

1979

St George Tucker's two "Old Batchellor" essays on duelling: An edition with critical commentary

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<https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-dr1p-am64>

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ST. GEORGE TUCKER'S TWO "OLD BATCHELLOR" ESSAYS
ON DUELLING

An Edition with Critical Commentary

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Gary D. ^{ale}Turner

1979

APPROVAL SHEET

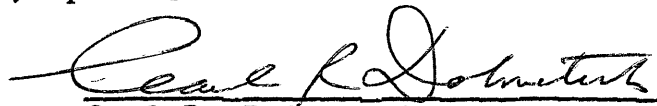
This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts




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Approved, April 1979



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Charles T. Cullen

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer expresses his appreciation to Professor Carl R. Dolmetsch, under whose direction this thesis was written, for his patient guidance and constant encouragement. The author is also indebted to Professors Charles E. Davidson and Charles T. Cullen for their careful reading and criticism of the manuscript and to Judy A. Turner for her unflinching moral support throughout the project.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine, in their literary and historical context, two unpublished essays written by St. George Tucker (1752-1827) on the subject of duelling. Specifically, this paper offers an annotated text of both essays and a critical evaluation of them.

A brief synopsis of Tucker's major accomplishments is included in the introduction, as well as an explanation of the circumstances under which the essays were written and a physical description of the essay manuscripts.

The annotated texts contained in this paper are exact transcriptions of the holograph manuscripts which now exist in the Tucker-Coleman Collection at the Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary.

The critical commentary, in addition to examining Tucker's unusually sentimental treatment of duelling in the essays and his possible reasons for using this approach, discusses the following subjects in the context of early nineteenth-century Virginia society: the familiar essay, the code duello, and the practice of duelling as a topic for the familiar essay.

The conclusion reached is that Tucker's essays on duelling, while lessened in literary value by excessive sentimentalism and limited narrative interest, are valuable literary documents which, by illustrating the author's attempt to improve social conditions through purely imaginative writing, help illuminate the beginnings of Southern belles-lettres.

ST. GEORGE TUCKER'S TWO "OLD BATCHELLOR" ESSAYS
ON DUELLING

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INTRODUCTION

In August and September, 1811, St. George Tucker, noted Virginian jurist, author, and educator, wrote a series of Addisonian essays, diverse in subject matter and style but always instructive in purpose, that were intended for inclusion in William Wirt's essay serial, The Old Bachelor, then running in the Richmond Enquirer and later published in a one-volume edition under the same title.¹ Twenty of these essays, none of which was published, still exist in holograph form in the Tucker-Coleman Collection of the Earl Gregg Swem Library at the College of William and Mary. The purpose of this paper is to offer an edition with critical commentary of two essays in this series which treat the subject of duelling. In addition to presenting an annotated text, the paper will include a discussion of the historical and literary contexts of these two essays and an evaluation of them.

Since the life and accomplishments of St. George Tucker have been examined in depth during recent years and are now generally familiar to the student of early Southern literature, only a brief biographical synopsis is required here.² St. George Tucker (1752-1827) was born in Bermuda and immigrated to colonial Virginia at the age of nineteen to attend William and Mary College. After studying law

under the supervision of George Wythe and obtaining his license to practice before the General Court of Virginia, he participated in the American Revolution as an officer of cavalry in the Virginia militia. At the war's conclusion he established a successful law practice and in 1788 accepted a judgeship of the General Court of Virginia, beginning a distinguished judicial career which spanned thirty-five years and included extended service as a judge both of the state supreme court and the U. S. District Court of Eastern Virginia. For a period of almost fourteen years beginning in 1790 Tucker held the position of professor of law at William and Mary in addition to performing his demanding judicial duties. While Tucker's contemporary reputation as a writer rested chiefly on non-belletristic works such as his five-volume edition of Blackstone's Commentaries and his formal essays on contemporary issues,³ his contributions to eighteenth and early nineteenth century Virginia literature as a poet, playwright, and writer of prose have gained increased attention among scholars during recent years.⁴

The following texts were transcribed from two holograph manuscripts loosely sewn into a blue multi-layered paper cover marked "For the Old Batchellor." Each composition covers two folio sheets, recto and verso, and the individual leaves measure twenty-one by thirty-five centimeters. These essays are numbered in the upper left hand corner "22" and "25," respectively, and each bears the

heading "For the Old Batchellor." Both are signed with the capital letter "Z" and bear the symbol  as a subscript.

No changes other than the modernization of Tucker's swash "s" have been made in transcribing the holographs. His British spelling, erratic capitalization, and use of the ampersand have been retained. Notes to the text have been included only in the following instances: when additional comment seems necessary for clear understanding (and when the required explanation can be made succinctly) and to identify caret additions and discernible cancellations.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

¹ For a discussion of Wirt's Old Bachelor serial and the possibility of Tucker's work appearing therein, see: Carl Dolmetsch, "Tucker's 'Hermit of the Mountain' Essay: Prolegomenon for a Collected Edition," in Essays in Early Virginia Literature, ed. J. A. Leo Lemay (New York: Burt Franklin and Co., 1977), pp. 257-275.

² For a general, if sentimental, treatment of St. George Tucker's life, see: Mary Haldane Coleman, St. George Tucker: Citizen of No Mean City (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1938).

³ William S. Prince, "St. George Tucker: Bard on the Bench," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 84 (1976), p. 267.

⁴ Dolmetsch, p. 257; Prince, pp. 267-282.

Sir,

Of all the social feelings a generous and dissinterested [sic] friendship has ever appeared in my eyes among the most estimable: the Affection between Brothers who have suckt the same tender, parental Breasts, and have been brought up in harmony, and from their earliest infancy, taught the sacred Lessons of Benevolence, ripens generally into a pure, affectionate, and lasting Friendship, which grows with their growth, and becomes stronger with increase of years.--Parents can not be too attentive to lay the Foundation of such strong fraternal Attachments between their Children; for in the hour of Calamity & Misfortune, where can we so naturally hope for aid or comfort, as from those whom nature herself has attach'd to us by such strong ties, as can only be weakened by unpardonable neglect in¹ parents, or by the unhappy Loss of such parents as would have discharged this sacred duty towards their Children. On the contrary, how grateful to the reflecting mind is it to see a numerous family tenderly attach'd to each other, and exerting every effort to render Life a comfort and blessing,² by the mutual interchange of kindness, and good offices on all occasions. This surely is one of those means of happiness which Providence in mercy to mankind

hath placed abundantly within our own reach. Too much attention therefore can not be paid to cherish, and to cultivate it from³ earliest infancy, to the latest period of Life.

But, the Sentiment of which it is my intention to say a few words is that ardent, and enthusiastic feeling, by which persons, generally in early Youth, are attracted to each other with an Attachment, even more than fraternal. This, most commonly proceeds from a similarity of taste, and sentiment, producing between young persons such an intimate connexion and intercourse, that it would seem at length, as if one common soul animated both. Like Pylades & Orestes⁴ they become inseparable, and each would willingly sacrifice his own Life, for the preservation of his Friend's. Many are the instances in which such friendships have never suffered any diminution, and where Death itself could not wholly dissolve the sacred Tie; the Survivor transferring to the Children & Family of the deceased friend the same affectionate regard that he bore to himself, and in many instances, adopting them as his own. Nothing surely can give an higher Idea of the excellence of the human heart, and the noble elevation it is capable of attaining, than such instances of pure, disinterested, and unshaken Friendship. And yet, such is the Weakness, infirmity, and inconsistency of human nature, that instances have not unfrequently occurred, where Friendships apparently built upon the most solid, and permanent

Foundations, have been, in a moment, renounced, and dissolved, by some frivolous or accidental Circumstance, not intended by the one, or not rightly understood by the other. And some occasions might be mentioned where a rancourous Animosity, which nothing could soothe, or calm has succeeded to former friendship: in others, the passions being vehemently excited, the parties have been hurried into the most desperate extremities, before they had time to reflect on the fatal consequences of what they were doing. An instance of this kind which occurred some years ago, in a retired part of the Country, has I believe never found its way into any of the public prints.

Honorius and Amintor⁵ were the Sons of two very respectable Gentlemen of moderate fortune, who resided within a mile of each other, in the Country. The families were particularly intimate, and having no other near neighbours, scarce a day passed without some friendly intercourse between them. They were both numerous; and as there was no good school near, the Fathers agreed to hire a Tutor, who was to live at their houses alternately, and keep a school at a small house about half way between them. Honorius and Amintor were nearly of the same age, & classmates; and as there was no perceptible inequality either in their Genius, or Application, they continued so, as long as they were at school together; they always got their tasks together, assisting each other, whenever assistance was wanted; their recreation, and sports were always the same; they rambled

together over the hills, or amused themselves with angling, or bathing together in the same rivulet, which was at no great distance from their school. During their holidays they were still constantly together, at the house of one or the other of their Fathers. Their Attachment was remarked by the whole School, by the whole of both Families, and by all who visited at their Fathers [sic] houses. If one was sick, the other staid with him till he got well, and that, without remitting their Attention to their Books. Thus they grew up together, until the period arrived when they were to go to some public School. They were sent at the same time, to the same College; by mixing in a larger society than they had ever been in formerly, their mutual attachment became stronger and stronger; they continued to be class-mates, and more than ever necessary to each other. It is not uncommon at public Schools to make some trial of the spirit of a Freshman; they did not escape such a trial; but the moment an insult was offered to the one, the other presented himself as his second, and supporter. Their Schoolmates being convinced that they did not want Courage, desisted from any further trials, and they prosecuted their studies with diligence and advantage, and obtained the Honor of a Degree at the same time; after which they returned on a visit to their friends for a few months: they were still inseparable, and every day seem'd to strengthen their mutual friendship. Being, both, intended for the Bar, they contrived to be admitted to study Law.

with the same Gentleman of that profession, and prosecuted their studies together with equal zeal and diligence, and on the same day obtained their Licences to practise. They proposed, at first, to settle in the same town and practise in the same Courts together; their plan however had some objections. They were too young to unite their practise, and form a partnership; and they were unwilling to run the risk of being opposed to each other. After mature deliberation they agreed to separate their practise, except in one Court, where as each moved in a remote circle from the other, it was less probable that they would be opposed, and where, by this arrangement, they might meet two or three times a year, and indulge their mutual friendship, & partiality, with a few days of happy intercourse. This plan was finally carried into Execution, and for several years they continued to meet two or three times a year at a Court, whither they were drawn more from a predilection for each other's Society than from any other Cause. They both married, and had two or three Children, a piece; and as they lived at no very great distance asunder, contrived to visit each other two or three times a year, with their wives & Children, and to spend a considerable portion of their leisure time in Winter, and during the Summer vacations, together, in the most affectionate manner. This friendly intercourse was kept up for several years, in a manner that contributed to cement their early Attachment more firmly than ever, till an unfortunate incident put a final period to it. It

happened that on some public occasion they dined together with a very large party, and unfortunately yielding to the example of those around them, drank to a greater excess than either had ever done before; a dispute arose in which unhappily they engaged on opposite sides, and being warm'd with wine, the friend was, for the first time, forgotten in the Ardor of Disputation. Amintor dropt some expression which Honorius interpreted as a sarcasm upon himself; he redden'd, and replied with a degree of harshness, which would have shock'd him at another Moment. Amintor, rous'd by so unexpected an Insult, (for he had not intended any offence by what he had said) retorted with Anger, and Severity; and Honorius instantly rose from the table, and going into another room, wrote him a challenge, which was immediately carried by an Officious friend, and accepted. They met early the next morning before either had recovered from the Fumes of Debauch: the seconds, were in the same state; no proposal was made for an Accomodation [sic], which both wish'd, but neither could propose. They exchange'd three fires without effect. At the fourth Amintor fell. Then it was that Reason, Recollection, and Friendship resum'd their places, in the Breast of Honorius; he dropt the fatal pistol, and rushed towards his wounded friend with an ejaculation, which shew'd the horrors of his Mind. Amintor held out his hand to him, as he advanced, and squeezing it with affection, with difficulty said, "We shall meet in Heaven, I hope," and expired. Honorius fell upon his

Bosom, and clasping him in his Arms wept aloud. The seconds stood aghast, whilst they witnessed the affecting Scene. Honorius at length starting up from the Corpse of his friend, siezed [sic] one of the pistols which was lying near to him loaded, and clapping the muzzle to his Temple, discharged it through his Brain, & falling upon the Corpse of his Friend expired.--

"How strong the Bands of Friendship! yet alas [sic]!
 Behind yon mouldering Tower with ivy crown'd,
 of two, the foremost in her sacred Class
 One from his friend recieves [sic] the fatal Wound!"⁶

Such was the Fate of Honorius, and Amintor; the Wife of the former who was in a state of pregnancy, fell ill, lost her Child, and died the day after hearing of her Husband's death. The family of the latter, who was not in affluent Circumstances, has since been exposed [to] all the Inconveniences and distresses, which may reasonably be expected from the loss of him who was their only support. --Such were the Consequences of this fatal misunderstanding between two excellent persons, and affectionate Friends.

NOTES TO ESSAY NO. 22

¹ Ms. originally read "in their parents" ("their" lightly cancelled).

² Ms. originally read "blessing to one another" ("to one another" lightly cancelled).

³ Ms. originally read "from our earliest" ("our" lightly cancelled).

⁴ Orestes, in Greek mythology, is the son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. His friendship with Pylades, the son of Strophius, is proverbial. See: "Pylades" and "Orestes," The Reader's Encyclopedia, 2d ed., (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1965).

⁵ Tucker, in all likelihood, means the names typologically. "Honorius" (Latin) derives from "honored" and "Amintas" (Greek) means "helpful."

⁶ These lines were taken from the seventeenth stanza of a twenty-five stanza poem entitled "Melpomene: or the Regions of Terror and Pity, an Ode" by the English poet and playwright Robert Dodsley (1703-1764). See: Robert Dodsley, Cleone: A Tragedy (London, 1759), pp. 83-91.

Sir,

I am the widow of the unfortunate Amintor, whose melancholy Fate you have lately recorded.--But you have omitted several interesting particulars, of which your correspondent, probably, was not informed, but which contributed not a little to encrease [sic] the weight of that great Misfortune to me, and mine. You must know, then Sir, my unfortunate¹ and only Sister, was the wife of Honorius. We were both married nearly about the same time, and never were two Sisters happier in their husbands, or in each other; and the affectionate friendship between our husbands appeared equal to our own. I had gone a few days before the fatal event which put a period to the happiness of us all, to pay my Sister a visit, and to remain with her until the birth of her Child, which was almost daily expected. Our husbands left us three days before the fatal morning, and had promised to return together the Evening of that day. How will it be possible for me to relate the sequel! Alas [sic], Sir! I can not. You have already told it, as it relates to my Sister: your own feelings must paint to you a scene too distressing for me to attempt to describe.--But² Sir, You do not yet know the full measure of my Misfortunes; My dear & venerable Father had died not long

before, in Circumstances very different from what his family supposed. My mother whose age & infirmities had long been the subject of painful Anxiety to her Children survived him; she had promised to divide the remainder of her days between my Sister, and myself, her only children,³ and had now come to attend her in her expected Confinement. She too, was a Witness of our Calamity, and a victim to it. She expired in my Arms a few days after the death of my Sister, of a broken heart; for surely never did grief wear so sad a countenance before. The Care of my Sister's three unfortunate Babes, with four of my own has now entirely devolved upon me. I endeavor to forget that their unfortunate, and lamented Father, was the Cause of all my Wretchedness, and that of my beloved Children. Yet, how hard is it to banish such painful recollections from a Bosom tortured with Agony, & overwhelm'd with Misfortune? Neither my Husband nor his unfortunate friend had made such a provision for their families, as to leave them without a considerable portion of pecuniary embarrassment [sic]. We have been in consequences (not withstanding the generous Conduct of some of their Creditors) deprived of most of the Comforts, and many of the necessaries of Life; our Children have arrived at that age, that renders Education an object of necessary Attention. I have it not in my power to send them to School, but I endeavour, as far as I am capable, to instruct them myself;--one difficult task still remains. They were too young, when deprived of their unfortunate

Fathers, to understand the story of their death. It had been my endeavour forever to conceal it from them: It was the dying request of my poor Sister, that I would. As yet, I believe and hope they remain ignorant; they call each other Brother; and Sister, and myself they believe to be their common mother. But how is it possible, Sir, that this pardonable deception can be continued much longer? Had I the means of removing into some distant place of Residence, I should not hesitate even to leave the few kind friends I have left in the world, and fix my abode among strangers, who could neither know, nor impart the fatal secret to them. The feigned names, under which you have been so kind as to disguise the tragical event which you have recorded, will I hope still continue to preserve the secret from their discovery. It is for the same reason, that instead of subscribing my real name, I shall use that, by which my beloved husband in the days of our happy union, was pleased to distinguish me.

The unfortunate

Amanda.⁴

It is not, I conceive [sic], easy to imagine a more afflicting situation than that of the distressed, and amiable Amanda. The Circumstances which she has disclosed add very much to the dreadful Misfortunes of her family, and the delicacy of her situation in respect to her unhappy Sister's Children (towards whom her heroic Benevolence

is probably without a parallel) can not fail to excite the warmest sympathy in every benevolent heart. What further Misfortunes may be reserved for her should the important secret be discovered, it is impossible to conjecture. I therefore hope the veil will never be drawn aside, and that her amiable endeavours to educate her adopted Children as well as her own, and to conceal from them their unhappy story, may be crown'd with success.

This unfortunate Affair exhibits an awful warning to all those who are apt to indulge the first sallies of passion, and rush on to immediate Revenge. Had Honorius when he withdrew from the Company to write a challenge, gone into the open Air for half an hour, or to his Bed, the probability is, that the Perturbation of his mind would have abated before morning, at least so far as for him to have seen his--friend, and have entered into some mutual explanation with him. And seeing the temper in which it is evident they must have met upon the fatal field, I can not but suppose, that if either of the seconds had entertained any corresponding sensations, an amicable adjustment of their quarrel might have taken place upon the spot. Surely, they who are called upon to attend a friend upon such an awful Occasion, ought to exert every honourable means of effecting a reconciliation, instead of witnessing a Death unwillingly inflicted by the hand that gives the Wound.--In all cases of sudden quarrels, especially between those who were before friends, there must be room for such

an interposition; and wherever there is, can he who neglects it, and sees his friend the victim of that neglect, help accusing himself as an Accessory to his Death?

The practice of Duelling seems to have recieved [sic] a salutary check in this Country lately;⁵ but I am somewhat apprehensive it may be succeeded by those sudden encounters, which passionate Minds, inflated by Resentment and the desire of Revenge are too apt to indulge in. To such let me recommend the serious perusal of the following beautiful lines, for which I am indebted to an old collection of poems. It is part of an ode to Melpomene by the late Mr. Dodsley of London.⁶

Ha! what is He, whose fierce indignant Eye,
 Denouncing Vengeance, kindles into flame?
 Whose boisterous fury blows a storm so high,
 As with its thunder shakes his labouring Frame.
 What can such Rage provoke?
 His words their passage choak:
 His eager steps nor time, nor truce allow,
 And dreadful dangers wait the menace of his Brow.

Protect me Goddess*! whence that fearful shriek
 Of Consternation? As grim Death had laid
 His icy fingers on some guilty Cheek,
 And all the powers of Manhood shrunk dismay'd;
 Ah see! besmear'd with gore,
Revenge stands threat'ning oer
 A pale delinquent, whose retorted eyes
 In vain for pity call--the wretched victim dies.

Nor long the space--abandon'd to Despair,
 With Eyes aghast, or hopeless fixt on earth,
 This Slave of Passion rends his scatter'd hair,
 Beats his sad Breast, and execrates his Birth:
 While torn within, he feels
 The pangs of whips and wheels;

And sees, or fancies, all the fiends below,
Beckoning his frightful Soul to realms of endless Woe.

*Melpomene.

Z.

20
+

NOTES TO ESSAY NO. 25

¹ Ms. originally read "unfortunate Sister" ("and only" added above the line with a caret).

² Ms. originally read "But alas [sic] Sir" ("alas" cancelled lightly).

³ "her only children" added above the line with a caret.

⁴ Tucker may have meant this name typologically, since "Amanda" (Latin) means "loving" or "lovable."

⁵ Tucker is most probably referring here to "An Act to Suppress Duelling" which was passed by the Virginia General Assembly on January 26, 1810. The preamble and first provision of this act were as follows:

Whereas experience has evinced, that the existing remedy for the suppression of the barbarous custom of duelling is inadequate to the purpose, and the progress and consequences of the evil have become so destructive as to require an effort on the part of the Legislature to arrest a vice the result of ignorance and barbarism, justified neither by the precepts of morality nor by the dictates of reason --for the remedy whereof

1. Be it enacted by the General Assembly, that any person, who shall hereafter willfully and maliciously; or by previous agreement fight a duel or single combat with any engine, instrument or weapon, the probable consequence of which might be the death of either party, and in so doing shall kill his antagonist, or any other person or persons, or inflict such wound as that the person injured shall die thereof within three months thereafter, such offender, his aiders, abettors and counsellors, being thereof duly convicted, shall be guilty of murder and suffer death by being hanged by the neck; any law, custom or usage of this commonwealth to the contrary notwithstanding.

⁶ In Greek mythology Melpomene is the muse of tragedy. Tucker quotes here the fifth, sixth, and seventh stanzas of Robert Dodsley's twenty-five stanza poem "Melpomene: or the Regions of Terror and Pity, an Ode." The three

stanzas are quoted accurately except for capitalization and the incorrect transcription of the word "frighted" in the last line of the seventh stanza. Tucker quotes the word as "frightful." See: Note six to Essay #22.

CRITICAL COMMENTARY

The modern reader may be inclined at first glance simply to dismiss St. George Tucker's "Old Batchelor" essays on duelling as bathetic and more appealing as sentimental comedy than as serious moral instruction. Nevertheless, more than a cursory glance at these two works is necessary before any sort of intelligent or equitable critical judgment of them can be made. Since the purpose of this commentary is, in part, to make such a judgment, a careful examination is in order, not only of the essays themselves, but also of their subject in its historical context, of Tucker's apparent feelings concerning the works' major themes, of his possible reasons for approaching the topic as he did, and of the methods used by his contemporaries in treating this or similar material. This study, then, will consider the following specific subject areas in the context of early nineteenth-century Virginia society: the purpose and form of the familiar essay, the function and prevalence of the code duello, and the practice of duelling as a topic for the familiar essay. Once these issues have been clarified, a close examination of St. George Tucker's cautionary tales concerning the sad plight of Honorius, Amintor, and Amanda should prove interesting and worthwhile.

The informal American essay in Tucker's time, usually modelled after those in the early eighteenth-century British serials of Addison and Steele, was primarily didactic in purpose and neoclassical in style.¹ William Wirt, in The Letters of the British Spy (1803) makes no secret of his regard for one of the British serials and, in addition, makes perfectly clear what he considers its primary function:

Were I the sovereign of a nation, which spoke the English language, and wished my subjects cheerful, virtuous and enlightened, I would furnish every poor family in my dominion (and see that the rich furnished themselves) with a copy of the Spectator; and ordain that the parents or children should read four or₂ five numbers, aloud, every night in the year.²

Seven years later, when he explained his purpose for The Old Bachelor series as "virtuously to instruct, or innocently to amuse,"³ Wirt still believed that the informal essay's primary function should be service to society. In a letter to St. George Tucker concerning the possible publication of a second Old Bachelor series, Wirt makes the point with even greater force: "I shall be not a little proud to be bound up with you in the same volume and I cannot help flattering myself that we may be of some service in this country."⁴ Tucker, in a later letter to Wirt, confirms the didactic purpose of the series by writing that he will be "happy indeed" to contribute material "As long as you continue to pursue the desire of improving our young folks by your Essays. . . ."⁵ When Wirt felt

that the essays were accomplishing little in the way of social improvement, he concluded the series and explained his action in these words:

I am dispirited . . . by the little effect such things produce. I did not begin that business for fame. I wrote in the hope of doing good, but my essays dropped into the world like stones pitched into a mill-pond; a little report from the first plunge; a ring or two rolling off from the spot; then, in a moment, all smooth and silent as before, and no visible change in the waters to mark that such things had ever been.⁶

While William Wirt's three series⁷ were by no means the only ones being published in early nineteenth-century Virginia (most small town newspapers, in fact, had their own as a status symbol⁸), his were the most widely known and respected, and they accurately represent the characteristics of other contemporary essay serials in the Commonwealth.

Informal essays of this period, as noted earlier, were generally neoclassical in style. This is readily apparent in the profusion of classical names, the formality of diction, and the normal reliance on reason rather than emotion evident throughout these writings. Neoclassicism, according to Richard Beale Davis, "was strong all through the period. St. George Tucker," he continues,

displayed the quality of "sound judgment" and held the attitude that imagination was a lighter faculty compared with reason and judgment. Wirt continued to evidence the same qualities in the British Spy and Rainbow and even in the Old Bachelor essays . . . [and] urged the younger men to develop a style utilitarian, masculine, and reasoned.¹⁰

However generally neoclassical most of the essays were, or however strongly Wirt recommended the principles of Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres to his young protégés, it is important to realize that an insistent element of Rousseauistic sentimentalism was also present in the literary atmosphere.¹¹ No one, it seems, was entirely immune to the spell of this insidious intruder, least of all William Wirt. Carl Dolmetsch, in a discussion of Wirt's serials, mentions "the sentimental tone of the 'O. B.,'"¹² and Jay B. Hubbell, remarking on the same subject, observes that the two most prominent character traits in Wirt's Dr. Robert Cecil (the Old Bachelor) are enthusiasm and sentimentality. "These traits," he says, "are [also] prominent in the character of Wirt himself."¹³ Davis, in basic agreement with Dolmetsch and Hubbell, places Wirt's tendency toward sentimentalism in even stronger light:

Wirt . . . is clearly a transition figure attracted both to the sentiment and antiquarianism of the new romanticism and to Addisonian and Popean rationalism. In an essay such as that upon the Blind Preacher,¹⁴ he is overly rhetorical, overly sentimental, but in other discussions, particularly on oratory, he can be almost relentlessly logical and direct, even at the very moment when he praises emotionalism in public speaking.¹⁵

One aspect of Wirt's personal conflict between reason and emotion which is of particular interest in this study concerns The Letters of the British Spy. Generally recognized as Wirt's most sentimental essay series, it was also by far his most popular, running to ten editions in the author's lifetime.¹⁶ The best remembered essay in the volume,

according to Bruce Granger, is the one concerning James Waddell, the Blind Preacher mentioned above.¹⁷

Informal essays in early nineteenth-century Virginia, then, or at least the most notable ones, were written to improve the reader in some way, and they usually, but not always, employed an appeal to reason rather than one to emotion. While neoclassical formality and rationality were considered the "best" elements of style, sentimentalism, in fact, was present in many of the essays. And in some cases, at least, the sentimental seemed most widely accepted by the reading public. St. George Tucker, as we shall see later in this paper, was as much a neoclassicist as the other writers of his day. He recognized the practical value of other styles, however, and chose his literary approach according to his immediate purpose.

In order to understand and appreciate fully the Tucker essays on duelling, some knowledge of the practice as it existed in eighteenth and nineteenth century Virginia is necessary.¹⁸ Basic to this knowledge is the realization that the duel in Tucker's time, especially in Virginia, was a highly controversial issue. While generally deplored by "thinking people,"¹⁹ the practice was kept alive and flourishing until well after the Civil War by public sentiment and the idea of a "gentleman's honor."²⁰

The duel, brought originally to America by British and Continental military officers,²¹ can be generally defined as a "combat between two persons, especially one fought

in the presence of seconds or witnesses, to decide some quarrel or point of honor."²² The Virginia "code duello," the set of unwritten but widely understood and respected rules under which the duel was arranged and fought, consisted of items too numerous for mention here. Those of major importance, however, or of special interest to this study, may be paraphrased as follows:

1. The challenge must be issued in writing through a friend, naming the time and place for the proposed duel.

2. The person receiving the challenge designates the weapons to be used and the distance between adversaries.

3. The person receiving a challenge is obliged to accept the "invitation" (unless the challenger is of inferior social status) upon pain of being "posted" publicly as a coward.

4. The designated seconds (representatives of the participants) must draft a formal statement of conditions to be signed by the participants.

5. Once the statement of conditions is signed, the seconds shall take complete charge of the affair and see to its being carried through as agreed.

6. Designated surgeons shall be on hand to give medical aid to persons injured during the duel.

7. The offensiveness of the insult determines the number of shots ("fires") to be exchanged. When a positive wrong or deep injury has been committed, one exchange is insufficient; the duellists must continue firing until

one participant makes a satisfactory apology or until one or the other falls.

8. Challenges are never to be delivered at night, for it is desirable to avoid all hot-headed proceedings.²³

While various attempts were made to end the "barbarous practice,"²⁴ nothing, it seemed, was effective. Laws were passed from time to time against issuing or accepting challenges, acting as seconds, or "posting" a reluctant adversary. The courts, however, usually refused to convict the accused, even when a fatality had occurred. Clergymen damned the practice from the pulpit, but their words were largely ignored. Universities expelled students who participated in duels and were subjected to student riots and protests as a result. Even the essays which appeared in newspaper serials on the subject mirrored the controversial nature of the issue: some essays condemned the practice, while others argued its virtues (three such essays which appeared in Wirt's Rainbow series within a space of three months will be discussed later). While intelligent and liberal-minded people understood that public opinion and the concept of honor were jointly responsible for duelling's longevity, few, if any, had any idea how these feelings could be changed.

The statements of two United States Senators on the subject, while made some twenty-seven years after St. George Tucker addressed the issue, accurately summarize the problem as it existed in early nineteenth century Virginia.

According to Senator Henry Clay,

The practice of duelling originated in, and is sustained by, public opinion; and so long as it is sustained, it will prevail, in despite of law, on the principle which has passed into a proverb, that when public opinion sets its face against the measure, no law will be requisite.²⁵

Senator Robert Rhett continues in the same vein:

The man with a high sense of honor, and nice sensibility, when the question is whether he shall fight or have the finger of scorn pointed at him, is unable to resist, and few, very few, are found willing to adopt such an alternative. When public opinion is renovated, and chastened by reason, religion and humanity, the practice of duelling will at once be discountenanced.²⁶

In examining Tucker's essays on the subject, three historical points concerning the issue of duelling in early Virginia should be remembered. The first of these is that the problem was not one of a parochial or passing nature, but one of wide interest which had existed for at least twenty-five years before Tucker wrote the essays and was to continue for more than a half-century after his death. The second point is that all attempts to halt the practice up to and including Tucker's time had proven futile; neither the threat of punishment by law nor the imposition of moral sanctions by the church had seemed at all effective. Finally, it should be remembered that the problem was recognized as one having more to do with man's feelings than with his intellect. One could hardly admit, for instance, that two men who voluntarily faced each other at a distance of fifteen paces or less and "blazed" away with loaded pistols until one or the other was seriously wounded or dead were

solving their problems in a rational way. This was done, quite simply, because custom demanded it and because a man's honor and masculine pride were at stake. Neither the act nor the issue, then, had anything whatever to do with reason but everything to do with highly charged emotion.

A brief discussion of the forerunners of Tucker's essays on duelling is necessary if these works are to be seen in proper historical and literary context. Besides serving as the subject of the three essays mentioned earlier which appeared in Wirt's 1805 Richmond Enquirer serial, The Rainbow, the issue of duelling was treated extensively and with imagination both in Richard Steele's Tatler and Joseph Addison's Spectator. While we can safely assume that Tucker had read both of the British works in their entirety (since he was, like Wirt, an avid proponent of Addison and Steele²⁷ and owned at least one volume of The Spectator²⁸), none of the English essays (with one possible exception) seems likely, either from content or style, to have served as source material for Tucker's compositions. Nonetheless, as precedents for Tucker's choice of subject and as further evidence of the universal nature of the duelling problem, the British essays deserve at least brief discussion.

James Ferguson, writing in the preface to an 1823 edition of The Tatler, makes an interesting comment on the significant moral influence generally attributed to that work. "Steele's admirable papers on duelling," he says,

"were among the first successful attempts on that remnant of barbarism."²⁹ Whether or not his "attempts" were as successful as Ferguson indicates, Steele certainly attacked the problem with élan. The Tatler contains no less than seven numbers, all within the space of a single month, dealing with the practice of duelling.³⁰ Whether Steele considered his task accomplished after the seventh essay or simply lost interest in the issue provides interesting speculation. In any event, all of the essays damn the practice as a "horrid and senseless custom" and, as might be expected, make their appeal through satire and reasoned discussion. Nothing which remotely resembles sentimentalism is evident in any of the essays. In the preface to the Octavo Edition in 1710, Steele indicates his deep hatred of the practice and implies that one of his purposes in writing The Tatler has been to rid the country of duellists. ". . . [N]ever hero in romance," he writes, "was carried away with a more furious ambition to conquer giants and tyrants, than I have been in extirpating gamesters and duellists."³¹

The essays on duelling in The Spectator generally mirror the form and content of those in The Tatler. Nine essays in the series deal with the subject, and the method of appeal is again mostly through satire and reason. One notable exception, however, exists in number eighty-four. This number, attributed by the editor to Steele, contains several striking parallels to Tucker's "Old Bachelor" essay

number twenty-two. The composition is in the form of a cautionary tale involving characters with classical names, and one of them, Spinamont, is overcome with grief at having just killed his best friend in a duel. The sentimentalism present in this essay comes very close to that employed by Tucker. In the following, Spinamont is addressing the king, Pharamond, and in telling his pathetic story is leading up to an accusation against the ruler for allowing the horrible custom of duelling to exist. Pharamond, at the end of the story, realizes that it is he, in reality, and not Spinamont who is responsible for the death of the beloved friend.

Oh excellent Pharamond, name not a friend to the unfortunate Spinamont: I had one, but he is dead by my own hand; but, oh Pharamond, tho' it was by the Hand of Spinamont, it was by the Guilt of Pharamond. I come not, oh excellent Prince, to implore your Pardon; I come to relate my Sorrow, a Sorrow too great for human Life to support: From henceforth shall all Occurrences appear Dreams or short Intervals of Amusement, from this one Affliction which has siez'd [sic] my very Being. Pardon me, oh Pharamond, if my Grievs give me Leave, that I lay before you, in the Anguish of a wounded Mind, that you, Good as you are, are guilty of the generous Blood spilt this Day by this unhappy Hand: Oh that it had perished before that Instant! . . . Know then, that I have this Morning unfortunately killed in a Duel the Man whom of all Men living I most loved.³²

William Wirt's Rainbow serial, second series, was never published in book form, but appeared in the Richmond Enquirer between October 27, 1804, and April 6, 1805. During the three months between January 5 and March 30, three essays on duelling were published. The authors of two of the

letters have not been identified, but interestingly enough, the third essay, entitled "Vindication of Duelling," was written by the Richmond lawyer, George Tucker, a cousin of St. George Tucker of Williamsburg.³³ In style and method of appeal all three of these essays could stand as exemplars of neoclassical writing. Learned, urbane, and elegant, the essays make their appeal strictly to reason. Through the flawless development of an argument which proceeds from an undeniable axiom, step by step to a seemingly irrefutable conclusion, each of the essays is designed as a classic example of rationalism and logic.

The first of the three essays, published on January 5, presents an argument totally against the practice of duelling and optimistically declares that "truth," which has always triumphed in the past will do so again in overcoming this "prevailing immorality." The following passage will serve to illustrate the writer's style:

The history of human society . . . is little else, than a detail of the evils which have arisen from inveterate errors and the means which philosophy and reason have successfully employed for their gradual extirpation. Viewed in this light, the proposition that truth is omnipotent, far from being an idle hyperbole, or unmeaning rant, is an important fact, attested and illustrated by the progress of society and science.³⁴

In addition to proclaiming the inevitable victory of truth, the author ridicules the familiar arguments in support of duelling ("honor" must be preserved, "insult" can only be rectified by revenge, duelling is courageous, etc.) as irrational and illogical.

The second essay, published on January 18, while employing a similar, if less flamboyant, style, approached the practice of duelling in quite a different manner. Seeming by his tone to denounce the custom, the author actually argues in its favor. Since public opinion cannot be changed, he observes, and since honor is of primary importance to every man, the idea that the victor in a fatal duel is guilty of murder (just like a common criminal) is unjust and irrational. The capstone of his logic is the concluding idea of the essay: if duelling could be suppressed, he reasons, its suppression would probably lead to something worse. "Wronged" men might resort to poison or stilletos as they do in countries where duelling is not the fashion.³⁵

The last of these Rainbow essays, the one by George Tucker, is by far the most interesting of the three. Not only does the author blatantly defend the custom of duelling, an unusual position indeed considering the moral and instructive purpose of the series, but he does so in a particularly remarkable way. Using traditional neoclassic rationality in structuring the essay and presenting his case, Tucker argues that the issue of duelling is wholly an emotional one and cannot, therefore, be resolved through an appeal to man's reason. "'Tis an affair," he says, "not of reflection but of sensation, not of reasoning but of feeling." He continues:

To attempt by phlegmatic reasonings respecting the injustice of duelling to controul these inexplicable but imperious feelings, betrays the profoundest ignorance of the nature of man. As well might we attempt by argument to quench the fever's fire, or quell the phrenzy of a maniac's brain.

George Tucker's major argument in defense of duelling is that since "the laws of honor [are] inscribed not on mouldering parchment, but on the tablets of the heart" and since no amount of rational argument (or anything else, for that matter) will keep men from duelling, the reasonable thing to do is simply to accept the practice as inevitable. There are, he continues, some good points to be seen in the custom. Not only does the practice protect "the reputation of the fairest and most amiable part of the creation, which might [otherwise] be blasted with impunity," but in addition, the very presence in society of the custom of duelling forces a man to be more civilized in his dealings with other men. "To its influence," Tucker reasons, "ought to be ascribed the superior propriety, delicacy and refinement of modern manners."

As intriguing as these arguments may be, Tucker's methods, for our purposes, may be of greater significance. Insisting that the survivor of a fatal duel (since he must live and observe its destruction, etc.) is actually the loser and reasoning that, since even this horror is insufficient to halt the practice, nothing will, he paints a sentimentalized picture of agony that closely rivals that of his older cousin in Williamsburg:

The survivor is the genuine victim. He is doomed perhaps to behold the blood streaming from the breast of his expiring friend, whose dying eyes e're they close forever, with their "last lingering agonising look" bespeak forgiveness, whose quick breath quivering on his whitening lips falters in inarticulate accents an everlasting adieu, whose palsied, clay-cold hand, with its last convulsive grasp expresses not the pang of dissolution, but the severer pang of final separation from the friend he leaves, the severer pang of commiseration for the agonies that await him, whilst in dark and hideous perspective, the heart-harrowing images of the distracted wife, the frantic mother, the little hands of the innocent infant wrung in agony, in dread succession flash upon his soul.³⁶

Having examined, then, the peripheral areas of the subject, a detailed look at St. George Tucker's two essays is now in order. As we have seen, the two essays are written in epistolary form and are designated, respectively, numbers twenty-two and twenty-five. Since the letters were obviously written to be read successively and, in fact, form the two halves of a single narrative, this discussion will consider them critically as an individual unit.

Tucker's general purpose in writing the essays seems immediately apparent, as does his major theme and method of appeal. Simply stated, the story of Honorius, Amintor, and Amanda is a cautionary tale depicting the horrors inherent in the practice of duelling and is designed to convince the reader, mainly through an appeal to his emotions, that duelling should not be permitted in society. In style the essays seem to be a combination of the neo-classical and the romantic. Tucker employs classical names, clear and concise diction, and a simple, well-ordered narrative

in essays undeniably intended to provide moral instruction. On the other hand, he seems to depend most heavily on unrestrained emotionalism to carry his major didactic purpose. In general terms, then, these two letters appear to confirm John Hare's comment that St. George Tucker's essays "are decidedly the works of a neo-classicist struggling to keep up with the times by treating his subject with sentimental effusiveness."³⁷ While there can be no quarrel with the description of Tucker as a neo-classicist and while no reasonable person could deny that these two essays display a certain amount of "sentimental effusiveness," this observation somehow seems too pat to be entirely credible. The dangerous part of Hare's statement, obviously, is his simplistic idea that Tucker was "struggling to keep up with the times." As this discussion progresses it should become apparent that Tucker, at least where these essays are concerned, had a good deal more in mind than simply illustrating his literary modernity.

From the modern reader's standpoint there are two closely related literary problems in the essays which deserve discussion. The first of these, Tucker's sentimentalism, is mentioned above and will be examined in more detail later in the paper. The second problem, which adds significantly to the first, concerns the weakness of plot and lack of character development in the first of the two essays. Nothing takes place in the story of Honorius and Amintor (at least nothing to command our loyalty to the characters

or our interest in the narrative) until, on the last page of the essay, our emotions are assaulted by the unfortunate events of the night at the tavern and the morning thereafter. Perhaps it is unfair to expect the writer to develop plot and character in so limited a space. The fact is, nonetheless, that the reader is simply not adequately prepared, either by attachment to the characters or by interest in the story, to accept the results of the duel as serious pathos.

While the essays may be somewhat lacking in narrative interest, there is no corresponding deficiency in variety of theme. The most impressive feature of the compositions is the unusual amount of thematic ground covered within the confines of two very short and apparently simple letters. Although one is aware during an initial reading that more is going on in the story than Tucker's frontal attack on duelling, one scarcely suspects that the author is, in fact, treating three additional major themes and several minor ones. In what seems to be their general order of importance, these major themes are friendship, family, and education. The minor themes, in addition to anger (or "passion") and drunkenness, are best described as various personal responsibilities supporting the major ideas, including the duties of parents to their children, of husbands to their wives, and of one friend to another. While these themes are used primarily in support of the duelling issue, this overabundance of thematic material illustrates Tucker's

primary concern with providing moral instruction rather than entertainment and is probably more responsible than any other factor for the weaknesses in plot and character mentioned above. In short, the writer seems to sacrifice narrative interest to abundance of theme.

The theme of "friendship" occupies a position of importance in the essays exceeded only by that of "duelling." Not only does Tucker spend the entire first half of letter twenty-two extolling the virtues of this "most estimable" of feelings, but in addition, the major moral impact of the essays depends upon the "Bands of Friendship" existing between Honorius and Amintor. If there had been, in fact, no friendship between the two, there could hardly have been a reason for the essays. In the final section of letter twenty-five, as the author laments the dreadful results of the fatal duel, the theme reappears to provide a fitting capstone to the moral of the story: if the seconds had fulfilled their duties as friendship required, the tragedy would not have occurred.

The significance of "family" as a theme in the essays closely rivals that of friendship. Letter twenty-two begins with a serious lecture on the virtues of strong family ties and the benefits enjoyed by members of "a numerous family tenderly attach'd." Again, as in the case of friendship, the moral impact of the tale depends upon the reader's acceptance of this principle, since the pathos of Amanda's letter results from the destruction of the two family units.

Not content simply to portray the happiness of a family intact and the sadness of one destroyed, Tucker also presents an important lesson on the duties of husbands. Wives, he cautions, must be provided a suitable legacy in order not to be left with "a considerable portion of pecuniary embarrassment [sic]."

The subject of education is undoubtedly one of Tucker's major concerns in the essays. On page one of the first letter he mentions the duties of parents to educate their children in the "sacred Lessons of Benevolence" and continues his comments on the subject throughout the narrative. The boys' fathers displayed admirable concern for their sons' education by hiring a tutor when "there was no good school near." Honorius and Amintor were excellent students who suffered illness "without remitting their Attention to their Books." In college the youths "prosecuted their studies with diligence and advantage" and, going on to study the law, "prosecuted their studies together with equal zeal and diligence." Amanda, even while "deprived of most of the Comforts, and many of the necessaries of Life" and unable to afford school for her children, found the time and energy to instruct them herself. "I hope," the author confides, ". . . that her amiable endeavors to educate her adopted Children . . . may be crown'd with success."

In addition to presenting these lessons on friendship, family, and education, Tucker makes strong, if brief, comments

concerning the evils of "passion" and drunkenness. While these two subjects would be difficult to justify as major themes, their relative importance to the fate of Honorius and Amintor makes them worthy of note. Without the evil influence of even one of these, one can argue, the tragedy could not have occurred.

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the modern reader's greatest problem with these essays is Tucker's overly sentimental approach to his subject. That the criticism is well deserved can hardly be denied: in these writings the author makes his appeal to emotion rather than to reason. While this can be partially justified, or at least rationalized, by citing examples of blatant sentimentality in the works of Tucker's models or better-known contemporaries (as in the examples of Steele, Wirt, and George Tucker examined earlier) or by simply writing the problem off as Tucker's imitation of a later style (as Hare suggests), neither of these solutions seems entirely satisfactory. To attribute the sentimentalism in these essays to a simple imitation of style, whether it be that of contemporaries, past models, or modern fashion, seems to ignore what we know of St. George Tucker. Consider what he once said about his own writing:

A plain intelligible didactic stile [sic] is what I aim'd at. . . . If the substance of what I read pleases me, I never stop to consider whether by any alteration of the structure of a Sentence, or the substitution of one word for another, the Beauty of the passage may be improved. 38

This would seem to indicate that Tucker was much more concerned with accomplishing whatever writing purpose he had in mind than he would have been with any simple imitation of style. He was, in short, more interested in purpose than in form.

As to Tucker's personal feelings about sentimentalism, a letter to his wife in 1781 should be of interest. Having just witnessed the arrival of the French fleet, Tucker wrote so effusively that the letter was embarrassing to him. Concluding a particularly grandiose and sentimental passage by calling for "an uninterrupted profusion of blessings [to fall] on the head of the glorious and immortal WASHINGTON," he continues:

Thus much for rant! But to a heart overflowing with the most happy presages of felicity nothing is more difficult than to avoid giving vent to its ebullitions. To you--and it is to you alone that I address myself--I need not apologize for any extravagance of sentiment or of diction that this letter contains.³⁹

It is difficult to imagine that Tucker, here obviously self-conscious about his extravagant use of sentiment even in a private letter to his wife, would choose this style unless he felt that his purposes could best be served by doing so.

When one considers that St. George Tucker must have read his cousin's "Vindication of Duelling" concerning the futility of attacking the practice through reason, an interesting possibility comes to mind. The Williamsburg Tucker in writing his essays six years later may well have

remembered what his kinsman had said ("To attempt by phlegmatic reasonings . . . to controul these . . . feelings, betrays the profoundest ignorance of the nature of man.")⁴⁰ and made a conscious effort to approach the subject through the heart rather than through the mind. If, in addition, one credits the ideas mentioned earlier, that Tucker disliked and was embarrassed by excessive sentimentality and that he chose his writing style to fit the purpose of his work, this supposition seems even more likely. One should remember in reading these essays that Tucker was much more in the habit of writing in a "straightforward style based on common sense, sound judgment, and logical reasoning," than he was in using an appeal to emotion to carry his argument.⁴¹ As Davis comments, "Tucker in practice displayed the quality of 'sound judgment' and held the attitude that imagination was a lighter faculty compared with reason and judgment."⁴² In any event, it seems clear that Tucker's use of extreme sentiment in these two essays was the result of a careful plan designed to fulfill his moral purpose.

St. George Tucker had strong personal feelings on the subject of duelling, and these, in addition to explaining the author's sense of mission in designing the essays, may also account in part for his sentimentality. To a dedicated jurist sworn to uphold the principles of law and order the idea of duelling must have been anathema. Further, with a brother who had been convicted of issuing a challenge

and "posting" his adversary, a cousin who openly advocated the practice, and a stepson who was perhaps Virginia's most notorious duellist, Tucker could hardly have escaped an emotional involvement in the issue.

While Thomas Tudor Tucker's conviction of the above mentioned charges during the winter of 1773 in Charleston, South Carolina, would perhaps have had little outward effect on St. George, the young Williamsburg Tucker must have felt a deep sense of embarrassment over the widely reported incident. According to Coleman "the suit . . . was . . . a cause célèbre in South Carolina and Virginia."⁴³ The fact that his cousin professed a popular and "unenlightened" opinion concerning the duel, while again reflecting no personal discredit on St. George ("Vindication of Duelling" was published, after all, pseudonymously), must have increased Tucker's desire to do his part in abolishing the "barbarous practice."

What brought the issue "closest to home," however, in personal discredit and embarrassment to St. George Tucker and what was undoubtedly most responsible for his strong emotional concern with the subject was the conduct of his stepson, John Randolph. Having reared Randolph from early childhood, the scrupulously law-abiding judge and respectable professor of law was obliged not only to witness his own stepson's eviction from William and Mary for engaging in a duel (almost immediately after the school adopted a statute against the practice!), but was, in addition, forced

to watch John Randolph develop the widely acknowledged reputation of a hot-headed, almost insanelly vengeful man who was prone to settle every argument at the point of a loaded gun.⁴⁴ While Tucker regarded his stepson with affection, the relationship between the two men grew severely strained as the years passed and finally reached the point of open hostility on the part of John Randolph. On one occasion Judge Tucker, after receiving an overt social snub from Randolph, commented sadly, "I never thought that one of my children would refuse my hand!"⁴⁵

One additional incident in the life of St. George Tucker deserves illumination if his involvement in the cause against duelling is to be fully understood. In 1802, while Tucker was professor of law, a duel was fought between two students at William and Mary which resulted in their expulsion from the college. The action taken by the school's administration against the duellists caused a student demonstration during which crowds gathered at Bruton Parish Church and St. George Tucker's home and proceeded to throw stones through the windowpanes of both buildings. While the incident was apparently exaggerated by an account in the New York Evening Post and was later described in the Richmond Virginia Argus as a "disturbance" in which "only five or six students were involved," it seems clear that "Judge Tucker's house" was one of the two primary targets of the demonstrators.⁴⁶ That the students would vent their ire in this particular way indicates beyond a reasonable

doubt that there were at that time at least two well-known enemies of duelling in Williamsburg: the church and St. George Tucker.

These two essays, while from a modern standpoint perhaps overly didactic, excessively sentimental, and less than captivating in narrative interest, are, nonetheless, valuable as literary documents which help illustrate the beginnings of Southern belles-lettres. St. George Tucker, dedicated both professionally and personally to the principles of law and reason, was obviously sincere in wanting the practice of duelling abolished, and his attempt to help end the custom through purely imaginative writing was an interesting deviation from the compositions of most of his contemporaries. Perhaps Tucker's essays would never have enjoyed the success against duelling that Ferguson attributed to those of Steele,⁴⁷ but it seems rather a shame that they were never given a chance.

NOTES TO CRITICAL COMMENTARY

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³ William Wirt, The Old Bachelor (Richmond, 1814), p. 63.

⁴ William Wirt to St. George Tucker, August 7, 1811, in The Tucker-Coleman Collection, Swem Library, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.

⁵ St. George Tucker to William Wirt, September 4, 1811, in Wirt Papers, The Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland.

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⁹ Richard B. Davis, Intellectual Life in Jefferson's Virginia (Chapel Hill: Univ. of N. C. Press, 1964), p. 284; hereafter cited as ILJV.

¹⁰ Davis, ILJV, p. 257.

¹¹ Davis, ILJV, p. 257.

¹² Carl Dolmetsch, "Tucker's 'Hermit of the Mountain' Essay: Prolegomenon for a Collected Edition," in Essays in Early Virginia Literature, ed. J. A. Leo Lemay (New York: Burt Franklin and Co., 1977), p. 260.

¹³ Jay B. Hubbell, "William Wirt and the Familiar Essay in Virginia," William and Mary Quarterly, 2d Ser., XXIII (March 1943), p. 146.

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- 16 Hubbell, p. 137.
- 17 Granger, pp. 188-189.
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- 20 James T. Moore, "The Death of the Duel," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 83 (1975), p. 259.
- 21 Robert L. Scribner, "The Code Duello in Virginia," Virginia Cavalcade, 3 (1953), p. 28. There is some disagreement among historians as to when duelling actually originated in America. Since records exist, however, of duels having been fought between officers of the British Navy in North Carolina during 1765, the practice must have begun at least as early as the French and Indian War (1754-1763). See: Hamilton Cochran, Noted American Duels and Hostile Encounters (New York: Chilton Company, 1963), p. 34.
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- 25 Henry Clay in Patterson, p. 70.
- 26 Robert Rhett in Patterson, p. 70.
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- 32 Richard Steele in The Spectator, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), I, pp. 358-359.
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- 44 Scribner, p. 29. See also: Patterson, pp. 25, 27, 32, and 37. See also: Cochran, pp. 136-139.
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