last book, completed and published just before his death in 1771. Far less brutal than his earlier work, it is the comic story of Humphry Clinker, a poor lad who joins a touring party of aristocrats on their journey through city and country. Smollett's satire on the well-to-do and the fripperies that consumed their society echoes in countless writers who came after him, from Jane Austen to "Bridget Jones" with her diary. Scottish writer TOBIAS GEORGE SMOLLETT (1721-1771) trained as a surgeon but found far more success as a novelist; he also worked as an editor and translator. Among his works are *Roderick Random* (1748) and *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751).

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