Types of Editing for Memoir and Fiction

Here is an abbreviated breakdown of what each type of editor generally does. All three are important, BUT at different times in the process.

Developmental Editing: Book and story as a whole. What works and what doesn't work.
- Structure of the book.
- How to begin and end.
- Which stories and characters are included and which are not.
- Plot, and plot flow. Reorganizing events. Cutting a scene or reordering scenes.
- Overall tone, style and voice.
- Character depth issues: Fact vs. feeling vs. meaning. "Why should we care?" issues.
- Character evolution problems.
- Dramatic questions: lack of them or not answering them.
- Believability issues with certain aspects of the book for your target audience.
- Overall amount of dialogue, scene and character description.
- Issues of 'show vs. tell' in a large sense. For example, "You need a chapter to replace this paragraph here."

Line Editing: Think of it as editing at the paragraph level. How things strike a reader as they go along, not the overall book.
- Consistency of voice.
- Adequate scene and character description on an individual case basis.
- Confusing or awkward sentences or passages.
- Conflicting information (for example, one minute it's sunset the next daylight).
- Incorrect data, a request for research support. A note might read: "Snow in San Diego? Check your sources."
- Individual cases of replacing 'tell' with 'show' or vice versa.
- Cutting paragraphs within a scene or reorganizing a scene's paragraphs
- Cutting or reorganizing sentences within a paragraph.
- Requests for deeper levels of fact vs. feeling vs. meaning vs. evolution on a case by case basis. A note might read: "What were you feeling when this happened?"
- Point of View (POV) violations.
- Verb tense disagreement. Or recommendations about changing it in spots.

Copy Editing or Proofreading: Words and sentences.
- Spelling
- Grammar (according to the publisher's style standards. Ex: MLA vs. Chicago vs. AP)
- Typos
- Verb tense disagreement within a passage.