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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE LATE ALEXANDER HENRY, ESQ.

THE duties of the Biographer, are of a varied and complex nature, often attended with difficulties which do not happen in other literary pursuits. Should he confine himself to a simple enumeration of events, in their chronological order, he could only deserve the title of a journalist or a writer of annals. If he launches too far in seeking for the causes which influence the conduct or actions of his hero, or if he branches out in search of those occurrences which may precede or follow these actions, he will be too apt to make the primary object of his work, only a matter of secondary importance, and instead of giving a history of the actor, he will only describe the operations of the stage on which he performed. The history of an individual who has sustained the part of a public character may be so closely interwoven with the events of his time, that the one cannot be faithfully related, or properly explained, without referring to the other. And many illustrious literati have been of opinion that in giving the history of eminent scientific characters, it ought to be combined with an account of the discoveries or improvements they have made. But both these have their proper limits as well as their usefulness: and it is seldom necessary for the Biographer to extend his labours beyond the touching on such events as directly flow from, or are the immediate cause of, the proceedings of him whose life he relates. The farther illustration of such events, the causes they spring from, and their subsequent effects, are all the prerogatives of the historian of the times, and not of the Biographer.

The Biographer for the faithful discharge of his task, must often look with a doubtful eye, upon some of the principal sources from which he draws his information. The materials for his work are sometimes to be found, only from the relations of the friends and kindred, of him whose life he writes. These, whether connected by the ties of blood or friendship, will, from a praiseworthy charity, towards the