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THE majority of the reading Public, in this present age, seem to agree upon one point in particular with the witty Montaigne—and that point is, a love of Biographical works. “The Historians,” says the lively and entertaining Frenchman, “are my true province, for they are pleasant and easy; where immediately man in general, the knowledge of whom I hunt after, does there appear more lively and entire than any where besides: the variety and truth of his internal qualities, in gross and piecemeal; the diversity of means by which he is united and knit, and the accidents that threaten him. Now, those that write Lives, by reason they insist more upon counsels than events, — more upon sallies from within, than upon that which happens without, are the most proper for my reading; and therefore, above all others, Plutarch is the man for me.” History may be compared to a numerous festive assembly, where the guest is distracted by the multiplicity of objects and persons;—whereas, Biography may be likened to that social intercourse which we hold with a friend, when enjoying a quiet *tete-a-tete* by our own fireside. We are fully alive to the truth of the saying uttered by a French prince, *That no man is a hero to the servants of his chamber*; indeed it is because no man is a hero in his own chamber, that we like to follow him there. The mind—distracted and

dazzled by the details of the pomp and circumstance of war, and wearied with endeavouring to penetrate the snares of subtle policy, or to unlock the hidden causes of events—abandons for a while, with delight, the grand theatre of the world, and loves to follow the principal actors behind the scenes, into the privacy and recesses of domestic life. We feel a natural and reasonable curiosity to know in what way the master-spirits of the earth demeaned themselves, when engaged in those pursuits which are common to us all: we also are prone to feed our self-love, by tracing out points of resemblance betwixt them and ourselves; and, in many instances, a pursuit or occupation, hitherto followed with no extraordinary zeal, becomes interesting all of a sudden, merely from the circumstance of its having been the favourite pursuit or occupation of some great man, whose Life we have just been reading.—Dead to all the noblest feelings of the heart must he be, who feels not a glow of complacency when he reads of Henry the Great riding on his children’s hobby-horse! How does our admiration of Lord Collingwood increase, when we follow him into his garden and grounds, and watch him engaged with old Scott, his gardener, in weeding his favorite oaks! Does not the follower of Isaac Walton pursue the art of Angling with additional pleasure, when

* The Georgian Æra . Memoirs of the most eminent Persons who have flourished in Great Britain, from the accession of George the First to the demise of George the Fourth. In four volumes. Vol I. The Royal Family;—The Pretenders and their adherents;—Churchmen, Dissenters, and Statesmen London Vizetelly, Branston, and Co., Fleet-street 1832.