directing him, as before, to bring a blank commission with him for the clerk of the General Court; this was then one of the most lucrative appointments in the Colony, and as the clerk of the General Court had the principal direction of the Secretary's office, the various duties of which required much skill, it had been filled with much caution and circumspection, by all preceding Secretaries. My grandfather, who was then about twenty-five years of age only, and had as recently received as signal a proof of the Secretary's regard for him, had met the most remote expectation that he would confer upon him this office also. But he did so, accompanying the commission with most flattering compliments, and saying that he had always intended the appointment for him, whenever it became vacant, for that there was none whom he thought deserved it as well.

His office of clerk necessarily excluded him from the bar of the General court; and the duties his new appointment imposed upon him, constrained him to limit his practice, which had by this time become very extensive and lucrative, the profits of his profession having not diminished by the limitations he imposed upon the extent of his practice. At that time the most valuable business done by the lawyers of the country, was the collection and securing of the debts due by the colonists to the British merchants, who held debts to a large amount due them in Virginia. These arrangements were for the most part affected at the meeting of the merchants of Virginia, which took place twice every year, in Williamsburg at the close of the session of the General court there. The residence of my grandfather upon the spot, the character he had soon established for industry, punctuality, integrity and skill, very soon recommended him to all the British merchants, a very large proportion of whose business fell into his hands, and was managed by him up to the commencement of the Revolution. I have often heard him state, that he was indebted for this part of his success, very much to the recommendation of Sir William Brooke, the Royal Governor of Virginia, whose friendship for him was manifested repeatedly in many other modes besides.

After his appointment to the clerkship of justice, and of the General court, my grandfather finding himself in a situation of independence, and capable of supporting a family, married a lady to whom he had been for some time attached, Miss Martha Hall.
parents had formerly resided in North Carolina, but were both dead; and she herself had lived for several years with a relation of hers in Williamsburg. This event took place I believe in 1746, for I have heard him say he was married on the very spot that the capital in Williamsburg was burned, and this seems to have occurred 24th that year. Some years before his marriage, he had been elected a member of the Assembly for the County of Hanover, which county he continued to represent in that body ever after, until the year 1764. The difficulties with the mother country, which afterwards led to war, having then commenced, and my grandfather, being then advanced in years, and holding several appointments, directly from the crown, such as King's Advocate in the county court of Admiralty, also, he did not think it right to oppose the measures of the Administration, and could not reconcile it to himself to oppose those proposed by his countrymen, he therefore declined a re-election and soon after relinquished all his other public appointments, and retired into private life.

After the organizing of this government however, he was induced by the entreaties of his friends to take some place under it and accepted a place at the Council Board for a short time. From thence he was translated into the Court of Admiralty, of which he was made the chief judge, and the session of which was still held at Williamsburg, even after the removal of the seat of the seat of government to Richmond, merely to accommodate him. This office he resigned a short time before his death, which took place in May 1786.

The reputation of my grandfather as a lawyer was as high as that of any lawyer in Virginia of his day. He was called upon, for more opinions than any other either before or since his time; and his opinions were always considered as conclusive by all who saw them. I have seen many of them since I came to the bar. They were remarkable for their clearness and brevity; and all I ever saw I thought I ever saw I thought unquestionably correct. So early as the year 1746 he was appointed by the Assembly one of the Committee to revise its laws; and the revision of 1748 as it is called, was the work of his hands almost exclusively. He was very regular in his attendance as one of the members of the Assembly, while he continued such; and was one of the most active and influential members of that body. Through this continued the
enormous fraud committed upon the Treasury by the Speaker Robinson, in
1766 was first detected, and his efforts upon this occasion drew
down upon him for a time, the resentment of many of the Speaker's friends,
some of whom were amongst the most conspicuous men in Virginia at that
day. — My grandfather was a very laborious man of study and very
regular habits, who notwithstanding his numerous public engagements still
found time to read a great deal. He was an excellent scholar, and kept alive
his scholarship during his life, in his family he was ever kind, affectionate
and cheerful, living beloved by all who knew him, and he died respected by a
numerous circle of friends, comprehending almost every man of note in the
country at that day. He left many children at his death, and had
but several who had married and died during his life, amongst these my
mother was one. Of his family as far as I know anything of the following
will be found a correct account. The eldest child Martha married Mr.
William Taylor, a most respectable man who was clerk of the county of
Anne Arundel, where he resided. This lady is still living there, and has a
numerous family, some of whom however are known to me except two,
Walter Taylor her son, who was last year a member of the U.S. Senate
from the State of Indiana, and a young gentleman, her grand son,
now a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy. His second child Molly, married
Mr. John Taylor Colvin of Serviceville in the County of King and Queen, an
amiable and very wealthy man. She died many years ago leaving a numerous
family also. I was intimately acquainted with her three eldest sons, and served for
several years as a member of the Virginia Assembly with Richard Colvin the eldest of
them, who represented first the County of Middlesex, and afterwards that of
King and Queen. They are all now dead leaving descendants. His third child
Mr. John Waller, who was bred up by his father in the Secretary's office, and
received from Secretary DeLeon the appointment of Clerk of Newport
before the Revolution. While he resided in this part of the country he
married a Miss Page of Hanover, and my grandfather, who had
purchased from his elder brother the old family plantation Williams,
to which he had added other contiguous lands, giving him this
estate. Mr. John Waller resigned his clerkship and moved to King
William. After the death of my grandfather he purchased an estate
in the neighborhood of Williamsburg, and removed thither. He died
some years since leaving several children. My mother was the fourth
child of my grandfather; and Anne his fifth, she married Dr. John Bond, a very wealthy and worthy man, who was the clerk of Suffolk County, and died without issue during her father's life. Benjamin Carter Waller was my grandfather's seventh child. He was led by his father to the bar and practiced the law in the neighborhood of Williamsburg with much success. To him my grandfather assigned the clerkship of James City and gave him the estate adjoining Williamsburg on which his son Robert R. Waller now resides. He also married a Mr. Bayley, the sister of his brother's wife, and died a few years since in Williamsburg, where he had always resided. I shall have occasion to speak of him hereafter. My grandfather's second child, was Clara. She married first Captain Edward Travis, an officer of the Navy, who greatly distinguished himself at the battle of the Great Bridge. By him she had several children, and Captain Travis dying she again married a Mr. Beardson. Both of the latter died after the death of her father. The eldest was a man of ye age, leaving many children by that marriage also. Dr. Williams Waller was my grandfather's eighth child. He was bred a merchant and established himself first at Hampton, while living there he married a Mrs. Deacon of that county, and disliking his situation, he quitted merchandise, bought him an estate called Belfield, about York river above York town where he removed. He resided here ever afterwards until his decease which occurred in 1799. He also left children. To him my grandfather devised the estate in Greensville, which he had purchased during the war. Robert Mait Waller was my grandfather's youngest son, and his mind closed. He was also brought up by his father as a clerk; and even after his own age my grandfather obtained for him the clerkship of James the county of York. To this my uncle added many years afterwards the clerkship of James City also, which he got from his brother. Still son my grandfather gave his family mansion in Williamsburg and a small estate he owned in the county of James City. He married a Miss Grimm, a daughter of the former President of Williamsburg and Mary, by whom he left several children, and died many years ago since in Williamsburg, where he always resided. The tenth and youngest child of my grandfather whom I ever knew was a daughter Sarah. She was the only daughter who remained single at his death. She afterwards married a Dr. John Smith of Matthews county, by whom she left several children, and died many years ago. My grandfather had had other children, all of whom died young and before I knew them.
All four of my uncles lived in or near the vicinity of Williamsburg when I began my professional career there. They were all warmly attached to me, and I derived great advantage from their society, especially from the countenance, knowledge, and experience of my uncles Benjamin and Robert, the former of whom was still engaged in the practice of the law, and the Clerk of York and James City courts when I commenced my practice in those courts. They none of them equalled my grandfather in genius or acquirement, but all were worthy respectable men, of much consideration where they resided, and with the exception of Robert Walter, whose frequent absence precluded him from being there, each of them represented the counties of James City and of York, where they resided.

All my grandfather's daughters who married during his life were most respectably and happily connected with men of property and worth. The two who married after his death, however (for my sister was then a widow) formed connections every way beneath them, and died in poverty.

Having thus given a brief account of my excellent grandfather and his family, let me now resume my own reminiscences. This I have brought down to my eight year, when I again returned to Williamsburg, and was once more happily established under the roof of my second grandfather. The event as I have stated occurred in 1792.

At that time there existed no good Latin school in Williamsburg. During the war the College of William and Mary had been broken up and the professorship of humanity put down by the Trustees entirely. Soon after my return to this place however, the Rev. John Braham, who had formerly been the professor of Humanity in William and Mary when this professorship was abolished, opened a private grammar school at his own house and was immediately placed under his tuition. My education had not been neglected before this, for I had been very regularly by my grandfather, then whom there was no one better qualified to improve, and my uncle Robert who wrote a most excellent hand, taught me to write. I did not receive much benefit from Braham's tuition, during the short time I remained with him; for all I was a very good scholar himself he was tidy and particular and my weak temper required much more gentle treatment than I received at his hands. But the kindness and care of my grandfather, kindly compensated me for this, and I still continued to
learned much more from him than I did at school. In the year 1763, some private family, calling Dr. Bannister to England, he broke up his school, and I was again happily dependent upon my grandfather alone for instruction. This mode of educating me was most excellent. Besides my customary lessons, which I was made to recite to him twice a day, if any circumstances occurred during our recitations, or in the course of our conversations together (for we were very seldom separated), upon which he could lay the foundation of any anecdote or story, calculated to interest a child, he immediately told it, in a way most calculated to arouse my curiosity. As soon as he had excited my attention and interest to a high pitch, he soon affected to have forgotten some circumstance or connected with his narrative, and I was sent to the study for a book in which stated, to adjust his memory. From this book I was made to read to him the whole account, in which he seemed to find numerous for more stories to what my curiosity, and to produce an earnest desire to gratify it by continuing the reading of the book we had begun, in some other of a like kind. By such means I was induced to read with great attention, the whole of the Pindar, all Plutarch's lives, many treatises on the Hermetic mythology, and large portions from the Greek and Roman History, as well as from the History of England and many of the English poets, before I was twelve years old. These occupations gave me interruption to our regular studies, which went on unceasingly as at by the year 1784, I was well grounded in my Latin syntax, had gone through the Balloquies of Boordy, and the dialogues of Bouscy, and could write a fair hand and understand sufficiently well the first rules of Aristmatik. In February 1784, Walker Drury, who had formerly kept a grammar school with some reputation in the County of Orange, finding that there were some schools in Williamsburg, removed thither, and soon afterwards obtained an act of Assembly, giving him the use of the old Capitol there, in which he kept the most numerous and for some years the best regulated grammar school I have ever seen. I was placed in this school as soon as it opened, and in a few days afterwards joined a class, which then began Euclid. I remained at school with Dr. Drury for several years, during the greater part of which time, by the unceasing attendance of my grandfather, to whom I always recited my lessons before I went school, and who examined and instructed me every minute in everything concerning them, I kept at the head of a very numerous class, although much the youngest and smallest boy in it. And here
Deans Prentice as an instance that occurred about this time, which most probably had some effect upon my future destiny. To give some celebrity to his establishing, it was custom with Dr. Prentice to have occasional public examinations of his scholars. These examinations were generally made by, and always in the presence of, the viceroy, governors, and professors of William and Mary college, and any other distinguished gentlemen, who happened to be in Williamsburg at that time. Upon one of these occasions it fell to the lot of my class to be examined by the venerable and learned chancellor, the late George Wythe. We had just begun the lines of Cornelius Nepos, and placing myself at the head of my class, fellow, I led them up to his chair, to receive their lesson from this work. The question being finished, Dr. Wythe questioned us very particularly in parsing, and as to the subject matter of the life, a part of which we had just read. It was the life of Eumenes. In all his questions put to me I answered with a promptness, and accuracy which obviously pleased him very much; and I manifested such a perfect acquaintance with the poet of Eumenes, history connected with this, more biographical, sketch, as to excite even his astonishment, for I had not then attained my tenth year. When the examinations were ended, he called one to him and in the presence of my tutor and all the other gentlemen, extolled my exhibition in such flattering terms, that I was even afterwards distinguished in the school, as one of its principal ornaments. Some months after this, returning from school, one evening to my grandfather, I found him writing with Dr. Wythe. They had been very intimate in their early days; and after my grandfather were went out then and Dr. Wythe very rarely, yet he made it a point to call to see my grandfather once or twice every year, and to spend an afternoon with him. When I came in Dr. Wythe immediately recognized me, and seeing my grandfather care for me as he did, he repeated to him with high eulogies the occurrence of my examination. Pleased to hear this, (which I had account of which I before told him), from Dr. Wythe himself, my grandfather requested him to examine me again; and he did so. I was immediately reading Caesar's Commentaries, and Dr. Wythe taking the books from me, made me recite several passages and to accompany my recitations with full account of the circumstances introductory to the passages read, so these my grandfather added many questions relating to this part of the Roman history and to ancient Geography of the Roman Empire at that time. I answered all the questions, and as I have stated, that was acquired of me entirely to Dr. Wythe's patient mind into thy
observed to my grandfathers with an appearance of great amusement. "Oh, Wallace!"

This is a very clever boy, and when he has advanced a little further, you must

let me have him. If this the good old man replied with much feeling, "Then"

for by this familiar appellation he always spoke to Mr. Wynde); this boy is the only"

companion of my old age, and the principal comfort; I feel that I cannot part"

with him while I live, but when I die, if you will take him under your charge"

I shall consider it as the greatest and highest favour you can confer on each"

of us." Mr. Wynde then further promptly assured that he would do so, and the conversation

between the old gentleman was turned to other subjects. I was too young then in

1785, to think of what was to happen to me thereafter.

During the year 1786, while on a visit to my father, to whom my grandfather always

sent me every Sunday, when he was at home, after I had been to church, I

had the misfortune to shatter my left arm and shoulder, in a very deceitful

way by a fall from a very high tree. This accident occurred to me near my

father's house, to which I was carried, and where I remained confined to

my bed for several months. The pain I suffered was very great, but was

not greater certainly than that endured by my poor old grandfather in

being deprived of my company and in enduring my sufferings. Although

he had never left his home for several years, yet so long as I was confined

at my fathers, the old gentleman paid me a visit at my father's regularly every

day, and pressed all his prayers at my bedside, prostrating my anguish, and insuring

me with patience, by his kind affectionate and cheerful conversation. As

soon as I was in a situation to be moved, he insisted upon taking me home

with him again, a movement for which I felt and expressed equal solicitude

with himself. The injury I had sustained was as serious, that even after the

fractured bones had knit, I had no use of my left arm, and least I should sustain

further injury in my then situation, from the headless width of my muniments

playfellows, I was kept from school for some months after I returned to my grand-

father's house. My education was not neglected however, during this interval. My grand-

father again took me under his care and instruction, and attended to me as

well, that when I again returned to school, I found myself much in advance of

my clafs. So my knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages, I had also

gained during my absence from school, some acquaintance with the then old

school's, my grandfather perfectly understood. At this critical period of my

everything I had begun coarses and taught in the Latin and Ancient Greek

class, although sustained the heaviest misfortunes which I had ever felt in the
legs of my much revered grandfather, who died in May 1786 in his seventieth year. The shock I experienced at this calamity was to the earth, and I felt that I could never rise again. My long and intimate and enduring connexion with this good man, had removed me from all other attachments, and my regard for him absorbed all my affections. As he seemed to live but for me, so I had lived for him alone.

Although my father had ever been most kind, and affectionate to me, yet, up to this period, I had seen as little of him, and been as little with him, that I felt for him no such sentiments, such that of respectful duty, and this because my grandfather had been inculcated such a sentiment and cherished it in me. My whole heart was given to my good grandfather; and in losing him I seemed to have lost all I valued on earth.

My father was about when my grandfather died, but very soon afterwards returned, and sought me out. He took me home with him, and tried every means in his power to comfort the affliction, and revive the spirit of his dissevered and almost broken-hearted boy. The effects were at first unnerving, but as the sources of childhood are rarely of long continuance, he at last succeeded in reconstituting one to my new situation. At that time a boy about my own age lived in my father's house; his name was Graham Wall. He was the youngest son of Major James Wall who had married an aunt of my father. This boy was also a scholar in Dr. Murray's school. He was idle, dull, and very wickedly disposed. Residing in the same house with me, we soon became constant companions, and I was presently initiated in all his bad habits. I still continued to go to Dr. Murray after my grandfather's death; but wanting the encouragement and assistance which he used always to afford me, and strongly tempted to follow by my delusive companion, I became indifferent to my lessons, and very soon lost much of the high standing I had previously maintained in the school. Mortification at this caused me to occasional exertion, sitting撅撅 up and down the house; but short-lived, and I very soon relapsed into my former indolence and negligence. Although I was on the high road to ruin and destruction, I preserved him from discovering my situation. Fortunately, however, before my destiny was irreversibly fixed, Dr. Murray having entered into holy orders, broke up his school in Williamsburg and removed to Norfolk. My dangerous companion then returned home and I never saw him afterwards. This fact may be readily conjectured from what I have stated. Dr. Murray removed from Williamsburg, having entered into holy
orders, in the summer of 1786, and after his removal I was left entirely to myself, to do as pleased, for my father was often from home; and while there was too actively employed to attend much to me. After nos- ticeless yet I became very idle, and scarcely ever opened a book. I continued this for some months, when one day meeting Dr. Wythe in the street, he immediately accosted me, and carried me to his house, where he questioned me very closely, as to my situation and occupance, and examined one very closely as to my studies. He made one translate for him an ode of Horace and some lines in Homer. I did not acquit myself as well as I had formerly done, but he seemed satisfied with my performance, which was without any previous preparation. My father was then in Richmond, but the day after his return Dr. Wythe called to see him, and stating to him what had passed between my grandfather and himself some time before, and what had taken place between him and myself during my father's absence, he very kindly offered to take me under his charge. My father was delighted at this unlooked-on offer, to which he very willingly assented, and the very next day I was sent to attend Dr. Wythe, who resided but a short distance from our house.

Before I proceed to give any further account of myself, let me make a somewhat general account of this great and good man, under whose tuition I passed several of the succeeding years of my life. Dr. Wythe was a native of the county of Elizabeth City. I have often heard him say that he was entirely indebted to his mother for his early education; she was an extraordinary woman in some respects, and having added to her other acquirements, a knowledge of the Latin language, she was the sole instructor of her son in this art. He was very studious and industrious, and as he grew up, so much informed upon this good foundation his mother had laid, that he made himself in time one of the best Latin scholars in America. Soon after he had attained manhood, and had been engaged extensively in the practice of the law, he determined to teach himself Greek, and he entered upon and prosecuted this task with so much zeal, that in a few years he made himself certainly the very best Greek scholar I have ever seen, and such he was universally acknowledged to be. He afterwards in like manner acquired the French language, and became deeply versed in Algebra, Mathematics,
and Natural Philosophy. He therefore may very properly considered as one of the most rare examples the world has ever produced. A man who by his own unaided efforts, has made himself a profound scholar.

When he came to Williamsburg, and commenced the study of the law, under the direction of my grandfather Walker, who was ten years older than himself, and engaged at that time in practice. Dr. Wythe, by his unceasing industry, soon acquired a very extensive knowledge of this science, in all its branches, and obtaining a license, returned to his native county, where he commenced the practice of the law about the year 1748. He was then elected a member of the House of Delegates. Burgesses, and continued to represent the county of Elizabeth City in that body for many successive years.

Very soon after he commenced the practice of the law, he acquired as much distinction in his profession, that he relinquished it in the inferior courts, and took his stand at the bar of the General Court, where all the eminent Counsellors of Virginia were then assembled. At this bar, his indefatigable industry, extensive knowledge, and profound research, speedily acquired for him very high and well merited distinction; and he ascended to its highest rank, in which he found no other equal competitor, than the late venerable Edmund Pendleton, who was his senior by some years.

It would be odious to draw a comparison between these two great men, both of whom stood so high and deserved so much. Honorable rivals for public distinction during many years, they were alike in so many respects that no fair parallel could be drawn between them. The address of Dr. Pendleton was more pleasing, and his manners more courtly than those of Dr. Wythe, whose pressed for study kept him much secluded from general observation, and whose excessive modesty concealed much of his merit even in this respect. In the manners of Dr. Wythe were very polished, indeed, and full of dignity and grace. Rising much more with the world, and more conversant with men than Dr. Wythe, Dr. Pendleton looked always to consequences. He therefore rarely made an enemy, but acquired the esteem of a very large circle of friends, who always sustained and supported him, and whom he in like manner upheld. While the stern integrity and unyielding firmness of Dr. Wythe’s character carried him always straight to his object, as soon as he was convinced, it was proper and
in the pursuit of what he thought right, he was headstrong and utterly indifferent
enough to after effecting this strong difference between the two was successful in their
conduct and practice but at the bar and in the Assembly, Mr. Wythe would more
engage in a cause which he thought wrong, and would often abandon his case
when he discovered that they had not been fully represented to him; whereas Mr.
considering the subject more carefully, felt as sensible in exerting his professional
powers for any cause in which he had undertaken to represent, or in taking any
case which was presented to him. In the year 1766, when the common
find committed by Speaker Claxton was detected, Mr. Pendleton, whose
patron and personal friends the Speaker was exerted his every power to
ward off the blow which threatened him; but yet so conducted himself
throughout that inquiry, that he was finally represented as one of its authors.
If this had been Mr. Wythe's situation, no consideration would have prevailed
upon him to refrain from deprecating his very best friends, and from
presenting them so far as his delicacy required.
From these different traits in their character, it may readily inferred,
that Mr. Pendleton was the more successful practicing, although Mr. Wythe
was considered as the better lawyer. And the former acquired with
ease but retained with effort the high distinction to which he
afterwards rose. When the Revolution came on they were
both sound orings, but they seems to have differed in this too
as to most other respects; Mr. Pendleton yielding to the force of
public opinion, was thus enabled in some degree to direct what
he could not control. He was able adjusted in effecting the
Revolution in government, but strongly opposed, and to his efforts
Virginia is strongly indebted for the prevention of this much
revolution. Mr. Wythe on the contrary having
once satisfied himself of the rights of the colonists, and of the
necessity of the mother country, laboured with all his soul to
stimulate and prepare the public mind for a change; and
not believing that a revolution in government could ever be perfectly
achieved, unless a great change in society was previously effected,
he would have gone all lengths to impel the laws upon which
society itself rested, rather than hazard the success of the scheme,
he deemed so essential to the liberty of the people. While Mr. Pendleton
closely controlled as chief of the Executive in the Committee of safety,
Mr. Wythe, at the then an old man, presented himself in his hunting shirt to Gen. Jones, proposing to enter the ranks of his detachment as an volunteer to fight the invading enemy. While the former yielded a reluctant agent to the policy which dictated a change in the system of entails then existing in the country, the latter was desirous to alter even the language of its people.

Both these great men pursued the same course, and successfully filled almost every station of high distinction in the country. Mr. Pendleton was elected by the Convention (of which he was a member) to be one of the delegates in the first Congress that assembled in Philadelphia in Sept. 1774. Upon the death of Dr. Randolph during the next year who had long presided both in the Assembly and Convention, the latter body then assembled in Richmond, chose Mr. Pendleton as their President and appointed Dr. Wythe to succeed him in Congress. In this situation he had a great share in preparing the declaration of independence, the petitionation of his pupils and colleagues Mr. Jefferson. When the new Government of Virginia went into operation in 1776, and the dissolution of the old government took place, a complete revision and a modification of all the statutes became necessary.

For this important duty Dr. Jefferson, Dr. Pendleton and Dr. Wythe were selected by the Assembly in the execution of this important task, making it necessary for Dr. Wythe to relinquish his situation in Congress, and Dr. Pendleton having them retired from the Assembly, in 1777 Dr. Wythe was elected to succeed him as the Speaker of that body. And as soon as a new judiciary was created by that body the Legislature in the winter of 1777. Dr. Pendleton, Dr. Wythe and Dr. Nicholas, were made Judges of the Court of Chancery.

While occupying this situation in the year 1780 Dr. Wythe was chosen by the Assembly one of the Deputation from Virginia to the Convention, which the next year met in Philadelphia, and then formed the present constitution of the United States. He attended this Convention when it first met, but the illness of his wife during its session compelled him to return home, so that he was not present at its adoptions by that body. Both Dr. Pendleton and himself however were elected members of the Virginia convention to whom this Constitution was submitted afterwards for ratification and each of them ably supported its adoption by this State. Dr. Pendleton was elected the President of that body, and Dr. Wythe presided over its deliberations as Chairman.
of the Committee of the Whole. When the Court was re-organized in
1788, Dr. Bedleman was made the chief Justice of the Court of Appeals,
and Dr. Wythe declining an appointment to that Court, was made
the sole Chancellor of Virginia, in which situation he died about the
year 1805. His death it was generally believed, was produced by poison,
administered in his coffee, by a nephew, a boy, a relation of his, who he
undertook to educate, and who afterwards committed the horrid
crime of forging of cheques in his patron's name.

Amongst many singularities in Dr. Wythe's character, all of which were
results of his pure philanthropy, the most remarkable, was his passion
(for it really deserved that name) in the instructing and aiding in
the improving the education of youth. The difficulties and
embarrassments he had experienced in educating himself, if I
may say, made him not merely willing but desirous to smooth
the path and aid the efforts of others in the pursuit. Dr. Jefferson
was greatly indebted to him for the aid he rendered in improving
and forming his mind, and there was no period of his life I
believe after the attainment of manhood, during which he did not
remunerate the education of several young men. For this he
would receive no compensation, and could expect no
satisfaction but that arising from the consciousness of
performing a good action. Whereas, he saw as a youth of any
promise, who had made some progress in his studies, he was
decisive to have him, to the end he might stimulate to
greater exertion, and enable him to reach a higher eminence
than without this aid such a one would never rise.

This disposition will explain the connection he had with my
grandfather, relative to one in the year 1786, which I have formerly
stated. Let me now return to my story.

In the autumn of 1786, I was placed as I have stated under the
guidance of Dr. Wythe. I lived with my father, but attended
Dr. Wythe daily, I was the youngest boy he had ever undertaken to
instruct; and had no companion in my studies with him at
that time. The mode of instruction was singular; and as every
thing connected with the life and opinions of this great and good
man must be interesting, I will here describe it. I attended him—
every evening very early, and always found him waiting for me in his study by
sunsine. When I entered the room, he immediately took from his well-stored
library some Greek or Latin book, to which any accidental circumstances first
directed his attention. This was done at random, and I was led to notice the
first passage that caught his eye. Although utterly unprepared for such a
task, I was so pleased to have the assistance of a lexicon or a grammar, but
whenever I was at a loss, he gave me the meaning of the word or structure
of the sentence which had puzzled me, taking occasion to remark to one
the particular structure of the language, the peculiarity of its syntax, or
the diversity of its dialects. Whenever in the course of our reading any
reference was made to the ancient manners, customs, laws, superstitions or history
of the Greeks, he asked me to explain the allusion, and when I failed
to do so satisfactorily (as was often the case), he immediately gave a full,
clear, and copious account of the subject to which reference was made.
Having done so, I was loth to remind him of it the next day in order that we might
then learn from one another's recite, whether his explanation was correct or not, and the
difficulties I met with on one day generally produced the subject of the lesson
of the next. This exercise continued until breakfast time, when I left him
and returned home. I returned again about noon, and always found
him in his study as before. We then took some Latin author, and continued
our Latin studies, in the manner I have above described as to the Greek, until
at two o'clock, when I again went home. In the afternoon I again came
and asked for five o'clock when we amused ourselves until dark in the
writing Algebraic equations, or demonstrating Mathematical problems.
Our text books in both cases were in the French language, to which I was
thus enabled to work myself in this language also while I was
advancing in the studies whose subjects were as
common.
These evening occupations were profusely occupied, by employing
me in reading to him detached parts of the best English authors.
either in verse or prose; and sometimes the periodical publications
of the day, and whenever these last were the subjects of our employment.
my reading was often interrupted by some anecdote suggested by the
matter read, referring to minor events in the history of the
country or the character of those who had formerly occupied a
distinguished situation in it. Of such anecdotes the long life and
particular situation of Dr. Wyttenb had supplied him with a stock
almost inextinguishable, which he told in a manner calculated to excite much interest. This mode of instruction would have been a very good one if I had been older or somewhat more advanced than I then was, but in my situation it was objectionable in many respects. The difficulties I encountered were removed with as little effort on my part; that being no occasion for the exercise of my own strength of mind; it did not increase as much as would probably have been the case, nor did my instruction take such deep root as if I had been made to exert my own powers more. The subjects of our studies were also often times beyond the comprehension of one so young as I then was (for I was only twelve years of age) and therefore did not excite my attention sufficiently. And the irregular course of our reading was not well calculated to enable one to acquire much useful knowledge of the language, although it gave me some instruction as to the subjects treated by the authors read. By the help of a very attentive memory, however, I acquired a great deal of some very useful knowledge. During this period of my life, the stock of which the disposition I felt could I think much enlarged, pointed my course of study had been more methodical and regular. But Dr. Wyeke judged of men by himself, I suppose, and therefore decided erroneously. He was a man however, naturally endowed with great strength of mind, whose power he had never called into operation in this mode until they were fully matured and developed, whilst I was a boy of tender years whose intellect was just forming. In the mode I have just described persisted for the first year I studied with Dr. Wyeke. In the autumn of next year 1787 my father having purchased Ringomill, and being about to remove there, and Dr. Wyeke having lost his wife about this time, he proposed to my father that I should board with him. This proposition was readily accepted by my father, and upon his removal from Williamsburg, I became an inmate of Dr. Wyeke’s house. My course of study was the same as before, but having now the free use of his library at all times, and knowing generally what would be the subject of our exercises the following day, I was enabled to prepare myself for them better than I had done before. And when I was disappointed in this calculation, I rarely found any difficulty in playing off upon him some little stratagem or other, by means of which the authors and passages
I had already examined the preceding day; deceased the selected books for our next day’s reading. This previous preparation, and the benefits derived from uninterrupted intercourse, with my venerable tutor and from his instructive conversations, made my progress and improvement much more rapid than it would have been otherwise. I soon became a great favourite of my much respected master, and he proudly exhibited me at all times as a boy of great promise. Every foreign or other gentleman of distinction who passed through Williamsburg, generally made it a point to pay their respects to the distinguished man, and very few of these were ever suffered to leave his house, without being made to inspect some of my performances. About this time, Dr. Wight invented a very complete electrical machine, together with a very fine air pump and many other parts of philosophical apparatus. And when this arrived, most of our leisure moments were employed in making philosophical experiments, and ascertaining the causes of the effects produced. Several of the young gentlemen were also taken by letters as boarders, from whose society I likewise derived some information. So that this year passed away with me more profitably than even the preceding.

The experience of the year taught Dr. Wight, what almost any other man in his station would have foreseen, that at his time of life, in his estate, and with his habits, the presence of a numerous family about him, must occasion much more trouble than he could sustain. The necessary domestic duties occupied so much of his time, broke in upon his pursuits, and interrupted his studies and his amusement. He was invited and pressed by a thousand little occurrences he had never foreseen, and which any other would have guarded against. He could not bear and ought never to have subjected himself to any such burdening; he therefore very properly decided to apply the only remedy, which was to break up his boarding establishment, and to live by himself. He could not forego the pleasure he derived from instructing others however; and in doing it, to take any young gentleman to live in his house, he still expressed a wish however, to continue his instruction to any such as would attend him for that purpose. Most of those who lived at a distance, did not do so afterwards, but I continued to attend him, as I had done. So soon as I left the house of Dr. Wight, my father placed me with our friend, Mr. John Wickham. I have mentioned this gentleman before, whom hostilities ceased with
Great Britain in 1782, he left Mr. Turnbull in Greenville, and returned to New York. From thence he proceeded to Europe, and having travelled the world, came back to the United States, and visiting Virginia about the beginning of this year 1786, he then determined to study the law and to practice it. He accordingly commenced the study of the law under the direction of his father, and obtaining a license, entered into the practice, and fixed himself in Williamsburg, where he kept a bachelor's house, at the time I am now speaking of, the autumn of 1788. He went to live with him, and as he did not dine at home, I dined out, first at Judge Parry's, and afterwards with an old man by the name of Taliaferro, who resided near Mr. Wythe whom I continued to attend regularly as I had done previously. Defined most of the use of Mr. Wythe's valuable library for my preparatory studies, and losing much of the benefit I had derived from perpetual association with him, my improvement in some respects, was certainly not equal to what it had been during the past year; but I derived full compensation for this loss probably in the society of my friend Mr. Wickham, and from my intercourse with two young gentlemen of Petersburg, who were become scholars of Mr. Wythe also, and boarded from one. These young gentlemen, Charles Turnbull, and John Thompson, were both of them amiable and excellent boys, and the latter particularly was the most promising youth I have ever seen. He became highly distinguished afterwards as the author of the celebrated Letters of Quintus, while he was still quite young; and by his untimely death, a man, little doubt, Virginia was deprived of one of her sons who had been spared, but a short time longer, would have been regarded as one of her brightest ornaments. Between these young gentlemen and myself a close intimacy soon commenced, and even afterwards continued. We became almost inseparable companions, and I derived very great advantage from my intercourse and conversation with them, engaged as they then were in the same pursuits with myself.

Early in the year 1789 the reorganization of the Court, which had then recently been affected by imposing upon Mr. Wythe exclusively, the whole duties of the Chancery Court, made it necessary for him to remove to Richmond where his court was held. He therefore broke up his establishment in Richmond, and fixed himself in Richmond, where he
continued to reside until his death. When Dr. Wight left Williamsburg, my
father and Dr. Wickham concerning in the opinion that I was now sufficiently
advanced to be placed at College, I was immediately entered a student of
Williams and Mary— I continued to live with Dr. Wickham as formerly, but attended
all the Professor’s daily. When I entered College I had not yet attained my fifteenth
year, and so the course were more than half finished by the several professors, I
did not derive much benefit from any of them save only the Mathematical profes-
sor with whom my former studies under Dr. Wight enabled me to keep up very well.
Although I derived but little benefit from attending College during this latter
course however, I did not mislead my time. By the advice of Dr. Wickham I began
a regular course of History, which I presented with but little interruption
during this and the succeeding year as my leisure permitted, and then completed.
During this time I not only renewed all my reading of Ancient History, but went
through a very good course of the History of Modern Europe.

In the year 1790 Dr. Wickham contemplating a removal from Williamsburg to
Richmond, which he accomplished during that year, it became necessary for
my father to provide for me some other home. This he did accordingly, and
placed me in the house and under the special direction of Philip Madison, the
Resident of Williams and Mary College— I soon commenced with much zeal
and ardor a new career, in this guided by the advice of my very worthy
preceptor, and stimulated by the example of my friend Thomson, who also
entered college at this time. I never flagged nor abated my exertion in any
mattered degree. I read a good deal and reflected much upon what I did
read, and made myself well acquainted with it. I performed all my
college duties and exercises with great punctuality and in such a mode as always
gave me the highest standing in all my classes, and often attracted the
particular notice and high commendation of each of the professors.

In this way was passed the whole of this year, to me, the most useful and
profitable I think of any I had then passed. I think

An accident however occurred to me at this time which had very nearly put
a period to all my hopes and terminated my existence. It was an eruption
with my fortune story but not made a very strong impression upon me at
the time, and very probably interest you I will here relate it

The winter of 1790-91 was uncommonly severe. The cold was so intense that all
the water courses were blocked up and James river itself frozen over a great way
down. My father's house for several weeks in succession. During this winter
Mr. Weikam had married my father's half sister, and Kingston was a place of a good deal of gaiety. While the first encounter was severe, I invited two of my school fellows, fellow students (Robert Carter who lived in the same room with me at Dr. Madison's) and Robert Pennister, to go down with me to my father's on a visit. A creek which bounded my father's estate, eventuallly ascended to within a short distance of the College, and our plan was to skate down this creek to its mouth, and down the river opposite Kingston. Accordingly after dinner we prepared our skates, and walking to the head of the creek, descended it rapidly to its mouth, and then entered James river. The cold was so intense that the river had frozen while it was agitated by the air, and we found the ice here therefore very rough, and being covered by a slight fall of snow was perfecting it was not agreeable. In the distance however we discovered a field of ice, apparently quite smooth and black, which seemed to promise much more pleasant amusement, and therefore we proceeded. I led the way, and arriving at this smooth spot first, dashed upon it at once, and escaped the field with great velocity and much pleasure. When I reached the opposite and turned around, I discovered both my companions still standing on the rough ice, as if afraid to venture on that over which I had just passed safely. I therefore set off to re-cross the field and to assure them there was no danger. My example induced Pennister no longer to hesitate, and he immediately came off to join me. The ice, although sufficiently strong to sustain one, was not thick enough to bear us both, and as soon as we approached each other, the ice gave way with a horrid crash under our united weight, and we were plunged into the river Carter seeing us late in this took it for granted we were both lost forever, and immediately made for the nearest bank, shrieking most loudly. We soon rose however and being both good swimmers we didn't find much difficulty in sustaining ourselves above water, even incorporated as we were. So soon as we recovered from the first shock we saw that the only hope of escape was to break the ice before us (which was smooth as glass) until we reached the rough ice, for the smooth ice was so slippery we could get no hold of it. We immediately entered upon this task with desperate efforts. The sharp edges of the ice mangled our limbs and bodies each instant we broke it, and my blood