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# American Statesmen

EDITED BY

JOHN T. MORSE, JR.

American Statesmen

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PATRICK HENRY

BY

MOSES COIT TYLER



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## PREFACE

IN this book I have tried to embody the chief results derived from a study of all the materials known to me, in print and in manuscript, relating to Patrick Henry, — many of these materials being now used for the first time in any formal presentation of his life.

Notwithstanding the great popular interest attaching to the name of Patrick Henry, he has hitherto been the subject of but one memoir founded on original investigation, and that, of course, is the *Life* by William Wirt. When it is considered, however, that Wirt's book was finished as long ago as the year 1817, — before the time had fairly come for the publication of the correspondence, diaries, personal memoranda, and official records of every sort, illustrating the great period covered by Patrick Henry's career, — it will be easy to infer something as to the quantity and the value of those printed materials bearing upon the subject, which are now to be had by us, but which were not within the reach of Wirt. Accordingly, in his lack of much of the detailed

testimony that then lay buried in inaccessible documents, Wirt had to trust largely to the somewhat imaginative traditions concerning Patrick Henry which he found floating in the air of Virginia; and especially to the supposed recollections of old people, — recollections which, in this case, were nearly always vague, not always disinterested, often inaccurate, and generally made up of emotional impressions rather than of facts. Any one who will take the trouble to ascertain the enormous disadvantages under which Wirt wrote, and which, as we now know, gave him great discouragement, will be inclined to applaud him for making so good a book, rather than to blame him for not making a better one.

It is proper for me to state that, besides the copious printed materials now within reach, I have been able to make use of a large number of manuscripts relating to my subject. Of these may be specified a document, belonging to Cornell University, written by a great-grandson of Patrick Henry, the late Rev. Edward Fontaine, and giving, among other things, several new anecdotes of the great orator, as told to the writer by his own father, Colonel Patrick Henry Fontaine, who was much with Patrick Henry during the later years of his life. I may add that, through the kindness of the Hon. William Wirt Henry of

Richmond, I have had access to the manuscripts which were collected by Wirt for the purposes of his book, but were only in part used by him. With unstinted generosity, Mr. Henry likewise placed in my hands all the papers relating to his illustrious grandfather, which, during the past thirty years or more, he has succeeded in bringing together, either from different branches of the family, or from other sources. A portion of the manuscripts thus accumulated by him consists of copies of the letters, now preserved in the Department of State, written by Patrick Henry, chiefly while governor of Virginia, to General Washington, to the president of Congress, to Virginia's delegation in Congress, and to the Board of War.

In the very front of this book, therefore, I record my grateful acknowledgments to Mr. William Wirt Henry; acknowledgments not alone for the sort of generosity of which I have just spoken, but for another sort, also, which is still more rare, and which I cannot so easily describe, — his perfect delicacy, while promoting my more difficult researches by his invaluable help, in never once encumbering that help with the least effort to hamper my judgment, or to sway it from the natural conclusions to which my studies might lead.

Finally, it gives me pleasure to mention that, in the preparation of this book, I have received

courteous assistance from Mr. Theodore F. Dwight and Mr. S. M. Hamilton of the library of the Department of State; from the Rev. Professor W. M. Hughes, of Hobart College; and from the Rev. Stephen H. Synnott, rector of 'St. John's, Ithaca.

M. C. T.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY, 3 June, 1887.



## PREFACE

### TO REVISED EDITION

I HAVE gladly used the opportunity afforded by a new edition of this book to give the text a minute revision from beginning to end, and to make numerous changes both in its substance and in its form.

During the eleven years that have passed since it first came from the press, considerable additions have been made to our documentary materials for the period covered by it, the most important for our purpose being the publication, for the first time, of the correspondence and the speeches of Patrick Henry and of George Mason, the former with a life, in three volumes, by William Wirt Henry, the latter also with a life, in two volumes, by Kate Mason Rowland. Besides procuring for my own pages whatever benefit I could draw from these texts, I have tried, while turning over very frequently the writings of Patrick Henry's contemporaries, to be always on the watch for the means of correcting any mistakes I may have made concerning him, whether as to fact or as to opinion.

x    PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

In this work of rectification I have likewise been aided by suggestions from many persons, of whom I would particularly mention the Right Rev. Joseph Blount Cheshire, Jr., D. D., Bishop of North Carolina, and Mr. William Wirt Henry.

M. C. T.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY, 31 March, 1898.

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