

communings in the tavern porch or on the shady side of the country store, [with] an occasional clergyman, pedagogue, or legislator, small planters and small traders, sportsmen, loafers, slaves and the drivers of slaves, and, more than all, those bucolic Solons of Old Virginia, the good-humoured, illiterate, thriftless Caucasian consumers of tobacco and whisky, who cordially consented that all the hard work of the world should be done by the children of Ham. During all that time in his life, as we now look back upon it (says his biographer), he has for us the aspect of some lawless, unkempt genius, in untoward circumstances, groping in the dark, not without wild joy, towards his unconceivable true vocation; . . . withal borne along, for many days together, by the mysterious undercurrents of his nature into that realm of reverie where the soul feeds on immortal fruit and communes with unseen associates, the body meanwhile being left to the semblance of idleness.

Is not this something like a philosophical description, tintured with poetry, of the loafer? Henry made his first notable appearance in the Virginia Clergy case, as the defender of what his biographer is constrained to brand as barefaced iniquity—iniquity upon which George the Third had put a tyrannical veto. Nor were the appeals to malignant and dishonest passion by which he gained his cause required or justified by professional duty. In the dispute with the British Government, Henry, like Samuel Adams, meant mischief from the beginning; he may even claim to be the first who gave his voice openly for civil war; and in his case, as in that of Samuel Adams, the government stands acquitted by the impossibility of satisfying the Implacable. He showed his implacability in a notable way by fiercely rejecting the conciliatory scheme of John Galloway, who proposed in Congress that the American colonies should be confederated and have a federal parliament of their own, with a governor-general appointed by the Crown; a plan which would have given them all that the most advanced of constitutional patriots pretended to desire. John Galloway was a man of mark. John Adams mentions him among the ‘sensible and learned but cold’ speakers in Congress, while he numbers Henry among the ‘orators;’ and the rejection of Galloway’s scheme² by the vote of a single state was a signal triumph of oratory over cold ‘sense.’ As to Henry’s power as an orator of

² ‘Could the plan have been adopted,’ says Professor Tyler, ‘the disruption of the British Empire would certainly have been averted for that epoch, and, as an act of violence and unkindness, would perhaps have been averted for ever; while the thirteen English colonies would have remained English colonies without ceasing to be free.’ To bar false inferences, it may be as well to remark that between this scheme of Home Rule and the proposal of a statutory parliament for Ireland there are vital points of difference. In the first place, Galloway’s plan would have involved no reconstruction of the polity of Great Britain; in the second place, the Crown in those days would have been a real, not merely a nominal, link; in the third place, the American colonies were three thousand miles off; and in the fourth place, their inhabitants were for the most part attached to the mother-country, and, instead of wishing to ‘break the last link,’ were very anxious to retain the connection. After all, no one can tell how the two Parliaments would have acted together. A call from Great Britain for supplies for a European war would have put a severe strain on their harmony.