

their public dues (including the dues to the established clergy) in money, at the fixed rate of twopence for the pound of tobacco. All but the parsons assented to the law. The Bishop of London, under whose jurisdiction these clergy were, opposed the ratification of the act, and so it was vetoed by the King in council. The courts of law in Virginia had now to say what damages the clergy had sustained, the "Twopenny Act" being void *ab initio*. The colonists looked upon the contest as one between the prerogative and the people. The first action tried was that of Rev. Mr. Maury, which came on in December, 1763. The contract with him was that he should be paid, as his salary, 16,000 pounds of tobacco: the act of 1758 had fixed the value at twopence per pound. As a matter of fact, in 1759 it was worth thrice that sum: the King had vetoed the act of 1758. Counsel for Maury thought he made a clear case, and that his client should recover the real value. Patrick Henry was of counsel for the defence. He was one of those heaven-born men who make for themselves a royal road to learning: after six weeks of cramming Coke upon Littleton, and the statutes of Virginia upon that, he gained his license to practise at the bar. This forest-born orator was a little awkward when he first rose to address the special jury—to some of whom Maury had objected as a "vulgar herd," and "New Light Dissenters"—but he quickly carried the war into Africa. As Bancroft tells us, he built his argument on the natural right of Virginia to self-direction in her affairs, against the prerogative of the Crown, and the civil establishment of the church, against monarchy and priestcraft. The act of 1758, having every characteristic of a good law, and being of general utility, could not, consistently with the original compact between King and people, be annulled. "A King," he cried, "who annuls or disallows laws of so salutary a nature, from being the father of his people degenerates into a tyrant, and forfeits all right to obedience." Cries of "Treason! treason! treason!" from the ultra-royalists did not stop him, as the crowd was with the patriot. He then defined the use of an established church, and of the clergy, adding, "When they fail to answer those ends, the community have no further need of their ministry, and may justly strip them of their appointments. In this particular instance, by obtaining the negative of the law in question, instead of acquiescing in it, they ceased to be useful members of the state,