

Biography

June 27, 1933

Dear Miss Roderick:

I was much pleased to receive your letter of the eighteenth and to know where you are and what you are doing.

What an interesting job you have. From what you tell me of materials that you are working over I cannot doubt for a moment that you have not got your hands on a fine subject for a biography. I may be prejudiced because of my conviction that women always have been doing fine creative work on patterns that the general public, that is the modern general public, has never understood. The great mass of the solid work of this world never gets on the front page or in the biographical dictionary.

It looks to me from your letter that Mrs. McCormick was doing a highly successful piece of work following the demands life made upon her.

But this comment is just for you and it is drawn out as you will know by your letter. Don't let it over-influence you.

Now as to that course on biography. It was undertaken at the request of a friend of mine who was thinking of endowing a chair on biography. She wanted me to take a try at a course at a college in which she was interested - Bucknell, Lewisburgh, Pa. All that I could do was to talk on the writing of biography and that I did informally and on the basis of my own experience. It is very simple stuff and I ~~know~~ very inadequate. However, both at Bucknell and at Tucson, Arizona where I afterwards gave a course I did have interesting results in the work that the pupils did - short biographies on topics chosen by themselves.

My work was never written. What I handed in was an outline with suggested readings. I talked from notes. However, students in the class made notes on some of the Tucson lectures which will show you about how I treated my material. These notes, of course, are not verbatim reports.

If this material is of any use to you I shall be grateful and when you have looked it over if you

you would tell me frankly whether you find it in anyway stimulating or suggestive. I have thought of writing out the whole thing, strengthening it throughout and put it into a little book. My idea in doing this would be to make something practical for college students.

The two best modern books in the writing of biography, so far as I know, are listed here - Harold Nicholson's "Development of English Biography" and Andre Maurois, "Aspects of Biography."

Take your time about looking this material over. I shall have to ask you to return it when you are through with it - there is no hurry.

And if there is anything in the world that I can do please do not hesitate to ask me. It will be a pleasure to know how things are going.

Cordially yours

Miss Virginia Roderick
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