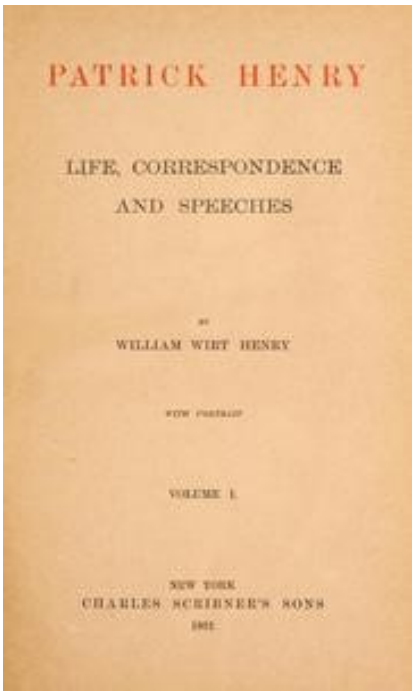
PATRICK HENRY

LIFE, CORRESPONDENCE
AND SPEECHES

BY
WILLIAM WIRT HENRY

WITH PORTRAIT

VOLUME I.

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1891

"Patrick Henry"By Spencer Roane

Letter of Spencer Roane to William Wirt, reprinted as an appendix in William Wirt Henry, Patrick Henry: Life, Correspondence and Speeches (3 vols., 1891).

[estimated to have been written c. 1800]

JUDGE SPENCER ROANE S MEMORANDUM

MY acquaintance with the late Patrick Henry did not commence till the year 1783. In the Spring of that year I met him in the General Assembly, as a Delegate for the County of Henry, and served four sessions with him in that year and the "next

Although during that period I often heard him speak, I formed no very particular acquaintance with him, as I was then a very young man, and was naturally averse from pushing myself into the society of so distinguished a character.

Richard Henry Lee was also a Delegate during those years and with him I was well acquainted, almost from my child hood. He had been very often at my father s house, who had long served in the Assembly with him, as well as with Patrick Henry, and when a young man had written in the office of Col. Geo. Lee, the Clerk of Westmoreland and a relation of R. H. Lee s.

In the Fall session of 84, Mr. Henry was elected Governor the second time, commencing in December of that year. I was elected a Councillor the same session, to commence in the May following. Mr. Henry continued Governor then two years, and I remained in the Council till the end of the year 86, when I resigned.

During that time I had an opportunity to become well acquainted with Mr. H., and especially as I had, during the time, formed connection in his family, in which I was, of course, domesticated.

After he had ceased to be Governor, and I had left the Council, owing to the distance by which we were separated I only saw him in the Assembly, of which he was a Delegate from Prince Edward

and I a member of the Senate, until I rode the Circuit as a Judge of the General Court, in 1790 and the four succeeding years. I was, during those years, at least three times on his Circuit, and every time left my family at his residence in Prince Edward, and at Long Island, and accompanied him to the Courts of Prince Edward and New London, in which he then practised, and on to Great Bridge Court, whither he went to defend a criminal. This gave me an opportunity to see him in a new character: that of a counsellor in civil and criminal cases.

After I ceased to ride the Circuit, by being elected into the Court of Appeals, and he quitted the practice of law, I never again saw him, owing to the distance, though I was at his house on my last Circuit, in the Fall of 94. He was always in his lifetime very cordial and affectionate towards me.

I have entered into this detail to show that, although I am unable to say much of his life or character prior to 83, except from the information of his family and others, I have had some opportunity to be well acquainted with him since that period. . . .

With respect to the domestic character of Mr. Henry, nothing could be more amiable. In every relation, as a hus band, father, master, and neighbor, he was entirely exemplary. It is no exception from this character that, I conceive, he meditated an act of injustice towards some of his first children, by his last Will; one of whom, too, at least, was a favorite child. That is to be ascribed to the extreme debility under which he then labored, and the urgent importunity of an interested second wife, who assailed him with the claims of her nine children. (This occurrence, of course, will not be mentioned in his biography. I may be mistaken in the idea, and it had better sink into oblivion.*)

The particulars of this transaction are detailed in a suit I brought in the Court of Chancery, against his Executors, after his death, and in which I recovered. I have no wish to bring that transaction into this detail; I only now mention it for the purpose of declaring that even that occurrence forms no exception against his justice as a parent; it was entirely owing to the debility and to influences . . . [illegible].

As to the disposition of Mr. Henry, it was the best imaginable. I am positive that I never saw him in a passion, nor apparently even out of temper. Circumstances which would have highly irritated other men had no such visible effect on him. He was always calm and collected, and the rude attacks of his adversaries in debate only whetted the poignancy of his satire. Witness his cutting reply to F. Corbin in the Virginia Assembly, about bowing, of which no doubt Mr. Wirt has been informed. It exceeded anything of the kind I ever heard. He spoke and acted this reply, and Corbin sank at least a foot in his seat.

** Roane was of course an interested party. Patrick Henry's provision for the children of his first wife had been liberal. Shortly after the Constitution was adopted, a series of the most abusive and scurrilous pieces came out against him, under the signature of Decius. They were supposed to be written by Mr. Nicholas (Americanus), with the assistance of other more important men. They assailed Mr. Henry s conduct in the Convention, and slandered his character by various stones hatched up against him. These pieces were extremely hateful to all Mr. H. s friends, and indeed to a great portion of the community.*

I was at his house in Prince Edward during the thickest of them, and I declare that he seemed to evince no more desire to see the newspapers containing them than the most indifferent person in the County. He evinced no feeling on the occasion, and far less condescended to parry the effects thereof on the public mind. It was too puny a contest for him, and he reposed upon the consciousness of his own integrity.

Patrick Henry had a remarkable faculty of adapting himself to his company. Of this talent, so important to him as a public speaker, I shall presently speak; at present I have only reference to the ordinary intercourse of society. He would be pleasant and cheerful with persons of any class or condition, vicious and abandoned persons always excepted. He preferred those of character and talents, but would amuse himself with any who could contribute to his amusement.

Although sufficiently tenacious of his character and dignity, he was not to be offended by rude liberties when no offence was intended. I will give one instance which struck me in a remarkable manner. He had been to Greenbrier Court to defend a criminal named Holland, of which trial I shall speak more particularly hereafter.

This trial had attracted great attention in the upper country and in Mr. Henry s own neighborhood. I was returning there from with Mr. H., and within 15 miles of his house we saw a laboring man at a Brake by the road, and believe he was known to Mr. H. He accosted Mr. Henry with " How do you do, Colonel ? " Mr. H. replied. He then asked Mr. H. what he had done with Holland. Mr. H. replied that he was ac quitted, on which the man replied, with great seeming exultation, " Hurrah for old Henry! " Mr. H., not at all offended with the coarseness of this exclamation, bid the man good-bye, and jogged down the road, smiling.

Mr. Henry was a child of Nature. He preferred, I believe, being in the country, and to be free from the restraints of polished society; yet he could readily adapt himself to that situation. When he was Governor the second time (and I presume more so the first), he rarely appeared in the streets, and never without a scarlet cloak, black clothes, and a dressed wig, &c. The ideas attached to the office of Governor, as handed down from the Royal Government, had not then got down to their present level; and I expect he considered this course a just adaptation to the public opinion. . . . With great simplicity and suavity of manner, he had as much true dignity as any man. . . . His dress was plain, as also was his house and furniture, and he was careless about his diet. He took no delight in the pleasures of the table. He was one of the most temperate men I ever knew. He rarely drank any wine or spirits, and his frequent custom was, in the country, to go to a wooden cask and drink water out of a gourd.

I believe he had been fond of hunting and fishing in his youth, but I saw nothing of it after I became acquainted with him; except that when he lived at Long Island he showed me a Slope, or fish trap, which he made across a branch of Staunton river, that furnished fish for his family, and spoke with pleasure of a buck which had recently been caught therein by having been brought down the river in the current.

I have no doubt, from report, but Mr. H. had been a good performer on the violin, and was in other respects a musical man; but I never heard him play on a violin, or any other instrument, or even sing or hum a tune. His daughters played on musical instruments, but these seemed not much to engage his attention.

His great delight was in conversation, and in the society of his friends and family, and in the resources of his own mind. I have understood from the family that he had engaged in trade when young, and had failed; but I never heard that he was ever a bar-keeper, nor do I believe it. If his father- in-law owned a tavern, it is possible that he might have assisted gratuitously, at times, but the man s nature must have changed if he could ever have been adapted to a calling of this kind. I have no conception of any man who would have been more abhorrent at mixing toddy and seeing it drunk in a tavern than Patrick Henry. The case is, however, unimportant; his rise in the world has been sufficiently remarkable without introducing into his history fiction of this kind.

As to the kind of clothes in which he went dressed in his youth, according to some of the statements, we must refer (unless they be ascribed to a poverty so extreme as to have denied him better, and which I have never understood was the case) to the customs of the times in which he lived. I can myself remember when there was only one four-wheeled carriage, and two pair of boots (called shoe-boots), in the wealthy and fashionable County of Essex. I myself delighted to go barefooted and in trousers until I went to College, and I have heard my father say that his father, when possessed of perhaps 100 Negroes, and when he was a Colonel of Militia and Justice of the quorum, would in his shirt and trousers (in summer) visit two or three of his plantations and return home to breakfast.

I have said that Mr. Henry could adapt himself to all men in a remarkable manner. He was also well acquainted with the transactions of life, or, in other words, was a man of business. He could buy or sell a horse or a Negro as well as anybody, and was peculiarly a judge of the value and quality of land. He made several excellent bargains for lands in the latter part of his life, owing to his foresight and judgment. When I have told him that his lands were too far from market, he once replied to me that when he lived at Leatherwood, 180 miles from Richmond, persons passing by his house, from the upper parts of North Carolina, envied him his contiguity to market.

No man ever vaunted less of his achievements than Mr. Henry. I hardly ever heard him speak of those great achieve ments which form the prominent part of his biography. As for boasting, he was an entire stranger to it; unless it be that in his latter days he seemed proud of the goodness of his lands, and, I believe, wished to be thought wealthy. It is my opinion that he was better pleased to be flattered as to his wealth than as to his great talents. This I have accounted for by reflecting that he had long been under narrow and difficult circumstances as to property, from which he was at length happily relieved, whereas there never was a time when his talents had not shone conspicuous, tho he always seemed un conscious of them.

With respect to Mr. Henry s education, he was equally silent on that subject to S. R. If he got a license after six weeks reading, that was the very reason why he would not mention it, as it would look like boasting.

I never heard Mr. Henry (nor Mr. Pendleton) say that he read Mr. Pendleton s books, nor do I believe it. If he had been under any obligations to Mr. P., he would have been grateful for them; but, on the contrary, I have reason to believe that he was not very fond of Mr. P., nor Mr. P. of him. I have heard Mr. Henry say that Mr. Pendleton was too much devoted to the aristocracy of former times; that he was not thorough-going enough in the Revolution; that he was in favor of an established church, when as a member of Congress he was contending for civil liberty; and that Mr. P., on the bench of Caroline Court, justified the imprisonment of several Baptist Preachers,

who were defended by Mr. Henry, on the heinous charge of worshipping God according to the dictates of their own consciences; and that Mr. Pendleton was a man of too much courtesy in his passage through life, thereby meaning that he had too little candor, &c. On the contrary, I have heard Mr. P. insinuate of Mr. H., as far as he could do so in my hearing, who was connected with him, that he was a demagogue and a popular leader, &c. . . . I mention these things to show that I do not believe that Mr. Henry ever read Law with Mr. P. or owed him any obligations.

As to Mr. H. s general education, I do not believe that he had a regular academical one, but I do believe that he had some knowledge of the Latin tongue, and acquaintance with some of the principal branches of Science. These a man of Mr. H. s genius could not fail to acquire in a consider able degree, if not in the school room, at least at the dinner table of his father, who was a well educated man. If other men could not catch an education under these circumstances, it does not follow that Mr. H. could not, though it is said in some of the statements that he was taught by his father.

His genius was as far-soaring above those of ordinary men as is the first qualitied land of Kentucky beyond the sandy barrens of Pea Ridge (a barren ridge in King & Queen).

As to his using a translation of Livy, he may have never been able to read the original with perfect ease, or have for gotten the language. I was once able to read Homer with almost as much ease as the Spectator, which I owed to our good friend Warden and others, but am now obliged to read Pope s Homer, which Dr. Johnson (I think) says, and says truly, is not Homer s Homer.

As for the general character of Mr. Henry s library, I readily believe that he had not a complete or regular one. He was not a man of regularity or system. When at his dwelling at Prince Edward, I lodged with my family in his study (house room being scarce), and there saw his library fully. I remarked that it consisted sometimes of odd volumes, &c., but of good books. I believe that an inventory and catalogue of the books he died possessed of is filed in my former suit in the Chancery, before mentioned, and I expect it would be found to come within this description. That he was acquainted with ancient History and Mythology needs no further proof than the eloquent parallel used by him in his argument on the British Debt Case, between Rhadamanthus, Nero, and George III.

I believe he was very fond of History, Magazines, good poetry or plays (say Shakespeare s), and I think was a very good geographer. He was particularly well acquainted with the geography, rivers, soil, climate, &c., of America. His speeches show that he was well acquainted with English His tory. I think he had some acquaintance with Mathematics and Natural Philosophy.

After all, while I believe that altho Mr. H. had not a complete education, his great merit consists in this, that he acquired it by means impervious to ordinary men.

There was one trait in Mr. Henry, flowing from his good disposition and his magnanimity, which did him great credit and is universally admitted. He was extremely kind to young men in debate, and ever ready to compliment even his adversaries where it was merited; of the latter class, his high eulogium upon Col. Innes eloquence in the Virginia Convention will be recollected; of the former class, the instances were innumerable. I will mention one which occurred in my own case. In the Spring of the year 83, several of the most respectable of my constituents of the County of

Essex tarred and feathered one Jas. Williamson. He had been a merchant in Tappahannock, had gone to the British and endeavored to bring up tenders to burn the town during the war, and after the peace had returned to Tappahannock, where he was countenanced by some of the inhabitants. This gave such umbrage that he was pursued, caught, and tarred and feathered ^pby the principal men of Essex. They were prosecuted for this misdemeanor in the general Court. While the prosecution was still pending, these citizens sent a petition to me in the Spring of 84, praying the Assembly to arrest the prosecution. I presented the petition, and got a law of indemnity in some progress, taking care to state, as the fact was, that the act was committed before the definitive treaty was signed, which was some alleviation of their conduct.

Mr. Henry took me out, one day, and said that he admired the Whig spirit which actuated me, but that the intervention of the Legislature could not be justified. I told him that the transaction was irregular, but that the provocation was great, and the act done, in some sense, flagrante bello. He persisted in his opinion, and I maintained my ground, intimated that I hoped he would not oppose me, but that if he did, I must nevertheless proceed. He left me, and did not oppose me, which I ascribe to the trait now in question, and the act of indemnity passed. This is one small instance, but a thousand others might be mentioned.

Although I was personally unacquainted with Mr. Henry until 1783, I was no stranger to his character before that time. A volunteer at the age of thirteen, armed with a short carbine and tomahawk, and clothed in a hunting shirt with the words " Liberty or Death " engraved in capitals over my left breast, I could not be indifferent to the character of that man who electrified the American public by his eloquence in council, and roused them to resistance at a critical time by taking the field.

I had even before this formed a high opinion of this man s eloquence, talents, and patriotism. My father, a burgess for Essex from 1768 to the Revolution, and once or twice during the war, always came home in raptures with the man. That a plain man, of ordinary though respected family, should beard the aristocracy by whom we were then cursed and ruled, and overthrow them in the cause of independence, was grate ful to a man of my father s Whig principles. He considered Henry as the organ of the great body of the people; as the instrument by whom the big-wigs were to be thrown down, and liberty and independence established.

It is among the first things I can remember, that my father paid the expenses of a Scotch tutor residing in his family, named Bradfute, a man of learning, to go with him to Williamsburg to hear Patrick Henry speak; and that he laughed at Bradfute, on his return, for having been so much enchanted with his eloquence as to have unconsciously spirted tobacco juice from the gallery on the heads of the members, and to have nearly fallen from the gallery into the House. At a subsequent time, too, my father carried another tutor and myself, when not ten years old, to Williamsburg, on pur pose to hear Patrick Henry speak, but no occasion brought him out before the vacation had expired, and we returned home. . . .

With these impressions, I met Patrick Henry in the Assembly in May, 1783. I also then met with Richard Henry Lee. I lodged with Lee one or two sessions, and was perfectly acquainted with him, while I was as yet a stranger to Mr. Henry. These two gentlemen were the great leaders in the House of Delegates, and were almost constantly opposed. Not withstanding my habits of intimacy with Mr. Lee, I found myself obliged to vote with Patrick Henry against him in 1783, and against

Madison in 1784 (in which year, I think, R. H. Lee was sent to Congress), but with several important exceptions. I voted against him (P. H.), I recollect, on the subject of the refugees he was for permitting their return; on the subject of a general assessment, and the act of incorporating the Episcopal Church. I voted with him in general, because he was, as I thought, a more practical statesman than Madison (time has made Madison more practical), and a less selfish one than Lee.

As an orator, Mr. Henry demolished Madison with as much ease as Sampson did the cords that bound him before he was shorn; Mr. Lee held a greater competition. There were many other great men in the House, but as orators they cannot be named with Henry or Lee. Mr. Lee was a polished gentleman. His person was not very good, and he had lost the use of one of his hands, but his manner was perfectly graceful. His language was always chaste, and although somewhat too monotonous, his speeches were always pleasing; yet he did not ravish your senses nor carry away your judgment by storm. His was of the mediate class of eloquence described by Rollin in his " Belles Lettres." He was like a beautiful river meandering through a flowery mead, but which never overflowed its banks. It was Henry who was the mountain torrent that swept away everything before it. It was he alone who thundered and lightened. He alone attained that sublime species of eloquence also mentioned by Rollin.

It has been one of the greatest pleasures of my life to hear these two great masters, almost constantly opposed to each other, for several sessions. I had no relish for any other speaker. Henry was almost always victorious. He was as much superior to Lee in temper as in eloquence, for while the former would often apologize to the House for being so often obliged to differ from the latter, which he assured them was from no want of respect for him, I once heard Mr. Lee say in a pet, after sustaining a great defeat, that if the votes were weighed instead of being counted, he would not have lost it.

Mr. Henry was inferior to Mr. Lee in the gracefulness of his action, and perhaps also the chasteness of his language; yet his language was seldom incorrect, and his address always striking. He had a fine blue eye and an earnest manner which made it impossible not to attend to him. His speaking was unequal, and always rose with the subject and the exigency. In this respect he entirely differed from Mr. Lee, who was always equal. At some times Mr. Henry would seem to hobble (especially in the beginning of his speeches), and at others his tones would be almost disagreeable; yet it was by means of his tones and the happy modulation of his voice that his speaking had, perhaps, its greatest effect. He had, a happy articulation and a clear, distinct, strong voice, and every syllable was uttered. He was very unassuming as to himself, amounting almost to humility, and very respectful towards his competitor; the consequence was that no feeling of dis gust or animosity was arrayed against him. His exordiums in particular were often hobbling, and always unassuming. He knew mankind too well to promise much. They were of the " menin aeide " cast (of Homer) rather than of the " fortu- nam Priami " of some author whose name is forgotten.

He was great at a reply, and greater in proportion to the pressure which was bearing upon him. The resources of his mind and of his eloquence were equal to any drafts which could be made upon them. He took but short notes of what fell from his adversaries, and disliked the drudgery of com position, yet it is a mistake to say he could not write well. Many of his public letters prove the contrary. I do not know that he ever wrote anything for the press.

It has been urged against Mr. Henry by his enemies, and by the aristocrats whom he overthrew, that he always seized and advocated the popular side of the question. Nothing is less true. He opposed General Washington and an [illegible] world (as he said) on the subject of the Constitution. The man who would do this cannot be suspected of want of firm ness to pursue his own opinions. The man who moved the Stamp Act resolutions, and took up arms to recover the gunpowder, pursued his own course. He had no certain indication of the popular opinion in either case, and both measures were esteemed by ordinary men too rash and bold to be popular. Besides, why court the popular opinion when he wanted not popularity, for he had resisted (in the latter part of his life) every distinction which was offered him?

On this subject, I take the fact to be that he generally thought like the most of people, because he was a plain, practical man, because he was emphatically one of the people, and because he detested, as a statesman, the projects of theorists and bookworms. His prejudices against statesmen of this character were very strong. He emphatically led the people in promoting and effecting the Revolution.

At the bar Mr. Henry was equally successful. When I saw him there, he must necessarily have been very rusty, yet I considered him a good lawyer. He was acquainted with the rules and canons of property. He would not, indeed, undergo the drudgery necessary for complicated business, yet I am told that in the British Debt Case he astonished the public not less by the matter than manner of his speech. It was as a criminal lawyer that his eloquence had the fairest scope, and in that character I have seen him. He was perfect master of the passions of his auditory, whether in the tragic or the comic line. The tones of his voice, to say nothing of his matter and gestures, were insinuated into the feelings of his hearers in a manner that baffled all description. It seemed to operate by mere sympathy, and by his tones alone it seemed to me that he could make you cry or laugh at pleasure; yet his gesture came powerfully in aid, and if necessary would approach almost to the ridiculous. This was the case in the " roasting case " to be presently mentioned. So in Corbin s case. ... I will endeavor to give some account of his tragic and comic effect in two instances that came before me.

About the year 1792 one Holland killed a young man in Botetourt. The young man was popular, and lived, I think, with King, a merchant in Fincastle, who employed John Breckenridge to assist in the prosecution of Holland. Holland had gone up from Louisa as a schoolmaster, but had turned out badly, and was very unpopular. The killing was in the night, and was generally believed to be murder. He was the son of one Dr. Holland, who was yet living in Louisa, and had been one of Mr. Henry s juvenile friends and acquaintances. At the instance of the father, and for a reasonable fee, Mr. Henry undertook to go to Greenbrier Court to defend Holland. Mr. Winston and myself were the judges. Such were the prejudices there, as I was afterward informed by Thomas Madison, that the people declared that even Patrick Henry need not come to defend Holland unless he brought a jury with him.

The day of the trial the Court House was crowded, and I did not move from my seat for 14 hours, and had no wish to do so. The examination took up a great part of the time, and the lawyers were probably exhausted. Breckenridge was eloquent, but Henry left no dry eye in the Court House. The case, I believe, was murder, though possibly manslaughter only, and Henry laid hold of this possibility with such effect as to make all forget that Holland had killed the storekeeper, and

presented the deplorable case of the jury killing Holland, an innocent man. He also presented, as it were at the Clerk s table, old Holland and his wife, who were then in Louisa; asked what must be the feelings of this venerable pair at this awful moment, and what the consequences to them of a mistaken verdict affecting the life of their son. He caused the jury to lose sight of the murder they were trying, and weep with old Holland and his wife, whom he painted, and perhaps proved to be, very respectable. All this was done in a manner so solemn and touching, and a tone so irresistible, that it was impossible for the stoutest heart not to take sides with the criminal. During the examination the bloody clothes were brought in. Mr. Henry objected to their exhibition, and ap plied most forcibly and pathetically Antony s remarks on Caesar s wounds; on those dumb mouths which would raise the stones of Rome to mutiny. He urged that this sight would totally deprive the jury of their judgment, which would be merged in their feelings. The motion fell, Mr. Winston being of opinion to reject them; I was of opinion to receive them as explanatory of the nature of the crime, by showing in what direction the strokes were given.

The result of the trial was that, after a retirement of an half or a quarter of an hour, the jury brought in a verdict of not guilty! But on being reminded by the Court that they might find an inferior degree of homicide, they then brought in a verdict of manslaughter.

Mr. Henry was equally successful in the comic line. Mr. Wirt has heard, no doubt, how he choused John Hook out of his cause by raising the cry of " Beef " against him. I will give a similar instance. About the year 1792 there were many suits on the south of James river for inflicting Lynch law. A verdict of $500. had been given in Prince Edward district court in a case of this kind. This alarmed the defendant in the next case, who employed Mr. Henry to defend him. The case was that a waggoner and the plaintiff were travelling to Richmond, and the waggoner knocked down a turkey and put it into his waggon. Complaint was made to the defendant, a justice; both the parties were taken up, and the waggoner agreed to take a whipping rather than be sent to jail, but the plaintiff refused. The justice, however, gave him also a small whipping, and for this the suit was brought. The plaintiff s plea was that he was wholly innocent of the act committed. Mr. Henry, on the contrary, contended that he was a party aiding and assisting. In the course of his remarks he thus expressed himself: "But, gentlemen of the jury, this plaintiff tells you that he had nothing to do with the turkey I dare say, gentlemen, not until it was roasted, " etc. He pronounced the word roasted with such rotundity of voice, and comicalness of manner and gesture, that it threw every one into a fit of laughter at the plaintiff, who stood up in the place usually allotted to criminals, and the defendant was let off with little or no damage.

I have likened this faculty of Mr. Henry of operating upon the feelings, whether tragic or comic, by the mere tone of his voice, to the experiment of ringing a series of glasses by rubbing one of them with the finger. It operated by sympathy. Yet he ranted not, nor did he distress himself or his audience by an unnatural stretching of his throat. He had a perfect command of a strong and musical voice, which he raised or lowered at pleasure, and modulated so as to fall in with any given chord of the human heart.

It is to be also observed that although his language was plain, and free from unusual or high-flown words, his ideas were remarkably bold, strong, and striking. By the joint effect of these two faculties, I mean of the power of his tone or voice and the grandness of his conceptions, he had a wonderful effect upon the feelings of his audience. Both of these concurred in the famous speech

in the Convention which was interrupted by a storm, and of which I see Mr. Wirt has a note. The question of adoption was approaching, and from that cause everyone had an awful and anxious feeling. This was, as it were, the parting speech of Mr. Henry, and he was depicting the awful immensity of the question and its consequences as it respected the present and future generations. He stated that the ethereal beings were awaiting with anxiety the de cision of a question which involved the happiness or misery of more than half the human race. He had presented such an awful picture, and in such feeling colors, as to interest the feelings of the audience to the highest pitch when lo ! a storm at that moment arose, which shook the building in which the Convention were sitting, and broke it up in confusion. So remarkable a coincidence was never before witnessed, and it seemed as if he had indeed the faculty of calling up spirits from the vasty deep.

Mr. Henry was remarkably well acquainted with mankind. He knew well all the springs and motives of human action. This faculty arose from mingling freely with mankind and from a keen and constant observation. From this faculty, and his great command of temper, he would have made a great negoti ator. In fact, he was a great negotiator, for in managing a jury or a popular assembly he measured and gauged them by a discriminating judgment. He knew how much they would bear, and what was the proper string to touch them upon. The same faculty and discernment which enabled him to buy a tract of land, or a negro, on good terms, and to govern a jury or a popular assembly at pleasure, by measuring the depth of those with whom he was dealing, would have enabled him to fathom the views and feelings of Courts and Cabinets.

The advantage of Mr. Henry s education consisted in this, that it arose from some reading which he never forgot, and much observation and reflection. It was remarked of Montesquieu's " Spirit of Laws " that it was a good book for one travelling in a stage-coach, for that you might read as much of it in half an hour as would serve you to reflect upon a whole day. Such was somewhat the proportion between Mr. Henry s education as drawn from reading and from observation and re flection.

He read good books as it were for a text, and filled up the picture by an acute and penetrating observation and reflection and by mingling in the society of men. He had practised law in the County Courts: a school remarkably well adapted to acquaint a person with mankind in general.

Mr. Henry was very fond of men of genius, and on this ground he was much attached to Dr. McClurg, and had a great agency in getting him into the Council in May, 1784. Dr. McClurg, I believe, would not have been then elected but for a speech of his just before the ballot. As he spoke, many members were seen to tear up their ballots prepared for other candidates. Mr. Henry took the ground for Dr. McClurg that he was a man of great genius and eminence in his profession. At this time party had not thrown our citizens so far asunder.

Mr. Henry did not permit political prejudices to tear asunder his friendships. I have heard that he interfered with the Committee of Hanover in favor of Mr. Lyons, an old friend and fellow-practitioner at the bar, and got him excused when suspected of some disaffection. He acted a very friendly and liberal part towards Mr. Ambler when Treasurer, who by some means sustained a considerable loss of public money, and for which Ambler was grateful. Mr. Henry s talent for humor showed itself sometimes in a remarkable manner. About the year 1790, as I think I have heard him or some of the family say, General Lawson applied to. him for his friendly advice

touching the state of his affairs, which were deplorably bad. Lawson had been a Revolutionary patriot and soldier, and a colleague of Mr. Henry in the Assembly and Convention. Mr. Henry secured a full and frank disclosure. After he was done, H. paused, and Lawson requested his opinion; on which Henry, looking at him significantly, said, " Why, faith, General, you had better run away." This, which was perhaps a jest in Henry, was literally followed by Lawson, who ran to Kentucky, spent his estate, and came to a wretched end.

In estimating Mr. Henry s standing and endowments, the difficulties under which he labored ought to be taken into consideration. He was without a regular academical education. He was poor, married young, and had a numerous family. For a great part of his life (tho he died rich) he was struggling in debt and difficulties. Where were his means and leisure for improvement? Contrast him in these respects with Madison, for example. Madison was born to affluence. His father early gave him a competent fortune, which also, I believe, he managed for him; and Madison lived with his father, I believe, till past the age of forty, unincumbered with the cares of a family or with keeping house. He had, besides, received a finished education at Princeton. He had every opportunity for improvement, and his life was that of a recluse and student. Had Mr. Henry had these advantages and been as studious as Madison, he would have excelled him, if possible, as much in the knowledge of books as he actually did in that of men: the great source of his superiority over Madison in public assemblies.

It has been said of Patrick Henry that he was not a military man, and surmised that he was deficient in personal courage. As to the last, he was so good-tempered a man that I never heard of his having a quarrel. He did indeed call on Edm. Randolph in 88. . . . He had, however, what suited us much better: an astonishing portion of political courage. Per haps it is not too much to affirm that it is owing to this one quality of this single man that our revolution took place at the time it did. As to his being a military man, he was certainly not a man of system and regularity, nor do I believe that he was a good tactician. He may nevertheless have had a genius which would have made him adequate (with the aid of subalterns) to great military operations. As to his resigning the command of the first regiment, it is probable that he may have thought himself slighted by the Committee of Safety, tho I never heard him complain of it. Indeed, he seldom complained (as to himself) of anybody. That committee, however, had a spice of the old aristocracy in it, by whom Henry was much hated, and it might have been agreeable to some of them to mortify him. Pendleton, the eclipsed rival of Henry, pre sided in the committee and had his party with him.

The principal reason, I believe, why he resigned was that he was called for by the public voice as Governor, and was perhaps indispensably necessary in that station. His competitor for that office was Secretary Nelson, who was beaten easily by Patrick Henry, although supported by all the aristocracy, and by Pendleton and perhaps a few others of plebeian standing.

Henry had strong prejudices for and against many of his political associates, though he only expressed them to his particular friends. He had the highest opinion of George Mason s talents, patriotism, and republican principles. He considered him as a man well acquainted with the interests of the people and warmly attached to the liberty of his country. A cordial friendship existed between them. Of R. H. Lee he did not think quite so well, and they were very often opposed to each other; yet they coalesced on great questions, as that of independence, and

opposition to the federal constitution. In 88 Mr. Henry nominated Lee and Gray son as Senators (taking the unusual liberty of nominating two) against Madison, and they were elected. He was very fond of John Tyler, as a warm hearted patriot and an honest, sensible man, and many others not necessary to be now mentioned. As to Mr. Madison, he considered him in 83 and 4 as a man of great acquirements, but too theoretical as a politician, and that he was not well versed in the affairs of men. This opinion increased in the Convention of 88; he was astonished that Madison would take the Constitution, admitting its defects, and in a season of perfect peace, and believed him too friendly to a strong government and too hostile to the Governments of the States. On these grounds he was rejected as a Senator in 88; and probably this rejection was useful to Madison, for, to regain the confidence of his native State, he brought forward the amendments introduced in 89 into the Constitution.

Henry s prejudice against Madison always remained in some degree, and to this cause may in some measure be ascribed his alleged secession from the Republican party, now headed by Madison, toward the close of his life. With respect to this alleged change of his political principles, I shall say what I know about it. When I was last with him, in October, 94, there was no difference between his opinions and mine that I could discover. I was extremely well pleased with all his opinions, which he communicated freely. He had, after the adoption of the Constitution, taken the anti-federal side in the Assembly on all occasions. After this, matters seeming to come to extremities in relation to our foreign affairs, I under stood, for I never again saw him, that he disapproved the policy of embarking in the cause of France and running the risk of a war with Britain. Possibly his sagacious mind foresaw the issue of the French Revolution, and dreaded the effect of a war with England upon our free government, and upon the finances of the United States.

After it began to be rumored that he had changed his opinions, he wrote me several letters alluding to the report, and averring that his opinions were not changed, and that he was too old to change them, but admitting that he differed from the Republican leaders as to some of their measures, which he considered unwise and impolitic. I saw another long letter to one of his daughters, who had apprised him that he was charged with a change of his opinions, entirely to the same effect. According to the best of my recollection, this letter had some cant of religious professions, and complaint of the decay of virtue, &c., which I rather think indicated a change in him, and some debility or gloom in his understanding. The particular date of it is not recollected, but I rather think it was within the two years in which Judge Winston says he gradually declined before his death. The alleged change must, I presume, have been subsequent to the fall of 96, for in that session he was elected Governor for the third time, with a view to keep out General Wood, who was deemed a Federalist. Mr. Henry was voted for zealously by all the Republicans; he declined, however, and Wood was then elected.

It must have been about the same time that he was chosen a Senator of the United States, which I see is asserted in one of the statements furnished, tho I have at present no dis tinct recollection of that fact (quere de hoc). I have under stood that for two or three years before he died he became much debilitated. ... He was very retired, and much out of the way of correct information. I have also understood that he became then more religious, and that it became a frequent topic of his conversation. This I must ascribe to the debility just mentioned; for tho I believe him to have been always a Christian, he was remarkably tolerant to others, and never obtruded that as the

subject of conversation. In this state of seclusion and debility, he was a fit subject to be worked upon by artful politicians, to widen a breach which would not other wise have been so great. That debility which, in the instance of the Will before mentioned, made him an easy prey to intrigues of a domestic character, laid him equally open to the arts of crafty politicians.

Before this time General Washington, no doubt informed of some difference in opinion between him and the Republi can leaders, wrote him flattering letters. He had appointed him Secretary of State, and he and Mr. Adams appointed him one of a trio of ambassadors to go to France, or England, and also a Minister to the Court of Spain; all of which appointments Mr. Henry declined. I do not think that at the time these appointments were offered Mr. Henry was in this state of debility; nor do I assert anything about this debility but from information and belief. I have no personal knowledge of it* They were, however, offered after Patrick- Henry began to diverge from the Republican party, and meas ures were afterward taken to widen the breach and to inflame him against the Republican leaders.

As to these measures, Henry Lee was the principal agent. He misrepresented the views and conduct of the Republicans, and flattered Mr. Henry, and assailed him on his weak side, in the trading for valuable lands which Mr. H. wished to acquire for the sons of his second marriage. By means like this I believe it was that Lee got from him a political letter, which he used to the injury of the Republican cause in a contested election in the Northern Neck.

I well remember that when I visited Mrs. Henry, on her invitation, after Mr. Henry s death, I mentioned this fact to her, and stated the injury it had done to Mr. Henry with the Republicans. She seemed to agree with me on the subject, but concluded, with a laugh, that Henry Lee had been a great friend to their family, for that Mr. Henry had got two

* Roane s ardent Republicanism should be kept in mind while one is reading his passages on Henry s political course during this period. Jefferson planned to put Roane in line for the Presidency. The idea was to run Crawford for President and Roane for Vice- President, and then to advance Roane. fine tracts of land from him! This was the instrument by which the influence of this infirm and declining old man was to be drawn from the Republican cause; this was the panacea for every injury. It must have been by similar means that a letter was got from Mr. Henry favoring Marshall in his election contest with Clopton. It was written to a man (Arch d Blair) who, I well know, was hardly in the habit of conversing with Mr. Henry in his more prosperous days. On the whole, it is my decided opinion and belief (but I only give it as my opinion and belief) that Mr. Henry was operated upon by the artfulness and misrepresentation of artful and designing men, under circumstances of seclusion and debility arising from the infirmity of age and disease peculiarly fitting him for the operation; and that by this means he was carried to greater lengths against the measures of the Republicans than he would otherwise have gone.

The effect now supposed can only be ascribed to debility. Formerly no man was more armed against seductions of every kind than Patrick Henry. Offices had now no charm for him, for he declined them all before the time in question, and he was hackneyed through life to flattery and compliments. As a proof how impenetrable he had been to attempts of this kind, when Leven Rowell and Chas. Simons and others professed a willingness to vote for him as President, but not for Jefferson, he declined the thing by a short notification in the Gazette. If, therefore, he was operated upon, as I have supposed, it must be ascribed to debility, and to it only. Under other

circumstances he could have got Lee s land without any sacrifice of opinion, for he was a match for Lee in bargaining.

Mr. Winston says Mr. Henry died in June, 1799, after " a gradual decline of about two years." I suspect it will be found that his most violent complaints against the Republicans took place within those two years. This decline was not, perhaps, attended with effects palpably visible, for he was elected for Charlotte in April, 99; but it made him gloomy on the subject of religion, and querulous on that of politics. In short, I believe it made him a different man from what he had before been. At the same time, I readily admit that he had before differed from the Republicans in some degree as to measures of policy, in some instances; in some of which, perhaps, time has shown that he was not mistaken. As to fundamentals, however, I must always believe he remained a true and genuine Republican. In giving this sketch of what I knew of Mr. Henry, I have endeavored to be faithful. It will be seen whether a spirit of candor does not run through the relation, and how far it is corroborated by other accounts. It was my intention "nothing to extenuate, nor set down aught in malice." If my descriptions seem extravagant, let it be remembered that he was a most remarkable man. As for his public conduct and opinions, they are already before the world, who will judge of them. It is only his eloquence, character, and virtue to which my details have related. In forming an estimate of his eloquence, no reliance can be placed on the printed speeches. No reporter whatever could take down what he actually said; and, if he could, it would fall far short of the original. Much of the effect of his eloquence arose from his voice, gesture, etc., which in print is entirely lost.

As to the character of Mr. Henry: with many sublime virtues, he had no vice that I knew or ever heard of, and scarcely a foible. I have thought, indeed, that he was too much attached to property: a defect, however, which might be excused on the largeness of a beloved family, and the straitened circumstances in which he had been confined during a great part of his life.

Mr. Henry was a man of middling stature. He was rather stoop-shouldered (after I knew him), probably the effect of age. He had no superfluous flesh; his features were distinctly marked, and his complexion rather dark. He was somewhat bald, and always wore a wig in public. He was, according to my recollection, very attentive to his teeth, his beard, and his linen. He was not a handsome man, but his countenance was agreeable, and full of intelligence and interest. He had a fine blue eye, and an excellent set of teeth, which, with the aid of a mouth sufficiently wide, enabled him to articulate very distinctly. His voice was strong, harmonious, and clear, and he could modulate it at pleasure.

The miniature shown by Mr. Wirt has some resemblance of Mr. Henry, but is not a good likeness. It makes him too thin and wrinkled, and to appear older than he appeared when I last saw him. I saw that miniature about the time it was taken, and gave this opinion then. The portrait I mentioned to Mr. Wirt, if in existence, affords a better likeness.

###