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JOHN RANDOLPH, OF ROANOKE.

From a volume of Sketches now preparing for the press, by the author of Clinton Bradshaw, &c.

Great wit to madness are nearly allied.

I remember some years since to have seen John Randolph in Baltimore. I had frequently read and heard descriptions of him, and one day, as I was standing in Market, now Baltimore street, I remarked a tall, thin, unique looking being hurrying towards me with a quick impatient step, evidently much annoyed by a crowd of boys who were flowing close at his heels, not in the obstreperous mirth with which they would have followed a crazy or a drunken man, or an organ grinder and his monkey, but in the silent curious wonder with which they would have hunted a Chinese bedecked in full costume. I instantly knew the individual to be Randolph, from the descriptions. I therefore advanced towards him, that I might make a full observation of his person without violating the rules of courtesy in stopping to gaze at him. As he approached, he occasionally turned towards the boys with an angry glance, but without saying anything, and then hurried on as if to outstrip them, but it would not do. They followed close behind the orator, each one observing him so intently that he said nothing to his companions. Just before I met him he stopped a Mr. C., a cashier of one of the banks, said to be as old a fish as John himself. I hovered in a store close by, and, unnoticed, remarked the Roanoke orator for a considerable time, and really he was the strangest looking being I ever beheld.

His long thin legs, about as thick as a strong walking cane, and of such a shape, were encased in a pair of tight small clothes, so tight that they seemed part and parcel of the limbs of the wearer. Handsome white stockings were fastened with great tidiness at the knees by a small gold buckle, and over them, coming about half way up the calf, were a pair of what I believe, are called hose, coarse and country knit. He wore shoes. They were old-fashioned, and fastened also with buckles—huge ones. He trod like an Indian, without turning his toes out, but plunking them down straight ahead. It was the fashion in those days to wear a fan-tailed coat, with a small collar, and buttons far apart behind, and few on the breast. Mr. Randolph's were the reverse of all this, and instead of his coat being fan-tailed, it was what, we believe, the knights of the needle call swallow-tailed; the collar was immensely large, the buttons were in kissing proximity, and they sat together as close on the breast of the garment as the feathers at a crowded public festival. His waist was remarkably slender; so slender that, as he stood his arms akimbo, he could easily, as I thought, with his long bony fingers have spanned it. Around him his coat, which was very tight, was held together by one button, and, in consequence, an inch or more of tape, to which it was attached, was perceptible where it was pulled through the cloth. About his neck he wore a large white cravat, in which his chin was occasionally buried as he moved his head in conversation; no shirt collar was perceptible; every other person seemed to pride himself upon the size of his, as they were then worn large. Mr. Randolph's complexion was precisely that of a mummy, withered, sallow, dry and bloodless; you could not have placed a pin's point on his face where you would not have touched a wrinkle. His lips were thin, compressed, and colorless; the chin, beardless as a boy's, was broad for the size of his face, which was small, his nose was straight, with nothing remarkable in it, except perhaps it was too short. He wore a fur cap, which he took off, standing a few moments uncorrected. I observed that his head was quite small, a characteristic which is said to have marked many men of talent, Byron and Chief Justice Marshall, for instance. Judge Burnett, of Cincinnati, who has been lately distinguished at the bar, on the bench, and in the United States Senate, and whom I have heard no less a judge and possessor of talent than Mr. Hammond, of the Gazette, said he was the clearest and most impressive speaker he ever heard, had also a very small head. Mr. Randolph's hair was remarkably fine—fine as an infant's, and thin. It was very long, and was parted with great care on the top of his head, and was tied behind with a bit of black ribbon about three inches from his neck; the whole of it formed a queue not thicker than the little finger of a delicate girl. His forehead was low, with no bump of high forehead; but his eye, though sunken, was most brilliant and startling in its glance. It was not an eye of profound, but of impulsive and passionate thought, with an expression at times such as physicians describe to be that of insanity, but an insanity which seemed to quicken, not destroy, intellectual acuteness. I never beheld an eye that struck me more. It possessed a species of fascination, such as would make you wonder over the character of its possessor, without finding any clue in your wonderment to discover it, except that he was passionate, way

ward, and fearless. He lifted his long bony finger impressively as he contended, and gesticulated with it in a peculiar manner. His whole appearance struck me, and I could easily imagine how, with his great command of language, so appropriate and full, so brilliant and classical, joined to the vast information that his discursive oratory enabled him to exhibit in its fullest extent, from the storehouse of which the vividness of his imagination was always pointing out a happy analogy, or bitter sarcasm, that startled the more from the fact that his hearers did not perceive it until the look, tone, and finger brought it down with the suddenness of lightning, and with its effects, upon the head of his adversary; taking all this into consideration, I could easily imagine how, when almost a boy, he won so much fame, and presaged it so long and with so vast an influence, notwithstanding the eccentricity and inconsistency of his life, public and private.

By the bye, the sudden, unexpected and aphoristic way in which Randolph often expressed his sentiments, had much to do with his oratorical success. He would, like Dean Swift, make a remark, seemingly a compliment, and explain it into a sarcasm, or he would utter an apparent sarcasm, and turn it into a compliment. Many speakers, when they have said a thing, hurry on to a full explanation, fearful that the hearer may not understand them; but when Randolph expressed one of these startling thoughts, he left the hearer for some time puzzling in doubt as to what he meant, and, when it pleased him, in the coolest manner in the world he explained his meaning, not a little delighted if he discovered that his audience were wondering the while upon whom the blow would descend, or what principle the remark would be brought to illustrate. A little anecdote, which I heard a member of Congress from Kentucky tell of him, shows this characteristic. The Congressman, on his first visit to Washington, (he had just been elected), was of course desirous of seeing the lions. Randolph, though not a member of either House, was there, and had himself daily borne into the Senate or House by his faithful Juba, to listen to the debates. Every body, noted or unnoted, were calling on the eccentric orator, and the member from Kentucky determined to do likewise, and gratify his curiosity. A friend, General—promised to present him, saying though, "You must be prepared for an odd reception, for, if Randolph is in a bad humor, he will do and say any thing; if he is in a good humor, you will see a most finished gentleman." They called, Mr. Randolph was stretched out on a sofa. "He seemed," said the member, "a skeleton, endowed with those flashing eyes which ghost stories give to the re-animated body when sent upon some earthly mission."

The Congressman was presented by his friend, the General, as a Member of Congress from Kentucky. "Ah, from Kentucky, sir," exclaimed Randolph, in his shrill voice, as he rose to receive him, "from Kentucky, sir; well, sir, I consider your state the Botany Bay of Virginia." The Kentuckian thought that the next remark would be a quotation from Barrington's Botany Bay epilogue, applied by Randolph to the Virginia settlers of Kentucky.

"True patriots are, for be it understood, we left our country for our country's good," but Randolph, after a pause, continued: "I do not make this remark, sir, in application to the morals or mode of settlement of Kentucky. No, sir, I mean to say that it is my opinion, sir, that the time approaches when Botany Bay will in all respects surpass England, and I fear it will soon be so with regard to your state and mine."

I cite this little anecdote, not for any peculiar pith that it possesses, but in illustration of his character, and in proof of the remark above made.

If Mr. Randolph had lived an ancient times, Plutarch, with all his powers in tracing the analogies of character, would have looked in vain for his parallel. And a modern biographer, with all ancient and all modern times before him, will find the effort fruitless that seeks his fellow. At first, the reader might think of Diogenes as furnishing some resemblance to him, and that all that Randolph wanted was a tub; but not so if another Alexander had asked him what he would have that imperial power could bestow—the answer never would have been a request to stand out of his sunlight. No, Randolph, if he could have got no higher emolument and honor, would immediately have requested to be sent on a foreign mission; that over, if Alexander had nothing more to give, and was so situated as not to be feared, who does not believe that the ex-minister would turn tail on him?

The fact is, that Randolph was excessively ambitious, a cormorant alike for praise and plunder; and though his patriotism could point out the disinterested course to others, his love of money would not let him keep the track himself—at least in his latter years, when Mammon, the old man's God, beset him, and he turned an idolator to that for which he had so often expressed his detestation

that his countrymen believed him. His mission to Russia broke the charm that the prevailing opinion of his disinterestedness cast about him, and his influence in his native state was falling fast beneath the appointment and outcries that had disenchanted it when he died; and now old Virginia will forget and forgive these inconsistencies of one of her greatest sons, to do reverence to his memory.

Randolph's republicanism was never heartily; he was at heart an aristocrat. He should have been born in England, a noble—there he should have reaped the emolument of all below him upon his own prerogatives, station, dignity, and quality; and he would have done his best to have brought the prerogatives, station, dignity, and quality of all above him a little below his level, or at least upon an equality with his. Randolph would have lifted Wilkes up to be a thorn in the side of a king whom he did not like, and to overthrow his minister; had he been himself a minister, his loyalty would then have pronounced Wilkes an unprincipled demagogue. Wilkes, we know, when he got office, said he could prove to his Majesty that he himself had never been a Wilkesite. Randolph was intensely selfish, and his early success as a politician and orator impressed him with an exaggerated opinion of his own importance, at an age when such opinions are easily made and not easily eradicated. In the case of Randolph, this overweening self-estimation grew monstrous. "Big man me, John," and the bigness or littleness of others' services were valued and proclaimed just in proportion as they elevated or depressed the interests and personal dignity of the orator of Roanoke. And often when his interests had nothing to do with the question presented to him, his caprice would sway his judgment, for his personal resentments led him far away from every consideration save that of how he could best wound his adversary.

His blow wanted neither vigor nor venom; his weapons were poisoned with such consummate skill, and he so well knew the vulnerable point of every character, that often when the wound by an observer who knew nothing of his opponent, was deemed slight, it was ranking in the heart. Randolph was well acquainted with the private history of the eminent men of his time, the peccadilloes, frailties, indiscretions, weaknesses, vanities, and vices of them all. He used his tongue as a jockey would his whip; he hit the sore place till the blood came, and there was no crack or flourish, or noise, or bluster in doing it. It was with a celerity and dexterity which showed the practiced hand, and its unexpectedness as well as its severity, often found the victim so completely, that he had not one word to say, but writhed in silence.

I remember hearing two anecdotes of Randolph, which strikingly type his character. One exhibits his cynical regard and disregard for the feelings of others—in fact a wish to wound their feelings—and the other his wit. I do not touch for their accuracy, but I give them as I have frequently heard them, as perhaps has the reader.

Once when Randolph was in the city of B—, he was in the daily habit of frequenting the book-store of one of the largest booksellers in the place. He made some purchases from him, and was very curious in looking over his books, &c. In the course of Randolph's visits, he became very familiar with Mr.—, the bookseller, and they held long chats together; the orator of Roanoke showing off with great courtesy. Mr.— was quite a pompous man, and rather vain of his acquaintance with the lions who used to stop in his shop. Subsequently, being in Washington with a friend, he espied Randolph advancing towards him, and told his friend he would introduce him to the "great man." His friend, however, knowing the waywardness of Randolph, declined. "Well," said Mr.—, "I am sorry you will not be introduced to me—I'll go up and give him a shake by the hand at any rate." Up he walked, with outstretched hand, to salute the civic. The Aristocratic Republican, (by the bye, how often your thorough-going Republican is a full-blooded Aristocrat in his private relations) immediately threw his hands behind him, as if he could not "dull his palm" in that way, and gazed searchingly into the face of the astonished bookseller. "Oh, ah!" said he, as if recollecting himself, "you are Mr. B—, from Baltimore?" "Yes, sir," was the reply. "A bookseller?" "Yes, sir," again. "Ah! I bought some books from you?" "Yes, sir, you did." "Did I forget to pay you for them?" "No, sir, you did not." "Good morning, sir," said the orator, lifting his cap with offended dignity, and passing on. This anecdote does not show either Randolph's goodness of head or heart, but it shows his character.

The other anecdote is as follows: The Honorable Peter—, who was a watchmaker, and who had represented B— county for many years in Congress, once made a motion to amend a resolution offered by Mr. Randolph on the subject of military claims. Mr. Randolph rose up

after the amendment had been offered, and drawing his watch from his fob, asked the Honorable Peter what o'clock it was. He told him. "Sir," replied the orator, "you can mend my watch, but not my motions. You understand fables, sir, but not facts!"

That, too, was a fine retort, when, after he had been speaking, several members rose in succession and attacked him. "Sir," said he, I am in the condition of old Lear—

"The Little Dogs and all, Taw, Blanch and Sweetheart, See—they bark at me!"

All accounts agree in praising the oratorical powers of Randolph. His manner was generally slow and impressive, his voice squeaking, but clear and distinct, and, as far as it could be heard, what he said was clearly understood. His gesture was chiefly with his long skeleton-like finger. The impressiveness with which he used it has been remarked by all who have heard him. When he was sarcastic, amidst a thousand it would say, stronger than language, to the individual whom he meant—"Thou art the man." In his choice of language he was very fastidious, making sometimes a considerable pause to select a word. His reading was extensive, and in every department of knowledge—romances, tales, poems, plays, voyages, travels, history, biography, philosophy—all arrested his attention, and each had detained him long enough to render him familiar with the best works of the kind. His mind was naturally erratic, and his desultory reading, as he never devoted himself to a profession, and dipped a little into all, increased his natural and mental waywardness. He seldom reasoned, and when he did, it was an effort that was painful, and which cost him more trouble than it was worth. He said himself, in one of his speeches in the Senate of the United States, "that he had a defect, whether of education or nature was immaterial, perhaps proceeding from both—a defect which had disabled him, from his first entrance into public life to the present hour, from making what is called a regular speech." The defect was doubtless both from education and nature; education might have in some measure, corrected the tendencies of his nature, but there was perhaps an idiosyncrasy in the constitution of the man which compelled him to be meteoric and erratic in mind, as well as temper. He said that "ridicule was the weakest weapon in the parliamentary armory;" and he learned all the tricks of fence with it, and never played with foils. He seems to have had more admiration for the oratory of Chatham than that of any other individual, if we may judge from the manner in which that great man is mentioned in his speeches. They were certainly unlike in character, very unlike. Chatham having had bad health, and it being well known that he went to Parliament and made his best efforts when almost sinking from sickness, Randolph might have felt that, as he had done the same thing, their characters were assimilated. Chatham was seized with a fainting fit when making his last speech, and died a short time afterwards. And probably it is not idle speculation to say that Randolph, with a morbid or perhaps an insane admiration of his character, wished to sink as Chatham did, in the legislative hall, and be borne thence to die.

However, there was enough in the character of Chatham to win the admiration of any one who loved eloquence, without seeking in adventitious circumstances a motive for his admiration; and Randolph appreciated such talents as his too highly not to have admired them under all circumstances; but his reverence was doubtless increased from the resemblance which he saw in their bodily conditions, and which, he was very willing to believe, extended to their minds. Chatham was bold, vehement, resistless, not often witty, but eminently successful when he attempted it; invective was his forte. In some of these points, Randolph resembled him; but then Chatham's eloquence was but a means to gain his ends; his judgment was intuitive, his sagacity unrivalled; he bore down all opposition by his fearless energies, and he compelled his enemies to admit that he was a public benefactor in the very breath in which they expressed their personal dislike. Chatham kept his eyes steadily in view, and never wavered in his efforts to gain them. Not so Randolph. He reminds us of the trichin in the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," who always used his fairy gifts with a spirit of deviltry, to provoke, to annoy, and to injure, no matter whom he wounded, or when or where. Randolph did not want personal dignity, but he wanted the dignity which arises from consistent conduct, a want which no brilliancy of talent can supply. On the contrary, the splendor of high talents but serve to make such inconsistency the more apparent. He was an intellectual motor, whose course no one could predict; but, be it where it might, all were certain that it would blaze, and wither, and destroy. As a statesman, it is believed that he never originated a single measure, though his influence often destroyed the measures of others. Some one observes "that the hand which is not able to build a ho-

useful may destroy a palace," and he seemed to have had a good deal of the ambition of him who fired the Ephesian dome. As a scholar, he left nothing behind him, though his wit was various, and his acquirements profound. He seems not to have written a common communication for a newspaper, without great labor and fastidious correction. I have been informed by a compositor who set a part of his speech on "retrenchment," which he dedicated to his constituents, that his emendations were endless. I have a part of the MS. of this speech before me; it is written with a trembling hand, but with great attention to punctuation, and with a delicate stroke of the pen. It was as an orator he shone; and as an orator his power of changing the attention of his audience has been, perhaps, never surpassed. In an assembly where Demosthenes, Cicero, Chatham, Mirabeau, or Henry spoke, Randolph's eloquence would have been listened to with profound interest, and his opposition would have been feared. As an orator he felt his power—he knew that in eloquence he wielded a magic wand, and he was not only fearless of opposition, but he courted it; for who of his contemporaries has equalled him in the power of carrying on successfully the partisan warfare of desultory debate—the cut-and-thrust—the steady aim who could wield like him the tomahawk, and who of them possessed his dexterity in scolding a foe? His trophies are numberless, and he wore them with the pride of his progenitors, for there was truly a good deal of Indian blood in his veins. It is said that Randolph first signalized himself by making a stump speech in Virginia in opposition to Patrick Henry; scarcely any one knew him when he rose to reply to Henry, and so strong was Henry's conviction of his powers, that he spoke of them in the highest terms, and prophesied his future eminence. Randolph gloriously said of Henry that "he was Shakespeare and Garrick combined."

Randolph's character and conduct forcible impress upon us the power of eloquence in a republic. How many twists, and turns, and tergiversations, and obliquities were there in his course; yet how much influence he possessed, particularly in Virginia! How much he was feared, courted, admired, shunned, hated, and all because he wielded the weapon that "rules the fierce democracy!" How many men, far his superiors in practical usefulness, lived unhonored and without influence, and died unused, because they had not eloquence! Eloquence is superior to all other gifts, even to the dazzling fascinations of the warrior; for it rules alike in war and peace, and wins all by its spell. Randolph was the very personification of inconsistency. Behold him talking of the "splendid misery" of office holders. "What did he want with office? A cup of cold water was better in his condition; the sword of Democles was suspended over him by a single hair," &c. &c.—when lo! he goes to the frigid north—for what? For health! No, for an outfit and salary; and died childless, worth, it is said, nearly a million!

Randolph's oratory reminds us forcibly of Don Juan; and if Byron had written nothing but Don Juan, Randolph might have been called the Byron of orators.—He had all the wit, eccentricity, malice and lightness of that work;—it touches that strike the heart, and sarcasms that scorn, the next moment, the tear that had started.

In a dying state, Randolph went to Washington during the last session of Congress, and, although not a member, he had himself borne daily to the hall of legislation to witness the debate. He returned home to his constituents, and was elected to Congress, and started on a tour to Europe, if possible to regain his health; he said "it was the last throw of the die."

He expired in Philadelphia, where he first appeared in the councils of the nation, in the sixty-first year of his age, leaving a reputation behind him for classic wit and splendid eloquence which few of his contemporaries may hope to equal; and a character which his biographer may deem himself fortunate if he can explain it to have been compatible with either the duties of social life, the sacredness of friendship, or the requirements of patriotism, unless he offer as an apology partial derangement. In the letter in which the deceased acknowledged that he had made a mistake with regard to the character of Mr. Lowndes on the tariff, he assigned, as a reason for the error, the disordered state of his mind, arising from the exciting medicine which he was compelled to take to sustain life.

I have, perhaps, expressed myself harshly—inconsistent with that charitable feeling which all should possess who are "treading upon ashes under which the fire is not yet extinguished." If so to express our conscientious opinions is sometimes to do wrong.

"Why draw his frailties from their dread abode,"

For who can tell, in the close alliance between reason and madness, which were so strongly mixed up in his character, how much his actions and words partook of the one or the other? Where they alternated, or where one predominated, or where

they mingled their influence, not in the embrace of love, but in the strife for mastery, old how much he may have struggled with his mental aberrations and wanderings, and felt that they were errors; and yet struggled in vain. His spirit, like the great eye of the Universe, may have known that clouds and storms beset it, and felt that it was continuing with disease and the film of coming death, yet hoped at last to beam forth in its brightness.

"The day drags on, though storms keep out the sun, And thus the heart will break, and brokenly lie on."

And so it is with the mind, and Randolph's "brokenly lived on" till the raven shadows of the night of death gathered over him, and gave him to the dark beyond.

From the Louisville Advertiser.

RATES OF INTEREST.

The following are the rates of interest in the States and Territories of the Union, together with the punishment of usury. It is a valuable statement, and should be preserved.

Maine, 6 per cent—forfeit of the debt or claim.

New Hampshire, 6 per cent—forfeit of three times the amount unlawfully taken.

Vermont, 6 per cent—recovery in action with costs.

Massachusetts, 6 per cent—forfeit of three fold the usury.

Rhode Island, 6 per cent—forfeit of the money and interest on the debt.

Connecticut, 6 per cent—forfeit of the whole debt.

New York, 6 per cent—forfeit of the whole debt.

New Jersey, 6 per cent—forfeit of the whole debt.

Pennsylvania, 6 per cent—forfeit of the whole debt.

Delaware, 6 per cent—forfeit of the whole debt.

Maryland, 6 per cent—on tobacco contracts 8 per cent—Usurious contracts void.

Virginia, 6 per cent—forfeit double the usury taken.

North Carolina, 6 per cent.—Contracts for usury void—Forfeit double the usury.

South Carolina, 6 per cent.—Forfeit of interest and premium taken, with cost to debtor.

Georgia, 8 per cent—forfeit of three times the usury, and contract void.

Alabama, 8 per cent—forfeit of interest and usury.

Mississippi, 8 per cent—by contract as high as 10—usury recoverable in action of debt.

Louisiana, 5 per cent—bank interest 6—conventional as high as 10—beyond contract, void.

Tennessee, 6 per cent—usurious contracts void.

Kentucky, 6 per cent—usury may be recovered, with cost.

Ohio, 6 per cent—usurious contracts void.

Indiana, 6 per cent—on written agreement may go as high as 10—penalty of usury, a fine of double the excess.

Illinois, 6 per cent—three fold the amount of the whole interest.

Missouri, 8 per cent—by agreement as high as 10—beyond, forfeit of the whole interest due, and of the usury taken.

Michigan, 7 per cent—forfeit of the usury taken and one fourth the debt.

Arkansas, 6 per cent—by agreement, any rate not higher than 10. Amount of usury recoverable, but contracts void.

Florida, 8 per cent—forfeit of interest and excess in case of usury.

Wisconsin, 7 per cent—by agreement not over 12—forfeit treble the excess.

On debts and judgments in favor of the United States, interest is computed at six per cent per year.

Unbiased Testimony.—The following tribute to the late President's Inaugural is from a London paper, and may be considered as speaking the voice of those who can judge impartially of judgment.

"The Inaugural Address of Gen. Harrison, on the occasion of his induction into the Presidency of the United States, was delivered at Washington, on the 4th inst. We have given this document elsewhere, at some length. Its character is perfectly pacific, while it is noble and dignified, and affords a singular and striking contrast to the unmeaning Speech which is delivered in the House of Peers on the occasion of a new Sovereign coming to the throne. The Address carries its own comment, requires no observations from us; but we recommend to our readers an attentive perusal of it, feeling assured that more than ordinary gratification will result. Though Gen. Harrison has been returned by the Whigs in opposition to the Democratic party, his principles are more Democratic than those of the opponent set up against him."

Prætius hits his neighbor of the Advertiser, in the words following:

"In our allusion to the fact that the junior editor of the Advertiser is now an unnaturalized foreigner, we have meant no unkindness towards that gentleman. The junior is no more to blame for having been born an Irishman, than the senior is for having been born a jockey."