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HISTORY
OF THE
LIFE AND TIMES
OF
JAMES MADISON.

By WILLIAM C. RIVES.

VOLUME II.

BOSTON:
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.
M DCCC LXVI.

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Mr. Henry was in himself a host on the side of the opponents of the Constitution. His consummate tact, his profound knowledge of human nature, and especially of the characters of his countrymen, the boundless resources of his ingenuity and eloquence, the dramatic charm of his conversation and manners, gave him an almost irresistible power over the opinions and conduct of men acting in masses. In the earnestness with which he pursued his object, it was not his wont to stop and hesitate about the arguments he used, provided he found them effectual for his purpose.¹ He knew how to enlist local and personal prejudices — every interest, every passion — in the service of his cause; and this power he used to the utmost in the great struggle in which his pride of victory and his public convictions were now alike engaged.²

of the Constitution [in the legislature] leave no stone unturned to increase the opposition to it."

¹ See Wirt's *Life of Henry* (Philadelphia edition of 1817), p. 252.

² Among the papers of Mr. Madison is a letter addressed to him by an eminent and well-known clergyman, an early college friend of his, and a resident of the same county with Mr. Henry, giving an account of the kind of topics and arguments by which the great tribune of the people was accustomed to arouse their fears and jealousies with regard to the Constitution.

"Before the Constitution appeared," he says, "the minds of

the people were artfully prepared against it; so that all opposition [to Mr. Henry], at the election of delegates to consider it, was in vain. That gentleman has descended to lower artifices and management on the occasion than I thought him capable of. . . . If Mr. Innes has shown you a speech of Mr. Henry to his constituents, which I sent him, you will see something of the method he has taken to diffuse his poison. . . . It grieves me to see such great natural talents abused to such purposes. He has written letters repeatedly to Kentucky; and, as the people there are alarmed with an apprehension of their interests being about to be

Governor Randolph was not to be classed, like the three gentlemen just named, with the thorough and uncompromising opponents of the Constitution. He had recently found occasion to define to the public, with more clearness and precision than he had hitherto done, the position he held on the subject. Before the meeting of the legislature, he had prepared an elaborate communication to that body, presenting in detail the reasons of his course

sacrificed by the Northern States, I am convinced that it has been owing to a story, which I have heard Mr. Henry tell, respecting the measure proposed in Congress for a perpetual relinquishment of the navigation of the Mississippi to the Spaniards. He has found means to make some of the best people here believe that a religious establishment was in contemplation under the new government. He forgets that the Northern States are more decided friends to the voluntary support of Christian ministers than the author, or at least warm abetter, of the assessment bill in this State." — Manuscript letter of Rev. John Blair Smith, President of Hampden Sidney College, to Mr. Madison, dated 12th of June, 1788.

A recent writer, whose book has met with no small degree of political favor, and the vigor and elegance of whose style naturally challenge attention, pronounces the adoption of the Constitution by Virginia "the most stupendous fraud, involving the greatest political turpitude, ever practised on a free people;" and scatters, broad-cast, charges and

insinuations of unworthy means employed by its friends, in that proud and ancient commonwealth, to achieve success. (See "Lost Principle, &c.," pp. 55, 78, 108, 107, 116, 119, 138, 164, 165, 169, 170, 172.) In these accusations, Mr. Madison is a principal mark, and the Father of his country, Washington, does not escape; while the opponents of the Constitution are held up as paragons of purity, virtue, and wisdom. We would fain believe, that, in this great public contest, neither party was actuated by any other principle than a lofty spirit of patriotism, and a sense of public duty. But as the conduct of the friends of the Constitution has been so gravely impeached, and, so far as we have seen, without the slightest proof to sustain the impeachment, we have felt it to be due to the truth of history to present to the notice of the reader, from the papers before us, as we have done in the text and in this note, a few samples of the electioneering industry, and zeal of proselytism, displayed by the opposite party.