

phies that have been written of distinguished persons; all history, both ancient and modern, if carefully examined, will be found to consist of little else than a series of biographies. As you have it in your power also to select such as by the fewness of their incidents are peculiarly simple, I would say, that these should form your first essays in this very attractive department of literature. And supposing you have selected some such biography as a theme on which to write, it is proper that you should make yourselves fully master of all the incidents of the story, whether few or many, before you write one sentence of the narrative; for thus taking a comprehensive view of all the parts together, you will be enabled to preserve the relative proportions between facts that are, and facts that are not important; and however compendious your essay may be, to furnish at least a fair outline of the original story. This species of writing possesses numerous recommendations, of which I need allege no other proof than this, that societies have been formed in the Mother Country by gentlemen ambitious of mental improvement, in which the single task required of the members is, to furnish a biographical sketch of some distinguished individual. But should it so happen that there are still some of you who think that the subjects I have suggested are all of a kind too grave and difficult for you to undertake, I would suggest one other class of a lighter kind, but still of much importance in the matter of improving your powers of observation as well as of writing.—Your lot is now cast on the western side of the Atlantic, in this young and thriving country, which I do not hesitate to say, is in very many respects better and more interesting than the one we left on the other side. Here we have all the poetry which the most sublime imagination could long for in our lakes of unrivalled greatness—these seas of a smoother surface and softer outline than those which encircle the British isles—but only on that account the better fitted for our graceful steamers that by their fleetness enable us to peruse their extent—to fix our eyes at one time upon the blue surface of the unfathomed depths, or to range them along shores where all that is beautiful in agriculture, or in thriving villages and cities—all that is magnificent in the hoary forest, or sublime in the thundering cataract, are seen as in a great panorama. If a certain lady could say to the poet Cowper, who had asked for a subject—“When required to write, you need be at no loss for a subject—there is the sofa!” I may surely be allowed to say to the student who makes to me the same complaint—you cannot be at a loss for a subject—there is your adopted country—a wonder in itself, not only for its natural grandeur, but for its rapid increase in wealth, and for the noble works devised, and in the course of being executed, to increase it still more.—Have any of us then been making a tour through any part of the country? The fruit of your observation is the theme on which I would