

—William's great-grandson **John**, "of Roanoke," statesman, b. at Cawsons, Va., 2 June, 1773; d. in Philadelphia, Pa., 24 June, 1833, was seventh in descent from Pocahontas by her marriage with John Rolfe. Richard Randolph of Curles, father of John Randolph of Roanoke, died in 1775. In



*John Randolph*

1788 his mother married St. George Tucker, who was a father to her four children, among whom were divided the large possessions of their father, including more than 40,000 acres. According to an unpublished manuscript of his nephew, by marriage, John Randolph Bryan, "his advantages of education were necessarily limited by the [Revolutionary] exigencies of the times. Such as he had were furnished by his step-father. His mother was a lady of rare intelligence, and 'little Jack,' as he was always called, found in her a parent and guide such as few children have. For her his love and admiration were unbounded. She was a beautiful woman, with a charm of manner and grace of person most captivating. In addition, she possessed a voice which had rare power. Jack was a beautiful boy, and the picture of the child and his mother was greatly admired. Randolph never spoke of her in after-life but with peculiar tenderness. From his mother he learned the power of tone in reciting, of which he made use in manhood." In his great speech in congress (1811) Randolph said: "Bred up in the principles of the Revolution, I can never palliate, much less defend [the outrages and injuries of England]. I well remember flying with my mother and her new-born child from Arnold and Phillips; and they had been driven by Tarleton and other British pandours from pillar to post while her husband was fighting the battles of his country." Although Randolph was argumentatively pugnacious, he would appear to have imbibed a hatred of war, which animated his diatribes against Napoleon and his resolute opposition

to the war policy of Madison. The Randolph-Tucker library was well supplied with history and romance, of which the child made good use. After attending Walker Maury's school in Orange county for a time he was sent, in his twelfth year, to the grammar-school connected with William and Mary college. He did not mingle easily with other boys, but attached himself vehemently to one or two. In 1784 he went with his parents to the island of Bermuda, remaining eighteen months. In the autumn of 1787 he was sent to Princeton, but in 1788 his mother died, and in June of that year he went to Columbia college, New York, where he studied for a short time. On 30 April, 1789, he witnessed the first president's inauguration. "I saw Washington, but could not hear him take the oath to support the Federal constitution. I saw what Washington did not see; but two other men in Virginia saw it—George Mason and Patrick Henry—the poison under its wings." When Edmund Randolph, a year later, entered on his duties as attorney-general, John, his second cousin, was sent to Philadelphia and studied law with him. Among his unpublished letters are several that indicate a temporary lapse into gambling and other dissipation about this time, and suggest an entanglement, if not indeed a marriage, in Philadelphia, as the explanation of the rupture of his engagement with the famous beauty, Maria Ward, whose marriage (to Peyton, only son of Edmund Randolph) completed the tragedy of his private life. While in Philadelphia he does not appear to have studied law exclusively, but availed himself of opportunities for hearing political debates, and attended lectures in anatomy and physiology. He had been a precocious skeptic, but passed into a state of emotional religion, under the influence of which he writes to a friend (24 Feb., 1791): "I prefer a private to a public life, and domestic pleasure to the dazzling (the delusive) honors of popular esteem." At the beginning of the French revolution he was filled with enthusiasm, and at the same time his idols were Jefferson and Burke. A strange combination of opposite natures was always visible in him. As his father before him had sold slaves to supply the cause of freedom with powder, so the son was at once aristocrat and democrat—offending President Adams by addressing him without adding any title, and signing "Your Fellow-citizen." He built up a distinctively pro-slavery party, and wrote a will liberating his slaves on the ground that they were equally entitled to freedom with himself. In 1795 Randolph returned to Virginia and lived in the family of his brother Richard, to whom he was devoted. The death of this brother (1796), under the shadow of a painful scandal, was a heavy blow. At "Bizarre," the family mansion, Randolph now dwelt as head of a large household. In 1797 he writes to his friend, Henry Rutledge, of another calamity: "I have been deprived by the Federal court of more than half my fortune. 'Tis an iniquitous affair, and too lengthy to be related here. The loss affects me very little, since I have as yet a competence, but I am highly chagrined at being robbed in so villainous a manner. I have but little thought of practising law." Randolph's first speech was made in 1799, in answer to Patrick Henry. The power of expelling foreigners from the country without trial, conferred on the president by the alien and sedition acts, had been answered in Virginia by legislative denunciation of the acts as infractions of the constitution. The issue had arisen in Virginia as to the reversal of those resolutions. When Randolph stepped forth

to defend the resolutions, he encountered Patrick Henry. There is little doubt that the powerful speech ascribed to Randolph in Hugh Garland's "Life" was based on reports from hearers, and the language is characteristic. Randolph was now elected to congress. His first speech in that body (10 Jan., 1800) had ominous results. Advocating a resolution to diminish the army, he used the phrase "standing or mercenary armies," contending that all who made war a profession or trade were literally "mercenary." The etymology was insufficient for certain officers, who took occasion to insult him in the theatre. Randolph wrote to President Adams, improving the occasion to let him and the Federalist party know his opinion of the executive office. He addressed Mr. Adams with no other title than "President of the United States," and signed himself, "With Respect, Your Fellow-citizen, John Randolph." Mr. Adams sent the complaint to the house, where the question of dealing with the affair as a breach of representative "privilege" ended in a deadlock. Quickly becoming Republican leader of the house, chairman of the ways and means committee, Randolph became the pride of Virginia. He commanded the heart of the nation by his poetic eloquence, his absolute honesty, and the scathing wit with which he exposed every corrupt scheme. In his slight boyish form was sheathed a courage that often fought single-handed, and generally won a moral if not a technical victory, as in the great Yazoo fraud which, after repeated defeats, could only be passed in his absence; also in the impeachment of Judge Chase, who was saved only because the constitutional apparatus was inadequate to carry out the verdict of a large majority. President Jefferson admired his young relative, and gained much by his support; but it speedily became evident that their connection was unreal. Jefferson idealized Napoleon, Randolph abhorred him. John had learned from Edmund Randolph a knowledge of the English constitution rare at that time, and some of the most impressive passages of his speeches were those in which he pointed out the reactionary character of certain events and tendencies of the time. The appearance of a postmaster-general as agent of two land companies to urge the Yazoo claims on congress in 1805 pointed one of Randolph's finest speeches. At this time he was so national in his political ideas that in defending the purchase of Louisiana he maintained the constitutionality of the transaction. It was of importance to the president that his act should be regarded as extra-constitutional. Owing to Randolph's course, the constitutional amendment that the president asked was never gained, and any further development of executive authority continued extra-constitutional. It was inevitable that there should be a steady alienation between the administration and Randolph. In the heat of a moment, as when the outrage on the ship "Chesapeake" occurred, the revolutionary element in him might appear; in the case alluded to he advocated an embargo; but when the embargo came from the senate, and he saw his momentary wrath systematized into a permanent war-measure, under which England and New England would suffer to the advantage of "that coward Napoleon" (his favorite phrase), he voted against it. It seems impossible to ascribe this apparent inconsistency to anything except Randolph's moral courage. This is not the only instance in which he confronted the taunt of admitting himself to have been in the wrong. He never desired office; his ambition was to be a representative of Virginia and to fight

down every public wrong. This involved quarrels, alienations, and a gradual lapse into a pessimistic state of mind, fostered, unfortunately, by domestic distresses and physical ailments. After his great struggle to prevent the war of 1812, and his conflict with Madison, he was left out of congress for two years, and during that time lived at Roanoke. When he returned to congress in 1815 the aspect of affairs filled him with horror, and he devoted himself to the formation of a "State-Rights" party. He vaguely dreamed of the restoration of the "Old Dominion." His ideal country was now England. Although in his state-rights agitation he appealed to the fears of southerners for their property, that reactionary attitude passed away. Hatred of slavery was part both of his Virginian and his English inheritance; only the legal restrictions on emancipation, and the injustice to his creditors that would be involved, prevented manumission of his slaves before his death. At the same time he voted against the Missouri compromise, and originated the term "dough-faces" which he applied to its northern supporters. He had no dream of a southern confederacy; none would have more abhorred a nationality based on slavery. He had no respect for Calhoun, or for Clay, who challenged Randolph for using insulting language in a speech, and shot at him, but was spared by the Virginian. He had been elected to the U. S. senate in December, 1824, to fill a vacancy, and served in 1825-'7, being defeated at the next election. Though he accepted the Russian mission in 1830 from Jackson, whom he had supported in 1828, he soon returned and joined issue with the president on the nullification question. In 1829 he was a member of the Constitutional convention of Virginia, and, though he was very infirm, his eloquence enchained the assembly. He died of consumption in a hotel in Philadelphia as he was preparing for another trip abroad. His last will was set aside on the ground that it was written with unsound mind. By the earlier will, which was sustained, his numerous slaves were liberated and they were colonized by Judge William Leigh in the west. Although eccentric and sometimes morose, Randolph was warm-hearted. He was fond of children. "His fondness for young people," says the Bryan MS., "was particularly shown in a correspondence with his niece, during which he wrote her more than 200 letters." Randolph's personal appearance was striking. He was six feet in height and very slender, with long, skinny fingers, which he pointed and shook at those against whom he spoke. His "Letters to a Young Relative" appeared in 1834. See "Life of John Randolph," by Hugh A. Garland (2 vols., New York, 1850); also "John Randolph," by Henry Adams (Boston, 1882).