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## St George Tucker's Essay "For the Old Batchellor" "The History of Contentment, an Allegory"

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ST. GEORGE TUCKER'S ESSAY "FOR THE OLD BATCHELLOR"  
"THE HISTORY OF CONTENTMENT. AN ALLEGORY"

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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

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by  
Vance C. Bird  
1974

APPROVAL SHEET

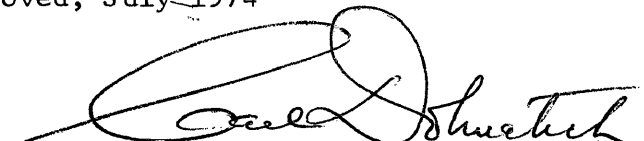
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to establish St. George Tucker's essay, "The History of Contentment. An Allegory," number 5 in his manuscripts designated "For the Old Batchellor," in its historical and literary context. To this end, a sketch of Tucker's life and times, an edited and annotated text of the essay, discussions of the familiar essay tradition and of possible literary influences, and analyses of others of Tucker's essays are provided.

"The History of Contentment" is of slight literary merit in itself, but has considerable historical value, providing insight, as do many of Tucker's compositions, into the social, political, intellectual, and literary currents of early nineteenth century America.

ST. GEORGE TUCKER'S ESSAY FOR THE OLD BATCHELLOR"

"THE HISTORY OF CONTENTMENT. AN ALLEGORY"

## INTRODUCTION

St. George Tucker attained prominence in Virginia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a professor, lawyer, and jurist, but he was also a poet, an essayist, and, to a lesser extent, a dramatist. He wrote in his spare time, when professional duties permitted, but his literary enthusiasm was never narrowly confined; the vast collection of his correspondence, whether to friend or family, to professional colleague or client, demonstrates in manner if not always in explicit comment an awareness of the value of literary pursuits in Virginia and in the young Republic. Acting upon this awareness, St. George Tucker wrote hundreds of poems, a half-dozen plays, and more than a score of Addisonian essays. Many of these essays, designated "For the Old Batchellor," are extant in the Tucker-Coleman Collection in the Earl Gregg Swem Library at the College of William and Mary in Virginia. They provide valuable insight into the political, social, intellectual, and most important, literary climate of Jeffersonian Virginia and, by extension, of the South and of the early Republic as a whole. One of these essays, "The History of Contentment. An Allegory,"<sup>1</sup> is the subject of this paper.

St. George Tucker was born at Port Royal, Bermuda on June 29, 1752, the youngest son of Col. Henry and Anne (Butterfield) Tucker. Although St. George had three brothers (Henry Jr., Thomas Tudor, and Nanthaniel) and two sisters, their family was one in which, as he affirmed more than a half-century later, "there never was a moments [sic] Interruption of the most perfect Harmony, parental tenderness, filial piety & fraternal affection. . . ." <sup>2</sup> By 1750 Col. Tucker had established a respectable if not lucrative mercantile business on the Bermudian island. Realizing the value of education, he was able to send his second son, Thomas Tudor, to Edinburgh for medical schooling, after which the young man established a practice in Charleston, South Carolina. Next in line, Nathaniel wanted to follow in his brother's footsteps, but the cost of education had begun to prove more than his father could handle. He set out in 1772 to study under his brother in South Carolina, only later matriculating at Edinburgh. Henry Jr., the eldest, remained in Bermuda (the only one of the Tucker brothers to do so) to pursue a career in politics. St. George, having waited in line patiently, had become interested in law. <sup>3</sup>

Col. Tucker hoped to send his youngest son to one of the Inns of Court in London, but financial difficulties again stood in the way. In the meantime, St. George attended school in Bermuda. By 1770 Col. Tucker had



decided upon the recommendation of a friend to send his son to the College of William and Mary in Virginia. Young Tucker still preferred one of the Inns of Court but, since his father was unable immediately to sponsor an education there, he set sail for America in October, 1771.

After landing at New York late that year, Tucker arrived in Williamsburg early in January, 1772 to begin studies in the Virginian college.<sup>4</sup> He later commented: "I was fortunate enough to bring with me such Letters of introduction as procured me the attention of the most respectable families, and introduced me to many of those whom I was happy enough to call my friends." At a time when knowing the right people was quite important to success, young Tucker was thus off to a good start. At William and Mary he did not immediately begin to study law, but rather courses -- such as philosophy, mathematics, ethics, rhetoric, and logic -- designed to form a solid foundation for a legal career. Tucker's study under his "venerable, and much respected" professor George Wythe lasted, however, only a few months, and in August, 1773 he returned to Bermuda, intending to remain there a year or so before continuing his education. Shortly thereafter, he received from Thomas Nelson, then Secretary of the Virginia Council of State, an appointment to a deputy county clerkship. Tucker returned to Virginia right away, accepting the clerkship of Dinwiddie County.<sup>5</sup>

Tucker received his license to practice law in the county courts in April, 1774 but the next month saw the suspension of local court terms in reaction to the closing of the port of Boston. The result was that, as Tucker himself put it:

I was incapable of supporting myself by my profession, and it being inconvenient to my father to support me here any longer, . . . I left this place, in Obedience to my Father's Desire, in June 1775, & returned to Bermuda.

In Bermuda Tucker acquired a small, local law practice, but, never realizing a profit, he was forced to move in with his parents in April, 1776.<sup>6</sup>

Tucker became involved in his father's shipping trade and planned to return to Virginia in order to carry on the business from this location as soon as he could attain passage. Passage to America was realized when he and two or three acquaintances in Bermuda combined resources to purchase a vessel of their own. They departed in November, 1776 by way of the West Indies in order to take on a cargo of salt, a commodity the importance of which to Virginia's government was fully realized by the adventurous group of young men. Arriving in January, 1777 with the smuggled cargo, Tucker was granted by Lieutenant Governor John Page a state commission to trade indigo for arms and ammunition with the West Indies. He engaged in a series of trade ventures in 1778, but before the autumn of that year his attention had turned to more personal concerns.

Frances Bland Randolph had inherited from her husband, John Randolph, three plantations: "Matoax," consisting of 1305 acres in Chesterfield County, "Bizarre" in Cumberland County, and "Roanoke" in Charlotte County. Randolph had also left her with three sons, Richard, Theodorick, and John. Tucker married Mrs. Randolph on September 23, 1778 and moved to "Matoax." They had six children of their own, but only two, Henry St. George and Nathaniel Beverly, survived their father.<sup>7</sup>

While managing his new family doubtless took much of his time, Tucker's life in this period was by no means one of complete domesticity. Throwing himself into the Revolutionary War on behalf of the struggling colonies, he became a colonel of the Chesterfield County militia and participated in the Battle of Guilford Courthouse in March, 1781, an important colonial victory in the closing campaigns of the War. Later that year he became lieutenant-colonel of a troop participating in the triumphant siege of Yorktown.<sup>8</sup>

A few months later, Tucker was elected by the House of Delegates to fill a vacancy on the Council of State. He served in this position until May, 1782, at which time he established a law practice in the Chesterfield County Court. Although his success in court was only moderate, Tucker had accomplished a great deal in the single decade during which he had lived in Virginia. He had attained financial independence and had married into the heart of

the Virginian aristocracy; his contributions to the cause of American independence had been more than merely spiritual and, not least, he had made friends with several figures who were or would become of state and national importance.<sup>9</sup>

His law practice continued to grow, and by 1785 he considered his situation stable enough to merit a vacation; he would execute the resolution he had made some time earlier to return home to visit his parents. Along with his wife and children, Tucker left for Bermuda in August; as he later recalled, "We spent three months (the happiest of my Life), in the bosom of the best of Friends." Upon his return to Virginia in December, Tucker was able to abandon the county courts for a practice in the general court at Richmond. After being admitted in April, 1786, his practice grew slowly for the first several months.<sup>10</sup>

His practice was delayed later that year by his appointment to attend, along with James Madison and Attorney-General Edmund Randolph, the Annapolis convention for the purpose of amending the Articles of Confederation.<sup>11</sup> Thus, by the age of thirty-four Tucker had attained a respected reputation as a legal and political thinker. Moreover, his legal practice had taken a turn for the better: the year 1787 saw Tucker receive more and more cases, and in January, 1788, an appointment as one of four district judges for the General Court of Virginia.<sup>12</sup>

His acceptance of the judgeship, however, was delayed: Tucker's ailing wife Frances worsened throughout the autumn and, after giving birth to a daughter around Christmas time, she died on January 18, 1788. Tucker accepted the position as district judge later that year and moved his family from "Matoax" to a house he had purchased in Williamsburg. The void created by the death of Frances was not filled until October 8, 1791 when he married Lelia (Skipwith) Carter, the widowed daughter of Sir Peyton Skipwith.<sup>13</sup>

Upon the resignation of George Wythe in 1790, Tucker succeeded him to become the second Professor of Law at the College of William and Mary. Professor Tucker arranged for his classes to meet in three-hour sessions, three times weekly (a schedule he modified periodically), so as not to interfere with his duties as judge. The basic text of his course was Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England on which Tucker elaborated where American law significantly differed. Since this text was used throughout his tenure, it is appropriate that in 1803 Tucker published his own edition of the Commentaries, a major contribution to American jurisprudence. Tucker's class also closely examined the issue of slavery, and in 1796 the professor published his Dissertation on Slavery, one of the more profound of the early Southern statements favoring abolition. Tucker preferred to meet with his students in his home, rather than in a classroom, in order to avail himself of his

collection of legal books and materials. For some reason the Board of Visitors disapproved of this arrangement; in 1800 a resolution, apparently aimed directly at Tucker, stipulated that all classes must meet in college classrooms. Tucker complied for a time, but later he lapsed into his old habit of meeting his classes at home. In 1803 the resolution was reiterated; then came a ruling that attendance records must be kept and that professors must visit their students twice a week in their college rooms.<sup>14</sup>

These factors, coupled with his concurrent appointment to the Virginia Court of Appeals, led Tucker to resign as professor in March, 1804. In his new position, Judge Tucker served eminently for seven years, adding to his fame and enhancing the reputation of the court. During these years he witnessed both national and international occurrences of great moment -- British naval impressment and infringement, Napoleon's expansionism, Jefferson's Embargo, and a rise of opposition to Jeffersonian republicanism -- several of which would lead to war in 1812. In 1811 the aging Tucker resigned his position on the Court of Appeals, ready to retire from public life altogether. A life away from the public eye, however, was to be his for only two years: in 1813 President Madison appointed Tucker federal judge for the district of Virginia.

Upon his resignation from the Court of Appeals in 1811, Tucker had, in his words, "resolved thereafter never to engage in any public Business, or office. . . ." Yet he had been in some public business or office for most of his adult life, and he would remain in the office of district judge until two years before his death on November 10, 1827 at Warminster (Nelson County Virginia), the home of his stepson.<sup>15</sup> From lawyer to judge to professor to judge again, with various committee appointments in between, his career had been full and rewarding, but it left him little time for more personal interests. One of these was science; and as a man of the Enlightenment Tucker dabbled in this field at various spare moments throughout his life. Another was agriculture. Tucker maintained a garden of his own<sup>16</sup> and evinced a keen concern for agrarian productivity in Virginia and the nation. But easily the strongest of these non-professional interests was literary, and somehow Tucker found ample time to pursue it.

Tucker wrote in almost all of the popular forms of the period. A few pieces were published, but the vast majority of his compositions remain in manuscript. His plays, while of no great literary merit, offer valuable historical insight in their extremely topical subject matter, yet none of them has been published and only two have been edited. These are The Wheel of Fortune: a Comedy, set in

Philadelphia and concerned with greedy land speculators in the Northwest Territory, and The Times: or the Patriot rous'd, a musical drama, concerned with British naval impressment. Other plays are Up and Ride, or the Borough of Brooklyn, a satire of the Senate and President John Adams, The Profligate: a Dramatic [ode?], and The Patriot Cool'd. Tucker's plays are highly political and lack real dramatic value; the characters are disappointingly flat and stereotyped. Yet they demonstrate a deep concern on the part of the author for contemporary problems and the public welfare, concerns we shall note in his "History of Contentment."<sup>17</sup>

Apart from the edition of Blackstone's Commentaries and the Dissertation on Slavery, among Tucker's published works is The Probationary Odes of Jonathan Pindar, Esq. A Cousin of Peter's, and Candidate for the Post of Poet Laureat to the C.U.S., published in full in 1796 (the first part having appeared in Philip Freneau's National Gazette in June, July, and August, 1793). The Probationary Odes is a group of satirical poems modeled after the odes of "Peter Pindar" (a pseudonym used by John Wolcot) of England. As Peter burlesqued the British king, Jonathan spoke out against speculation, and against John Adams, whom he referred to as "Daddy Vice."<sup>18</sup> Tucker, a thoroughgoing Republican, as we shall see in his "History of Contentment," aimed his satirical verse at the British, at particular persons and institutions, and, before the turn of the cen-



ture, at Federalism. It is in his political satires, particularly in The Probationary Odes, that Tucker is perhaps at his best; his odes appear to be the only satires with a thoroughly political target written in the South during these earliest years of the Republic, and the only ones to concentrate at length upon important national issues of the day.<sup>19</sup>

Another of Tucker's longer published works, written in 1780-81, is Liberty, a poem; On the Independence of America (1788). Consisting of twenty-seven stanzas, this poem describes the movement of the goddess Liberty from Greece to Italy to Switzerland to the Netherlands to Britain. In each country her stay is brief: Tyranny and Oppression force her to leave. Once she arrives in America, however, her voice becomes "hallowed," her shrine "sacred"; since the American cause is sacred in the poet's portrayal Liberty will inevitably triumph.<sup>20</sup> In this forceful yet charming political poem Tucker has Liberty move from place to place in the manner of Contentment in the essay written "For the Old Batchellor." Moreover, Contentment's travels are also politically inspired on one level of the allegory.

In 1786 Tucker published The Knight and the Friars, an Historical Tale, containing humorous, almost bawdy verse reminiscent of some of the old English ballads in style and measure.<sup>21</sup> Memorable sections are those concerning the preacher "Jerry Walker," in which Tucker pokes fun at

evangelism. Among Tucker's shorter published poems are "The Belles of Williamsburg," written collaboratively with James McClurg, and the deistic "Hymm to the Creator," both printed in Mathew Carey's American Museum in 1792. "Resignation," a poem in which Tucker philosophically accepts the passing of his youth, was published in the British Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction in 1823.

Tucker's verse, written between 1770 and 1825, is not of very great intrinsic merit. He wrote poems for practically every occasion from funereal to political, as well as satirical, patriotic, religious, and humorous verse. A few, as we have noted, were published as books or in magazines, but the vast majority of them -- more than two-hundred are extant in the Tucker-Coleman Collection -- remain unpublished; yet most of them were not seriously intended for publication, providing instead amusement for Tucker and his circle of friends. His poetry is typified by the neoclassical spirit popular in the early Republic: grandiose and sometimes confusing imagery, prolix statement, moral platitudes, and extreme sentimentality.<sup>22</sup> As such, Tucker's poetry is a valuable index of the literary influences and important concerns of the time. He did not write apart from tradition, and his poetry is perhaps the most traditional of all his writings.

If Tucker's poetry reflects many of the popular trends of the early national period, his personal library offers

further insight into literary, social, and intellectual currents; the books it contains are a reflection not only of his own interests but also of those of his contemporaries in the young nation. Contained in the Tucker-Coleman Collection are 488 volumes consisting of 350 titles known to have belonged to Tucker himself.<sup>23</sup> In addition to the expected dozens of legal volumes, his library contains approximately one hundred history books, ranging from ancient histories to the most recently published historical accounts of Virginia and other states. Like many of his contemporaries, Tucker felt the importance of an historical awareness not merely to his profession as a lawyer and judge but to nationalism and the maturation of the young Republic. He had Ragnal's book on the American Revolution, popular in the years following its publication in 1781, a dozen or so each of travel and exploration accounts, biographies including works ranging from Middleton's Cicero to William Wirt's Patrick Henry, and current political publications. The classical authors, influential in the whole body of Tucker's writings, are also well represented on Tucker's shelves; Herodotus, Ovid, Tacitus, Livy, Cicero, Longinus, Plutarch, and others are included. He also had a sizable collection of American journals and periodicals, the most important outlet for literary expression in the period; all thirteen volumes of Mathew Carey's American Museum, several volumes of the Port Folio and Niles' Weekly Register, popu-

lar journals all, as well as volumes of other periodicals, are among the extant books of his library. As for belles lettres, Tucker owned editions of Chaucer, Dryden, Spenser's The Faerie Queene (a second edition, given to Tucker by Bishop James Madison<sup>24</sup>), Wolcot's Peter Pindar, and six volumes of Pope's works. American contemporary poets represented in his library included Trumbull and Freneau. On Tucker's shelves were also the highly popular Tristram Shandy, Don Quixote, and the later volumes of Addison and Steele's The Spectator.<sup>25</sup>

A sampling of almost all the literary forms popular in the early national period is provided by the kinds of literature in Tucker's library and by the kinds of literature which he himself produced. Like Tucker, and like his Addisonian predecessors, scores of early Virginians wrote in either prose or verse and published in newspapers and magazines. Some three dozen volumes of poetry, ranging in form and length from the epigram to the epic, were published in Virginia between 1790 and 1830. Historical interest and concern, evidenced by the numerous volumes in Tucker's library, produced in Virginia two important histories of the state, several accounts of the Revolution and the War of 1812, and biographies such as Mason Locke Weem's Washington, Marion, and Franklin and Wirt's Henry. Novelists, such as George Tucker (a cousin of St. George's)

and William A. Caruthers, published ten or so works, at least half of which depict a Virginian setting.<sup>26</sup> Virginians were in fact so anxious to publish their literary efforts that several attempts were made to produce their own magazines. James Lyon's National Magazine; or, A Political, Historical, and Literary Repository was issued bi-quarterly through 1799 and part of 1800. The American Gleaner; and Virginia Magazine, appearing fortnightly throughout 1807, contained excerpts from British periodicals as well as original Virginian pieces and excerpts from the Irvings' and Paulding's Salmagundi. The Virginia Literary Museum, published weekly by George Tucker and Robley Dunglison at the University of Virginia in 1829-30, was the best of these journalistic attempts from a literary standpoint.<sup>27</sup>

Neoclassicism, evident in Tucker's early compositions and particularly in his poetry, remained the dominant influence throughout the period in which Tucker wrote. Another important influence was the Scottish school of "common-sense" rhetoricians, aestheticians, and philosophers, notably in the form of Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres (1783), which stresses a precision and simplicity of style, a delicacy and Latinity of diction.<sup>28</sup> Also important was the moral didacticism of Addison and Steele. These two writers, influential in the hundreds of familiar essays printed in newspapers and maga-

zines in Virginia and the nation, were important in almost all of the popular literary forms of the period. The most direct expression in Virginia of such moral didacticism was in the familiar essays written by Wirt and his circle of friends and colleagues. Modeling his essays after The Spectator, The Tatler, and other British essays, Wirt also had American contemporaries in the North, notably Joseph Dennie's The Lay Preacher and the Irvings' and Paulding's Salmagundi, though this last series, as we shall see, is not specifically moralistic. Wirt supervised the publication of three series of essays, writing most of the individual pieces himself, but also calling on friends to contribute. For the last of these, the "Old Bachelor" series, Tucker wrote "The History of Contentment."

This essay exists only in a holograph among Tucker's manuscripts in the Tucker-Coleman Collection. It consists of a single sheet approximately eight and one-half by fourteen inches, written on both recto and verso with two lines and Tucker's pseudonym, together with a brief notation, written along the left-hand margin of the verso. The manuscript is in very good condition compared to others of his essays written for Wirt's series and compared to much of his extant correspondence. There are relatively few emendations and cancellations, and Tucker's handwriting is legible for the most part. In the following edition of the

essay, in which notes for emendations, cancellations, and allusions are provided, no modernizations or other changes have been made.

5.

## TEXT

For the Old Batchellor.

The History of Contentment. An Allegory.

"The Birth and parentage of Contentment, whose Story I am about to relate, was for a long time a profound Mystery. She was a Foundling, laid at the door of an opulent and respectable Gentleman, who was married to an amiable wife, by whom he had several most beautiful and promising Children. In the Basket which contained the<sup>1</sup> beautiful little Foundling, were found a spindle & a Distaff, a Bottle of clear, spring-water, and a loaf of plain, but excellent, household-bread; with a note in these words. -- "Whosoever shall recieve [sic] and cherish this Child as his own, shall recieve [sic] an ample reward: let the Tokens which she brings be faithfully preserved."<sup>2</sup> -- The good People were delighted with the Beauty, and Sweetness, of the little Innocent, who smiled in their faces the moment that she was taken into the House, and seem'd to return their caresses with a sensibility, and fondness, altogether wonderful in such an Infant. The Lady of the House, who had the day before lost an Infant only two days old, determin'd to adopt the little Foundling, as a substi-



tute sent by Heaven to assuage her Grief, and to suckle her at her own Breast. Her Eyes overflowed with Gratitude and Thanksgiving to the Almighty, for so well tim'd a Blessing, and the Bitterness of Sorrow gave place to thankfulness, and Adoration. The tender & affectionate Husband very soon imbibed the feelings of his wife, and the little Outcast was literally [sic] recieved [sic] and cherish'd as their own; and literally [sic] did they, without perceiving [sic] it, recieve [sic] the promis'd Recompense for their parental kindness. Her foster-brothers and Sisters were soon taught by the example of their excellent parents, to consider her as a Sister, and she became the favorite of them all, insomuch that they were never easy, but when she was in the midst of them. In this happy family she continued, until the Sons were called away by Ambition, or other pursuits, and the Daughters by marrying. She frequently made them short visits, during which her Absence always hung more heavily upon her Foster-mother & Father, than that of their own Children, and, when she return'd, was recieved<sup>3</sup> [sic] with more joy, than the prodigal Son, in Scripture, by his Father. In this manner She continued to live with them, till the Hand of Death finally Separated them. -- In the Mean time her Foster-Brothers & Sisters, had either removed into distant places, or died, so that the poor Foundling,<sup>4</sup> at the death of her kind Benefactors, found herself again destitute, forlorn,

and without a friend. Many who had seen, & heard of her in the family, express'd a willingness, and even a Desire to recieve [sic] her into their houses; but there was so much of capriciousness, or Insincerity in their Conduct, that she soon discovered, wherever she was invited, that it was impossible for her to continue long. Many young Men of Fortune and Fashion pretended to court her: but the looseness of their morals, the levity of their Conduct, or their Ardour in other pursuits made her uniformly reject their Advances.<sup>5</sup> Some, more advanced in Age, made similar proposals to her; but though she listened to their proposals<sup>6</sup> with respect, the difference of Age, the want of Fortune, or of Health, or some previous Attachment, or Connexion, or other Obstacle,<sup>7</sup> was soon discovered, sufficient to prevent their Union. Meantime she was frequently invited into the families of the Great, as well as those of the middle and poorer classes. She was uniformly recieved [sic] with great professions of kindness by the former; was invited to every Wedding, in town or Country; and was professedly the most welcome Guest wherever she went. Those with whom she did not remain long, always complaind of her Conduct in going away, & declared they would willingly have kept her with them forever, if they could: they now began to call her capricious, and coquettish. Florio<sup>8</sup> swore that he would never court her again, but find Consolation for her Absence in the pleasures of the Bottle,

the playhouse, and the gaming table. Pomposo drove off in his Coach & six, resolved, thenceforward, never to to<sup>9</sup> quit the Verge of the Court; and Servilius determin'd to follow him, and seek Consolation from the smiles of a Great-man, at a Levee.<sup>10</sup> Equestris<sup>11</sup> mounted his horse, and gallop'd off to the races; and Rusticus<sup>12</sup> at full speed follow'd a pack of Hounds pursuing a Fox. Thrasso<sup>13</sup> ordered the drums to Beat for his Regiment to parade immediately; and Nauticus<sup>14</sup> hoisted his sails for a cruise, after a rich fleet that was known to be upon the Coast. Mercator<sup>15</sup> retired to his Counting House; while<sup>16</sup> Rapax<sup>17</sup> went to look for a half ruined Spendthrift who wanted to borrow money of him; and Tom Flippant<sup>18</sup> set about writing a new speech for the next grand Occasion. In the mean time Contentment<sup>19</sup> in company with a beautiful Lady whose name was Health, had gone into the Country and made an Acquaintance with a virtuous and venerable pair, whose names were Temperance and Industry, by whom she was kindly recieved [sic], and, from the Tokens she brought, recognised<sup>20</sup> as their darling Child, who had been stolen from them by a Gipsy whose name was Misfortune:<sup>21</sup> And with this happy Trio she has remaind ever since, and declares she will never change her abode.

Lycidas<sup>22</sup>

Written over again & altered - Aug : 9<sup>th</sup>  
 Title - History of a Foundling.

## CRITIQUE

By the time St. George Tucker, William Wirt, and their friends were writing in Virginia, the tradition of the familiar, periodical essay was a century old. It had originated in Britain soon after the turn of the eighteenth century with the essays of Joseph Addison (1672-1719) and Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729). Both Addison and Steele had matriculated at Oxford, where Addison took his degree; Steele, however, having little academic success, left the university to take a commission in the army. Both enjoying the patronage of the great Whig magnates, Steele was able to become editor of the London Gazette. Appearing twice a week with news of government appointments and foreign and domestic occurrences, the Gazette may be called the first newspaper in the modern sense. The journalistic experience Steele gained as editor, together with his increasing need of money, was sufficient cause for his launching of The Tatler in April, 1709.<sup>1</sup> The Spectator, a series which enjoyed even greater success, began publication in March, 1711, two months after the last number of The Tatler was issued.

The periodical essay of Addison and Steele is a unique genre; there had been nothing like it before and, though

imitators have been numerous, there has been nothing quite like it since. The Tatler, edited by Steele's grave "Isaac Bickerstaff," appeared three times per week from April, 1709 to January, 1711. The series, to which Addison also contributed, attempted to appeal to the largest possible audience;<sup>2</sup> the title itself was calculated to arouse the interests of the women, and many of the particular topics discussed -- gallantry, pleasure and entertainment, various forms of literature, general news, and personal reflections -- gave the paper a wide appeal among the men. By claiming to be a frequenter of coffee-houses and a spy in ladies' assemblies, "Isaac Bickerstaff" held a light, humorous interest that was rendered almost credible by his somber countenance.<sup>3</sup>

Addison and Steele's Spectator, appearing every day except Sundays from March, 1711 to December, 1712 (and briefly resumed in 1714 by Addison), sought to depict more sober reflections than its immediate predecessor. The paper was intended to record the observations of a silent, almost detached figure, withdrawn from the confusion and strife of daily routine -- a spectator. In general, the "Spectator" would be moralistic where "Bickerstaff" had been more topical, but the social ideals embraced by both included moderation, reasonableness, self-control, urbanity, and good taste in literature and life.<sup>4</sup>

Imitated throughout the century by such British essay-

ists as Johnson in the Rambler and Goldsmith in the Bee, Addison and Steele would also have American emulators shortly before the turn of the nineteenth century. The papers of Addison and Steele, which discuss the widest possible range of topics from manners and morals to literary and philosophical ideas to fads and fashions, had an impact in their own country and elsewhere that can hardly be overstated.

Among the early American achievements in this genre fostered by Addison and Steele is The Lay Preacher, a series of more than a hundred essays written by Joseph Dennie (sometime editor of the Port Folio) between 1795 and 1801 and published in several magazines.<sup>5</sup> Each of Dennie's essays is headed by a verse of Scripture and follows the basic structure of a brief sermon. In the Advertisement to his 1796 collected edition, Dennie says of the "lay preacher": "To instruct the villager was his primary object. . . . The familiarity of Franklin's manner, and the simplicity of Sterne's proved most auxiliary to his design. He, therefore, adventured their union."<sup>6</sup> The range of subjects includes the emphasis upon homely virtues, the pleasures of a simple, retired life, paraphrasings of Biblical stories, and warnings (owing to Dennie's federalistic tendencies) against radical philosophies in American politics. Despite the title, Dennie did not wish The Lay Preacher to be viewed as merely a volume of sermons,

and certainly it is not wholly moralistic; in Dennie's words, it is a series of essays "modeled after the design of Addison and the harmless and playful levity of Oliver Goldsmith,"<sup>7</sup> a series of essays designed to amuse as well as to instruct.

Another popular series of essays during this period was Salmagundi; or the Whimwhams and Opinions of Launcelot Langstaff, Esq., and others. Written jointly by Washington and William Irving and James Kirke Paulding, Salmagundi was published as separate numbers (not in a journal or newspaper) from January, 1807 through January, 1808; and as the pseudonymous "Launcelot Langstaff" pointed out, "when enough numbers are written, it may form a volume sufficiently portable to be carried in old ladies' pockets and young ladies' workbags."<sup>8</sup> Employing satire with almost reckless abandon, "Langstaff" and his friends "Anthony Evergreen" and "William Wizard" -- a group of "old bachelors" themselves -- burlesqued most of the important fashions and literary trends of the young Republic. As "Langstaff" put it, "Our intention is simply to instruct the young, reform the old, correct the town, and castigate the age; this is an arduous task, and therefore we undertake it with confidence."<sup>9</sup> "Anthony Evergreen," brilliantly old-fashioned, reported events of the "fashionable world"; "William Wizard," who presided over the area of criticism, had not had the "advantage of an education at Oxford or

Cambridge, or even at Edinburgh or Aberdeen . . . but we have no doubt he will be found fully competent to the undertaking";<sup>10</sup> and "Langstaff" himself, who supposedly cared little "for the opinion of this exceedingly stupid world,"<sup>11</sup> served as editor and moderator. As planned, "Evergreen" procured the advice of a Mrs. Toole, "the oracle of fashion and frippery,"<sup>12</sup> and informed his audience what the well-dressed ladies must wear this season: "If the weather be very cold, a thin muslin gown or frock is most advisable, because it agrees with the season, being perfectly cool."<sup>13</sup> "Wizard," resident critic, claims that Blair's lectures on style, actually one of the most revered authorities of the period, "has not thrown a whit more light on the subject."<sup>14</sup> Instead, "Wizard" prefers "Linkum Fidelius'" theory: "Style is . . . style [ "Wizard's" ellipsis ]."<sup>15</sup>

That writing such as that in Salmagundi was not only tolerated but widely enjoyed demonstrates a willingness on the part of early Americans to laugh at their own manners and their most sacred institutions. Among those institutions at which the Irvings and Paulding aimed their brilliant satire was the familiar essay itself; part of the result is that their essays provide few serious moral examples of which Addison or Steele would have approved. The Salmagundi essays sought "innocently to amuse" more than "virtuously to instruct,"<sup>16</sup> and in meeting one-half of



William Wirt's generic intention they could scarcely have been more successful.

The genre of the familiar essay in Virginia found its best writers in Wirt and a few of his friends and professional colleagues. Wirt (1772-1834), prominent Richmond lawyer, judge of the Williamsburg chancery court in 1802, and Attorney-General of the United States from 1817 to 1829, began his career as an essayist with Letters of the British Spy.<sup>17</sup> Printed in August and September, 1803 in Samuel Pleasants' newspaper, the Virginia Argus, the ten letters were collected into a book which appeared in several editions during the next half-century. In a letter to his close friend, Dabney Carr, Wirt said, "I adopted the character of a British spy, because I thought that such a title, in a republican paper, would excite more attention, curiosity and interest than any other. . . ." <sup>18</sup> He had certainly been an excellent judge of contemporary tastes, for the British Spy, while perhaps not the best of the Virginian essays, proved to be extremely popular.

Just as Addison and Steele and other essayists did not write all of the numbers in their series, not all of the letters in the British Spy were written by Wirt. In a later letter to Carr, Wirt identified George Tucker as the author of two of the letters signed "An Inquirer."<sup>19</sup> Quite possibly, other friends also contributed to the series. As Addison had done in The Spectator, Wirt sought a tone of

objectivity in the British Spy. This he achieved by discussing Richmond and Virginia -- its manners, public characters, political sentiments and moral complexions -- in the guise of a detached, foreign observer. The series includes several letters on eloquence, of which the seventh (on the blind preacher, James Waddell) is considered the best, several portraits of such public figures as James Monroe and John Marshall, and George Tucker's scientific contributions. On the whole, the British Spy is not impressive from a literary standpoint and Wirt himself, perhaps his own best critic, provides many of the reasons. In a letter to Carr, he stated:

[the] disquisitions are too desultory, and the topics too lightly touched to contain much of the useful. The letters bespeak a mind rather frolicksome [sic] and sprightly, than thoughtful and penetrating; and therefore a mind qualified to amuse, for the moment, but not to benefit either its proprietor, or the world, by the depth and utility of its researches. The style, although sometimes happy, is sometimes, also, careless and poor; and, still more frequently, overloaded with epithets, and its inequality proves either that the author wanted time or industry or taste to give it, throughout, a more even tenor.<sup>20</sup>

In 1804, Wirt formed the Rainbow Association for the purpose of writing another series of essays entitled "The Rainbow." The first ten of these essays appeared in Thomas Ritchie's Richmond newspaper, the Enquirer, from August through October, 1804 and were later published as a collected edition; sixteen additional essays, which were not collected, were also printed in the Enquirer during the

early part of 1805. Each of the ten members of the Association, including (besides Wirt) George Tucker, James Ogilvie, and Meriwether and Skelton Jones, contributed a number to The Rainbow; First Series; together with other writers who have not been identified, each member of the Association contributed one of the uncollected essays.<sup>21</sup>

The "Rainbow" series bears a greater resemblance than does the British Spy to such predecessors as The Spectator and The Tatler in that it discusses a much broader range of subjects of a serious and utilitarian nature. The later essays lack the levity and shallowness which Wirt criticized in his first essay series. Unlike the British Spy, largely the work of Wirt alone, The Rainbow utilizes the abilities of a wide variety of writers of diverse educational backgrounds and philosophies. Topics include eloquence (a subject popular throughout the period), genius, education, duelling, luxury, law, women, and politeness<sup>22</sup> -- subjects which embrace the possibilities for both instruction and amusement, concerns which would be paramount in the mind of the "old bachelor."

Wirt decided in 1810 to begin a series of essays entitled "The Old Bachelor" when another brief series, "The Sylph," had proved unmanageable. He liked his new plan because it had "the scope for all sorts of compositions"<sup>23</sup> and the potential for incorporating dramatic interest. The principal subject, as Wirt told Dabney Carr, was to be

education,<sup>24</sup> a topic which had been given some attention in The Rainbow; in execution, however, the "Old Bachelor" series embraced subjects ranging from the virtues of a retired, simple life in the opening numbers to the evils of gambling in the last. In the eleventh number Wirt states the general purpose of the series -- "virtuously to instruct, or innocently to amuse"<sup>25</sup> -- and in the twelfth, his hopes for the specific effects of it:

to awaken the taste of the body of the people for literary attainments; to make them sensible of the fallen state of intellect in our country, compared with the age even of the revolutionary war; to excite the emulation of the rising race, and see whether a groupe [sic] of statesmen, scholars, orators, and patriots as enlightened and illustrious as their fathers, cannot be produced without the aid of such another bloody stimulant.<sup>26</sup>

Twenty-eight essays written for the series were printed in the Richmond Enquirer from December 22, 1810 to December 24, 1811. The collected edition, published in 1814, includes five additional essays which had not appeared in Ritchie's newspaper.<sup>27</sup> As had been the case in The Rainbow and, to a lesser extent, in the British Spy, Wirt received essay contributions for the "Old Bachelor" series from several of his friends in and around Richmond. Among those who have been definitely identified are Frank and Dabney Carr, Richard E. Parker, Dr. Louis H. Girardin, George Tucker, and David Watson.<sup>28</sup> Assuming the persona of "Dr. Robert Cecil," Wirt, however,

wrote the majority of the work. In the opening number, the "old bachelor" describes himself, his educational background and tastes in a manner reminiscent of the opening of The Spectator. He is a sentimental, somewhat old-fashioned bachelor who claims that "Enthusiasm is the prominent feature of [his] character. . . ." <sup>29</sup> He continues his autobiography in the second piece, introducing his youthful but wise niece, Rosalie, and explaining his preference to live "far removed from the tumult and bustle of life." <sup>30</sup> "Dr. Cecil" appears throughout The Old Bachelor as a sort of moderator who serves to link together and explain the provenance of the numerous letters he receives. His tone is conversational, his thoughts somewhat rambling as he skips from topic to topic. In this "Dr. Cecil" provides a pleasant balance for the greater precision and directness of most of the letters to the "old bachelor." The letters themselves, though sometimes satirical, share much of "Dr. Cecil's" sentimentality and they discuss such favorite topics of the period as eloquence and oratory, manners, the virtues of patriotism and industry, and the evils of gambling and avarice. Employing an Addisonian didacticism tempered by a Goldsmithian levity, The Old Bachelor represents, as Wirt himself has stated, the best of his own efforts in the genre, and the series contains some essays which are comparable to the best of early nineteenth century American literary endeavor.

The familiar essay in Virginia became a convenient outlet for professional men such as lawyers, doctors, and professors to express their opinions on contemporary issues and to exercise their creative and literary abilities. Since the security of a pseudonym or simple anonymity was always available, printed forums such as Wirt's series were all the more attractive. Wirt encouraged several of his friends to contribute and, as the extant correspondence illustrates, St. George Tucker was among them; throughout Tucker's papers of the period surrounding publication of the "Old Bachelor" essays are letters in which Wirt expresses strong admiration for Tucker as both writer and critic. Yet, with the possible exception of two letters in the twenty-seventh number,<sup>31</sup> none of Tucker's essays written "For the Old Batchellor" was actually printed.

In the correspondence between the two friends it is possible to discern several matters simultaneously: Wirt's high estimation of Tucker's literary abilities, Tucker's comments on his essay of concern here ("The History of Contentment"), the fading away of the "Old Bachelor" series as Wirt lost interest in it, and an apparent rift in the Wirt-Tucker relationship which may have had something to do with Tucker's failure to be published in the group of essays. In a letter to Tucker on August 7, 1811 Wirt said:

I have received your elegant communications for the O[ld] B[achelor] for which I beg you to receive my thanks. They shall all have a place,

except the last letter from Mitis the federalist, which they will all think too true a joke to be a joke at all -- at least so I fear. . . . The allegory on memory is beautiful.<sup>32</sup>

On the following day and again on August 12 Tucker responded with characteristic modesty:

I am gratified that you approve of the allegory on Memory, & now enclose you another on Contentment, which I dare not hope you will be equally pleased with.<sup>33</sup>

I am afraid you will be sick of allegories. . . . Reject what you disapprove, without ceremony.<sup>34</sup>

Such disavowals of his own writing ability, however, should not be construed as made out of genuine modesty so much as of his desire to appear gentlemanly. The wealth of writing extant in the Collection indicates Tucker held no misgivings about his creative abilities; and while the allegory on memory is not available for comparison, it is not possible to conclude that Tucker considered his allegory on contentment actually inferior.

Responding in a letter commenced on August 18 but not mailed until the following day, Wirt remarked:

I thank you for your communications of today. . . . On the comparison I prefer the allegory on contentment first sent. Your first draught has some points of superiority, I think -- but the toute ensemble of the second is preferable.<sup>35</sup>

The allegory referred to is of course "The History of Contentment." As Tucker noted on the holograph, the extant version of the allegory was "Written over again & altered" on August 9, and retitled "History of a Foundling." The original version was mailed, as Tucker's letter

indicates, on August 8; the revisions were made on the following day, and the second version was probably included in a packet Tucker mailed on the twelfth. Unfortunately, the second version is not extant, rendering impossible a comparative analysis of the original and revised essays. And Wirt's ambiguous judgment -- the first draft is preferable "On the comparison" while "the toute ensemble of the second is preferable" -- is of no help whatever beyond the suggestion that possibly the differences between the two versions are not great.

On August 25 Wirt wrote, the "allegory on Ambition & Patriotism is made of everlasting stuff. I think the O. B. with such a spark in his composition cannot perish very speedily."<sup>36</sup> While it must be realized that Wirt is a bit too lavish in his praise here, his high opinion of Tucker as a writer is obvious. Later in this letter, he encouraged Tucker to continue to submit essays -- "for your own sake & that of your country." Ironically, the extant correspondence referring to the "Old Bachelor" series contains no more letters from Wirt until January 29, 1812. Here, he implored Tucker to answer his letter: "Pray let me hear one line from you -- if it be but to assure me that you are in peace & good will toward me."<sup>37</sup> His pleading remark indeed suggests that something had occurred between the long-time friends, that there existed some reason Tucker would not be "in peace & good will toward" Wirt,



but in the absence of further correspondence it is not possible to pinpoint the problem. Wirt mentioned the "Old Bachelor" in this letter only to remark that someone had composed a sonnet on the burning (in December, 1811) of the New Brick Theatre in Richmond and that he hoped to include the poem in the series.

Later in the year the difficulty, whatever its cause, apparently did not improve. The following letters, the first by Wirt, the second by Tucker, were written on August 22 and September 11, respectively:

I received your favor relative to the return of the manuscripts prepared for the O. B. at this place [Warm Springs]; the manuscripts are in Richmond. . . . your request is predicated on the idea of my having dropped the thought of continuing the essays under that title.<sup>38</sup>

I had supposed from the long discontinuance of the O. B. that you had dropp'd all intention of reviving it, & upon that presumption alone my request was made.<sup>39</sup>

Wirt attributed the "old bachelor's" silence to the time consumed by his professional duties and to his own and his family's recent illnesses; in his letter Tucker reiterated his willingness to "help out with the O. B." and insisted that he must have his essays back should Wirt arrive at different plans for the series. More than a year later, Tucker made the request once again:

Will you pardon me for requesting you to find out the numbers for the O. B. which I sent you. No. 2 - No. 11 both numbers inclusive. I have a very particular reason for this request. The O. B. has been silent for more than eighteen months.<sup>40</sup>

According to Tucker's extant papers, Wirt wrote only once more regarding the "Old Bachelor" series: "As to the O. B. I will, with pleasure contribute what I can to the scheme tho' I fear that will be but little."<sup>41</sup> He cited increasing professional responsibilities and other literary pursuits of his own as his reasons. Tucker, however, apparently sensed both that the "Old Bachelor" series was all but finished as far as Wirt was concerned and that none of his essays would be published. Tucker's reference to "a very particular reason" for wanting his essays back was his intention to use them in a series he was planning himself. On that same day -- September 12, 1813 -- he wrote the first entry in his "Hermit of the Mountain" series.

In "The History of Contentment," two versions of which Tucker wrote for Wirt's series, the author describes in a manner reminiscent of the goddess Liberty (in his Liberty, a poem; On the Independence of America) the travels of Contentment. She stays longest with "an opulent and respectable Gentleman, who was married to an amiable wife," but only a short time with those who are insincere and capricious. She rejects the loose morals of men of fortune and fashion, and is separated from the elderly by a variety of obstacles. Contentment pays short visits to those of the entire range of social classes, in both rural and urban areas, and makes brief appearances at every wedding. Tucker then relates the several ways in which Content-

ment's rejected suitors seek substitutes; excessive drinking and gambling, egotism, avarice, and over-fondness of political position are among the qualities Tucker warns against. While the suitors are engaged in these activities, Contentment meets Health and goes to live with Temperance and Industry, who recognize her as their own daughter.

"The History of Contentment" is a rather simple vignette, demonstrating no great profundity or originality of thought. In fact, the ideas Tucker expresses echo those set forth by many of his predecessors and contemporaries in the essay genre. At the end of Tucker's essay Contentment retires to the country with Health, Temperance, and Industry; for Tucker these are the qualities conducive to true happiness or contentment. Joseph Addison expressed a similar view a century earlier in The Spectator:

True Happiness is of a retired Nature, and an Enemy to Pomp and Noise; it arises, in the first place, from the Enjoyment of one's self; and, in the next, from the Friendship and Conversation of a few select Companions.<sup>42</sup>

Characters such as Florio, Nauticus, and Rapax are given little notice by Tucker's Contentment; instead, she prefers the "few select Companions," Health, Temperance, and Industry. Later in the same essay, Addison said:

false Happiness loves to be in a Crowd, and to draw the eyes of the World upon her. . . . She flourishes in Courts and Palaces, Theatres and Assemblies, and has no Existence but when she is looked upon.<sup>43</sup>

Addison's "false Happiness" likes many of the things Contentment's rejected suitors enjoy: Pomposo drives off in his coach, determined "never to quit the Verge of the Court"; Thrasso prepares for the assembly and parade of his regiment; and Tom Flippant, anxious to be the center of attention, begins "writing a new speech for the next grand Occasion."

While only the last two of eight volumes of The Spectator are to be found today among the books of Tucker's surviving library in the Tucker-Coleman Collection, the popularity of Addison and Steele's work would suggest more than a passing familiarity on Tucker's part. Certainly, the views on contentment or happiness are close enough to those expressed in The Spectator and quite possibly Tucker found access to the earlier volumes of the British periodical (if he did not own them himself) through friends or in the College library. At any rate, both the "Spectator" and "Lycidas" (Tucker's pseudonym for this and others of his essays) advise a simple, retiring life as appropriate to contentment.

Throughout Tucker's allegory, Contentment's suitors pursue her with insincerity, too arduously, too anxiously, losing her in the process. Unlike the family who finds her on the doorstep, the suitors do not nurture Contentment; they merely attempt to capture her. In a late number of The Spectator, extant in Tucker's library, Addison

stated that "no Man has so much Care, as he who endeavors after the most Happiness."<sup>44</sup> In Tucker's allegory, man is shown in constant pursuit of contentment, only to be disappointed in his efforts. Contentment is reared from infancy by "an opulent and respectable gentleman" and his "amiable wife": on the personal, individual level of the allegory the only way to maintain contentment is to nurture it from an early age, a gradual, easy process performed by the individual for himself.

"The History of Contentment" has thematic precedent in this country as well as in Britain. In Mathew Carey's American Museum, printed in Philadelphia from 1787 to 1792, an anonymous contributor wrote:

We give ourselves much unnecessary trouble in our enquiries, and ramble far abroad to find that which lies concealed at home. Happiness or content . . . depends much less on the acquisition of what we have not, than on the enjoyment of what we actually have.<sup>45</sup>

Tucker was undoubtedly familiar with this passage since he owned all thirteen volumes of the American Museum and had had poems of his own printed in Carey's magazine. Certainly, the ideas expressed by Tucker suggest his awareness of those expressed by the unknown writer. Not only do Contentment's suitors ramble around in search of "that which lies concealed at home" and depend a great deal on that which they have not, but Contentment herself ultimately ends up where she started: at home, with her parents Temperance and Industry.

Further evidence that Tucker's ideas closely conform to tradition may be found in Dennie's The Lay Preacher; in this work Dennie admonished:

Be independent in your property. Lean not against another man, lest you continue not long in one stay. . . . When you think you can afford two coats, purchase but one. Put a small piece of silver into your purse each day and you will feel proud to find it swollen at year's end. . . . Observing these easy rules you will sleep quietly. . . .<sup>46</sup>

Like Tucker, Dennie's gentle philosophy advises independence, which is linked by the "lay preacher" with industry and hard work, with temperance and prudence; also like Tucker, Dennie is clearly more concerned with the result of these virtues than with the virtues themselves: "Observing these easy rules you will sleep quietly. . . ."

From even these few examples it seems clear that Tucker's simple philosophy in "The History of Contentment" is traditional and conforms to that held by such writers as Addison and Steele, fathers of the genre within which Tucker wrote. More clearly still, the philosophy expressed in Tucker's allegory, emphasizing good health, hard work, and moderation on the part of the individual, is reminiscent of that expressed by Benjamin Franklin in his Autobiography. Employing the didacticism of Addison, a writer he admired and emulated, Franklin counseled such virtues as temperance, order, frugality, industry, justice, tranquility, and humility. Furthermore, much of the advice given by Franklin's "Poor Richard" is clearly endorsed by

Tucker in "The History of Contentment." In the almanac for 1742 Franklin wrote:

On him true Happiness shall wait  
 Who shunning noisy Pomp and state  
 Those little Blessings of the Great,  
 Consults the Golden Mean.<sup>47</sup>

and in a later one:

Happy the Man whose Wish and Care  
 A few paternal Acres bound,  
 Content to breathe his native Air,  
 In his own Ground.<sup>48</sup>

Throughout "Poor Richard's" publications, beginning in 1733 and spanning a quarter-century, one finds a gentle philosophy emphasizing a retiring, industrious, temperate life similar to Contentment's rural existence in Tucker's allegory. Moreover, Franklin's bagatelles, written while he was in France, are philosophically close to Tucker. The bagatelles, like the essays of Tucker, Wirt, and others, were at once relaxing to the author for their humor and frivolity and instructive to the reader for their often serious didacticism and moralism. The ideas expressed in one of them seem particularly close to those expressed in Tucker's allegory. In "The Whistle" Franklin warned against harboring false values:

When I saw one ambitious of Court Favour, sacrificing his Time in Attendance at Levees, his Repose, his Liberty, his Virtue and perhaps his Friend, to obtain it; I have said to my self, This Man gives too much For his Whistle.<sup>49</sup>

Like Tucker's Pomposo and Servilius, this man, unable to find happiness elsewhere, becomes a political hanger-on. Another man, "fond of Popularity, constantly employing

himself in political Bustles, neglecting his own affairs, and ruining them by that Neglect, . . ."50 is approximated by Tucker's Tom Flippant, while Franklin's "Man of Pleasure, sacrificing every laudable Improvement of his Mind or of his Fortune, to mere corporeal Satisfactions, & ruining his Health in their Pursuit, . . ."51 makes the same errors Tucker's Florio commits. None of these men in Franklin's "The Whistle" and none of the suitors in Tucker's allegory attain true happiness or contentment, much of their unhappiness, as Franklin put it, having been "brought upon them by the false Estimates they had made of the Value of things."52 Since Tucker owned six volumes of Franklin's works, he could have been familiar with a number of these passages. Thematic parallels are certainly present, and in many respects "Poor Richard's" almanacs and the bagatelles are a part of the essay tradition within which Tucker wrote.

Yet if Tucker's philosophical stance in "The History of Contentment" is for the most part traditional, the theological implications of his allegory are not so conventional; the ideas lying just below the surface here and elsewhere in his writings (notably in two essays written "For the Old Batchellor" on the theory of the universe) seem much closer to deism than to a Calvinistic view of nature.<sup>53</sup> As Richard Beale Davis notes, deism and skepticism existed side by side with orthodox, established faiths



in Jefferson's Virginia; moreover, in 1813 John Randolph complained bitterly of the deistic upbringing Tucker, his stepfather, had supplied him.<sup>54</sup> In "The History of Contentment" Tucker shows little disapproval of the gambling, drinking, and avarice of the suitors from any Christian, moralistic vantage; his condemnation seems to rise more out of the fact that such activity will not bring one true contentment. Such a stance implies an emphasis on this world rather than on the one beyond, clearly a deistic viewpoint. Implicit in Tucker's allegory, as in the Autobiography of Franklin (a thorough deist himself), is a reliance on the individual during his time on earth: if one maintains good health, and practices temperance and industry, one naturally will be contented.

Deism holds that God created the world and thereafter allowed it to operate according to divinely ordained natural laws. Tucker demonstrates a belief in this notion through the family on whose doorstep Contentment is placed: upon receiving the infant, the wife's "Eyes overflowed with Gratitude and Thanksgiving, for so well tim'd a Blessing. . . ." While God is responsible for placing the child on the doorstep, the members of the family themselves take care of Contentment thereafter. Tucker seems to suggest that if God made possible contentment in His creation of the world He is not responsible for maintaining it in each individual; that responsibility lies within man himself.

While God created the concept of contentment, Tucker's Contentment, the embodied and personified concept, is by no means divinely compelled to remain with the individual at all times; in fact there is no evidence of divine governance in her movements at all. Her travels are controlled by the individuals with whom she comes in contact. Once God has created the concept of contentment, man himself is responsible for its operation.

Only once in the essay does Tucker make a Biblical reference: Contentment's "Absence always hung more heavily upon her Foster-mother & Father, than that of their own Children, and, when she return'd, was relieved with more joy, than the prodigal son, in Scripture, by his Father." Tucker reinforces in this passage the importance of individual contentment by placing Contentment over the prodigal son; on earth personal contentment is of the utmost value to man. This is not, of course, to call Tucker an atheist, even if John Randolph did consider his stepfather's deism a giant step in that direction. Rather, in his belief in an impersonal God, Tucker can only stress man as his own means to individual contentment.

As an allegory, "The History of Contentment" should not be read on one level only. The advice Tucker provides for the individual is also applicable to the nation, particularly in consideration of its state in 1811. No lengthy historical account is necessary to realize that Tucker's

allegory was written in a time of considerable national and international discontent. Britain and France had been at each other's throats for some time, and Napoleon Bonaparte seemed to hold the key to the future of both America and Europe. President Jefferson did not approve of the emperor, yet Napoleon represented Jefferson's beloved France and what remained of the legacy of the French Revolution. Opposing Napoleon's expansionism was England, aiming, Jefferson believed, for nothing less than domination of the ocean and monopolization of world trade. Since the President wanted to avoid war with either, neutrality to both and open trade constituted the wisest policy; however, such a policy proved more plausible in theory than in practice. War, beginning anew in 1803, raged between the two European countries, and America herself could not remain detached for long; indeed, British men-of-war patrolled the American coast in order to inspect American ships for contraband and for British deserters. British captains often kidnapped American sailors, ignoring the protests of the United States government. Such action culminated in the summer of 1807 with the killing or wounding of twenty-one men of the United States' Chesapeake. Though Jefferson held his temper once more, the Chesapeake incident had much to do with the drift toward war with Britain in 1812.

In reaction to the naval situation, which showed no signs of improvement, Congress passed Jefferson's Embargo

Act in late 1807, forbidding American vessels to leave the country; the President hoped to discourage British seizure of American ships. At the same time, he hoped to encourage the growth of American industry by cutting off British imports. Through his "peaceful coercion," he believed Britain would ultimately relent because of her heavy dependence on American imports. In practice, American ships, particularly in New England, continued to trade with Europe and Britain did not suffer enough shortages to hurt her economy significantly. The Embargo was lifted fourteen months later, three days before Jefferson's term ended. Various other measures designed to alter British policy were attempted by President Madison, but with no success. Pressures for war at home, concentrated in such politicians as Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun, hastened Congress' declaration of war with Britain on June 18, 1812, three days after Britain had taken steps to improve relations.<sup>55</sup>

The development of the momentum that led to the vote for war must have been in Tucker's mind when he chose to write an essay on contentment in 1811. The United States found herself caught in the middle of a European war, Virginia found its economy declining, and Virginians in large numbers found new homes in areas deeper south and southwestward where they hoped cotton farming would prove more profitable than tobacco. Writing for a newspaper as widely read as the Enquirer and for a series as concerned with

contemporary issues as the "Old Bachelor," it was only natural for Tucker to be concerned in his essays with the drift toward war with Britain. If the advice Tucker provides in "The History of Contentment" is Franklinian on the personal level, it is quite Jeffersonian on the social and political. Jefferson's attempted policy of moderation or neutrality in the problems of Europe approximates the temperance Tucker suggests in his allegory; moreover, Jefferson's hopes for an independent, industrious, stay-at-home America are paralleled by Contentment's other parent, Industry. Temperance and industry in the face of national and international difficulties were for Jefferson the logical, rational qualities to maintain; and for Tucker these qualities are conducive to health and contentment on both a personal and public level.

Those characters in Tucker's allegory who do not attain contentment, however, are neither temperate nor industrious. Pomposo, apparently "never to quit the Verge of the Court," possibly refers to Prince George of Wales who had become regent in February, 1811, taking over for George III whose mental illness had been worsening for several years. Prince George had eyed for some time the position of power his father's illness was bound to create; perhaps Tucker's Pomposo is intended to depict the Prince's lack of more industrious activity than merely awaiting the appointment as regent. Servilius, another of Contentment's suitors,

could refer to any servile court minister seeking royal favor. Nauticus, who in the allegory hoists "his sails for a cruise, after a rich fleet that was known to be upon the Coast," seems to parallel the practices of the British navy in its seizure of American ships in search of contraband. Rapax, a Latin word meaning greedy or avaricious, and Mercator, a merchant who spends his time counting his money, could also refer to the British navy; but they could refer to certain Americans as well. The loudest cries for war came from the American West and deep South where desire for territorial expansion overshadowed concern for the country's economy; "war hawks," as John Randolph termed them, looked longingly both at Canada, a British possession, and at Florida, then belonging to Britain's ally, Spain. To provide a place for such war mongers in his allegory, Tucker includes, besides these greedy characters, two figures who are in some way associated with war: the name Equestris derives from the Latin for cavalryman; and Thrasso orders "the drums to Beat for his Regiment to parade immediately." The first of these characters, having no direct involvement in war itself in the action of the allegory, possibly represents such war hawks as Clay and Calhoun; Thrasso, a braggart soldier and a fool in Terence's The Eunuch, seems to indict one with a more direct contact with the war -- perhaps William Eustis, the highly incompetent Secretary of War in the initial stages of the War of 1812.

Both Tucker and Jefferson were, as Davis notes, extremely liberal men who considered the pursuit of happiness through wise government the aim of their generation.<sup>56</sup> Foreign encroachment of the order Britain practiced conflicted with this aim; so did war, and both men naturally opposed it. As we have seen, Tucker expresses this opinion on the national, political level of "The History of Contentment." Explicit in Jefferson's political theory and implicit in Tucker's allegory is the necessity of building up the nation. To this end, America must remain at home and become independent, rather than rely heavily on foreign imports; she must practice moderation and neutrality in foreign affairs; and she must work hard, and build her own industries. Only then could America attain health and contentment according to Tucker and Jefferson.

Read superficially, then, "The History of Contentment" is a rather charming little story. Read on the level of the individual it is a statement of Tucker's deistic leanings and a demonstration of his awareness of the literature of his predecessors and contemporaries. But read on a political level Tucker's allegory becomes a forceful statement against British foreign policy and American cries for war. Able to employ a pseudonym, Tucker, judge of the state Supreme Court of Appeals at the time, was not at all reluctant to express his political opinions, however damning of certain individuals and ideologies. He certainly

expressed them in his plays and in his anti-federalistic poetry, also usually published pseudonymously or anonymously, and in other pseudonymous compositions "For the Old Batchellor." One such essay (from "Mitis the Federalist"), however, was rejected by Wirt, as we have seen in one of the letters, because of its obvious political nature; perhaps Tucker believed that by couching his political ideas in the allegorical form he could better satisfy his potential publisher, a man who had vowed never to print in the "Old Bachelor" anything "malevolent, mischievous or vicious. . . ."57

Tucker's allegory demonstrates, as we have seen, the author's political position and his philosophical affiliation with contemporaries and near-contemporaries both in and out of the Addisonian tradition. One can also detect in "The History of Contentment" Tucker's familiarity with certain literary traditions outside the essay genre. In portraying Contentment as a foundling, Tucker suggests an awareness of any of a large number of works concerning foundlings; such works were endemic in the eighteenth century, though foundlings had appeared much earlier. A work with which Tucker was almost certainly familiar is Spenser's The Faerie Queene; as has been noted, he owned a rare edition of the Renaissance masterpiece. In Spenser's poem characters such as the Red Cross Knight and Arthegall, Britomart's lover, are also foundlings, the poet's way of



emphasizing their quests for identity. Similarly, Tucker's *Contentment* does not learn her true identity until the end of the allegory. Fielding's Tom Jones (1749), bearing the full title, The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling, is another example; indeed, Tucker chose almost the identical title for the revised version of his allegory. Tucker's work parallels in some respects the basic plot structure of Fielding's epic: in the earlier work Tom is also found as an infant, his parentage unknown; he is eventually discovered to be the son of Squire Alworthy's sister Bridget, and thus the Squire's true heir; the book ends with Tom's marriage to Sophia Western and his retirement to a life in the country. In similar manner, several of Smollett's characters, such as Roderick Random and Humphrey Clinker, discover their actual parentage only after the author takes them through a series of movements and episodes; in *Contentment's* movement from place to place Tucker, besides serving the purposes of the allegory, approximates this picaresque tradition.

In the ways in which Tucker uses allegory, further literary influences are discernible. Two distinct sets of characters exist in "*The History of Contentment*," and each set is carried by a different type of allegory. The first set, consisting of Health, Temperance, Industry, and *Contentment* herself, depend on the simpler technique. In one way, these characters more properly should be called exam-

ples of personification, in which, as M. H. Abrams puts it, "an abstract concept is spoken of as though it were endowed with life or with human attributes or feelings."<sup>58</sup> Contentment moves about, interacts with human beings, and senses the pretense and insincerity, the loose morals and levity of her suitors; similarly, Temperance and Industry are able to recognize their daughter by the tokens she carries at the end of the story. Clearly, these characters taken in and of themselves are only personifications; but considered in the context of the story Tucker presents they become examples of an allegorical type, the "allegory of ideas, in which the characters represent abstract concepts and the plot serves to communicate a doctrine or thesis."<sup>59</sup> Taken together with the plot of Tucker's allegory this first set of characters serves to communicate the author's philosophy that temperance, industry, and health are virtues which produce contentment.

The "allegory of ideas" may be either episodic or sustained throughout the work, and Tucker uses both techniques in "The History of Contentment": Contentment is maintained as a character throughout the allegory while the other three characters are only brought forth for the final episode. Tucker was likely familiar with classic examples of both techniques. Spenser's The Faerie Queene contains several examples of the episodic method: the Red Cross Knight encounters the monster Error (a character

Tucker includes in another of his allegories) in an episode in the first canto of Book I; in Book II Sir Guyon meets characters such as Pain, Strife, and Revenge in the cave of Mammon; and in Book III Cupid's parade includes such characters as Fancy and Desire. As Spenser calls forth these characters only to support larger ideas, Tucker introduces Health, Temperance, and Industry to help formulate his idea of contentment. The character of Contentment, typifying the sustained technique, also has a literary parallel with which Tucker was likely familiar in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress (1678). In Bunyan's religious allegory, Christian interacts with characters such as Evangelist, Faithful, Hopeful, and Despair on his way to the Celestial City. Like Christian, Contentment is sent on a quest of sorts and Tucker, like Bunyan, sustains the chief character throughout the allegory and provides minor characters with whom she can interact.

Tucker employs another type of allegory for the second set of characters in "The History of Contentment." For characters such as Pomposo, Servilius, Nauticus, and Thrasso, Tucker utilizes historical or political allegory, "in which the characters and the action represent, or 'allegorize,' historical personages and events."<sup>60</sup> Pomposo and Servilius represent actual royal personages; Nauticus, in sailing after a rich fleet on the coast, represents actual practices of the British navy; and

Thrasso serves to ridicule Eustis or any of several incompetent figures involved in events leading to war in 1812.

The classic historical or political allegory of the eighteenth century is Swift's Gulliver's Travels (1726), the technique in parts of which is paralleled by Tucker in "The History of Contentment." Tucker certainly knew Swift's work for, in another essay written "For the Old Batchellor" entitled "Dream Trip to Lilliput,"<sup>61</sup> he recounts the controversy in Part I of Swift's allegory between the "Big-endians" and the "Little-endians." Tucker's particular indebtedness, however, seems to lie in Part III of the eighteenth century satire. In the "Voyage to Laputa, etc." Swift satirizes the abstractionism and misuses in learning which occurred in his own time. The Laputian king, so far removed by absurd theory from the practical concerns of human existence, cannot understand a word Gulliver speaks, no more than Gulliver can understand him. Similarly, in Lagado, another stop on the third voyage, members of the "Academy of Projectors" engage in such ridiculous scientific experiments as attempting to extract sunshine from cucumbers and to build houses from the roof down. The power of the allegory is felt when we realize that George I (reigned 1714-1727), satirized through the king of Laputa, was German and could neither speak nor understand English; moreover, the Royal Society of London actually conducted experiments only slightly less absurd than those of Swift's

projectors. Exaggerating for the purposes of satire, Swift allows historical facts and persons to speak for themselves in his condemnation of particular contemporary affairs. Similarly, Tucker ridicules British royalty and American war hawks by casting them in essentially frivolous situations, in the midst of absurd characters like Florio and Tom Flippant, and by depicting them as hopelessly unsuccessful in their quests for contentment. Tucker is Swiftian in the technique of "The History of Contentment" and certainly in his willingness to speak out against what he considered wrong in politics and society, a fact manifest in another of his allegories, as we shall see.

Tucker was fond of allegory as his frequent use suggests. Several instances of allegory naturally exist in his poetry -- from a poem composed to encourage his stepson Theodorick Randolph to study, in which a book is defined as Theodorick's "Monster,"<sup>62</sup> to his more serious work, Liberty, in which the goddess Liberty, the concept allegorized, moves from country to country. More important to the present study, however, are the allegories Tucker designated "For the Old Batchellor." Of the extant essays intended for Wirt's series, five, including "The History of Contentment," employ some type of allegory. Four of these are labeled "allegory" by the author, although the other one, on avarice,<sup>63</sup> is also allegorical. The types of allegory we have identified in "The History of

Contentment" can also be discerned in these allegories, and in one of them Tucker fuses two different types in one character.

Taking the allegory on avarice first, we discover historical or political allegory and sustained "allegory of ideas" types concentrated in the single character of Avarice. Like Contentment, the "Birth and Parentage [of Avarice] are entirely unknown. . . ." He (or she -- for Avarice, like several of Spenser's characters, is hermaphroditic) is centuries old; Tucker traces his origin back as far as the days of Moses, then through ancient Greece and Rome, to Mexico and Peru, and finally to France, Britain, and Virginia. Along the way, Avarice causes the Israelites to take riches from the Egyptians, and Cortez and Pizarro to conquer Mexico and Peru. Once Avarice arrives in France, Britain, and the United States, Tucker expresses ideas similar to those set forth at the conclusion of "The History of Contentment." Avarice, Tucker claims, "has often been honoured with a Command in the British navy, and has been the adviser, & Conductor of many of their Expeditions. . . ." France is likewise indicted, for Avarice "possesses a kind of ubiquity that enables him to assist in the British and French Cabinets, and in the navy of one, and the armies of both, at the same moment." King George III, whose mental illness occasioned the rise to power of the Prince of Wales, is

another object of ridicule: Avarice "is suspected of having administered a potion to the superannuated King of England, which has occasioned the dreadful malady under which he has laboured for some years. . . ." Nor does Tucker omit his feelings toward American war hawks: "To come nearer to our own Country, and her Concerns . . . Avarice has been the author and adviser of more wars, than are mentioned in History. . . ."

Tucker's political stance is easily felt in this essay, but in presenting only one allegorical character he limits the thrust of the work. Avarice is sustained throughout his "allegory of ideas," but no characters such as Pomposo and Nauticus are introduced to help carry the political satire; whereas Contentment operates on primarily the personal level of "The History of Contentment," Avarice has so much to do to bear the political weight in this allegory that the personal level is hardly felt at all. The work is obviously limited in theme as well: by including no supporting characters, such as Contentment's Health, Temperance, and Industry, the quality of avarice is rendered somewhat flat, lacking dimension and associative qualities.

Yet Contentment's supporting characters are obviously limited themselves. Health, Temperance, and Industry appear only once, at the end of the allegory; since they are so important to Tucker's conception of contentment, more

developed roles clearly would have improved the work. In all three of the remaining allegories written "For the Old Batchellor" this particular problem is averted: the chief characters in each have others with whom they can interact to some length, producing a much richer, intricate allegory. Each of these works typifies the sustained use of the "allegory of ideas" type. The first two, "Generosity and Economy"<sup>64</sup> and "Youth, Health, and Temperance,"<sup>65</sup> are simple yet charming and amusing stories, while the third, on ignorance,<sup>66</sup> demonstrates a more complex train of thought.

In "Generosity and Economy" the titular characters are schoolmates and, except for occasional disputes, good friends. Generosity is characterized by spending his whole allowance on cakes to give to friends and beggars; Economy, however, always saves a portion of his allowance. As a result of his early habits, Generosity finds himself in debt by the time he finishes college. Fortunately, he marries Prudence, a relative of Economy's who immediately takes over domestic and financial affairs. Economy, meanwhile, marries Liberality, related to Generosity. For a time both couples experience marital bliss. Some years later, however, Prudence and Liberality die in childbirth. While Economy realizes life must go on, Generosity, both excessively grieved and unable to endure the solitude, enters an unfortunate marriage with Extravagance. She spends money extravagantly, forcing Generosity to sell his



estate piecemeal. He begins using laudanum, and one day an overdose kills him. In the meantime, Economy stumbles into a marriage with Parsimony, a miserable wretch who forces her husband to sell everything in the house to satisfy her obsession with money. One day Economy is found, starved to death, amidst the piles of money his wife had hoarded.

"Generosity and Economy" is not brilliant, but it demonstrates some cleverness, considerable charm, and Tucker's ability to sustain several characters throughout an "allegory of ideas." Nowhere in the piece do the characters act apart from the abstract qualities which they personify, an authorial accomplishment which deserves some recognition. The work is, however, only a moral fable and, while a politically-minded reader of the time could perhaps relate the qualities portrayed (moderation on the one hand, and avarice on the other, for example) to national issues, Tucker himself does not actually suggest more than a personal reading. "Generosity and Economy," then, supplies developed supporting characters, while the allegories on contentment and on avarice do not, but lacks the social, political, and historical levels of the other two works.

Identical merits and deficiencies are present in "Youth, Health, and Temperance," also an "allegory of ideas." This allegory has some charm and several developed characters, but has no apparent political or topical

import and verges on triteness. Briefly, Temperance and Labor give birth to Health, who is secretly attached to Youth. Youth, however, goes to the city for an evening with Pleasure; he recuperates from the resultant "burning fever, attended with many very alarming symptoms" in the house of Temperance. He comes to realize Health's beauty, and eventually marries her before such wedding guests as Happiness and Contentment. Later, however, he falls back into the arms of Pleasure; this time the "burning fever" leaves him a cripple and a social outcast. He dies in the house of Despair on his twenty-first birthday.

The final allegory of our discussion, and possibly the last one Tucker wrote for Wirt's series, is in some respects his best. A brief outline will serve to demonstrate careful planning on Tucker's part. Ignorance, the daughter of Night, lives with her children Sleep, Sloth, Error, and Curiosity in a deep, dark cavern. Genius wanders by, carrying a lighted torch: Ignorance flees from his brilliant presence immediately; Sleep rubs his eyes a moment, and returns to his pillow; Sloth stares "like an Idiot [sic] gazing upon the Sun, without Thought"; and Error, who appears to be a beautiful girl, shrinks from Genius' "Torch of Truth" which reveals that she is actually "a venomous Serpent, with Heads more numerous than the Hydra." Curiosity, however, is dazzled "by light of the Talisman of Experiment which Genius held in his hand." Genius leads Ignorance's

youngest daughter out of the cave, and gradually, to the "Temple of Knowledge." Eventually, Genius and Curiosity unite and produce a daughter, Philosophy, who presumes "to do nothing, to say nothing, and to determine nothing without previously consulting" her parents. Philosophy resides in a beautiful wing of the "Temple of Knowledge" set aside for her, and "though she has never been married she is undoubtedly the mother of a most lovely daughter called Science, who promises to be the Brightest Ornament of the present Age."

Tucker obviously put a considerable amount of thought into this last "allegory of ideas"; indeed, two full versions (the second is followed here) are extant among his manuscripts. Although it lacks the political level of the allegories on contentment and avarice it goes far beyond the intellectual significance of the other two "allegories of ideas" and is clearly very much in tune with the times. The characters, while naturally lacking the dimension of those in a much longer work such as The Faerie Queene or Pilgrim's Progress, interact in a logical yet imaginative fashion as they carry the basic theme toward the final ovation for the Age of Enlightenment of which the author was very much a product.

As an allegorist, then, Tucker suggests a knowledge of such important writers in the genre as Spenser, Bunyan, and Swift; it is not wholly legitimate for obvious reasons,

however, to form comparative judgments of his and their abilities. The earlier writers had far more room in which to work and naturally spent much more time on their allegories. Tucker, on the other hand, was severely limited (none of his allegories exceeds five or six pages) by the dictates of newspaper publication and by the necessity of working quite rapidly (all of his allegories, together with nearly a score of other essays, were composed within a few weeks' time) in the hopes of being published before Wirt's series ended. Yet in "The History of Contentment" Tucker manages to incorporate types of allegory characteristic of all of these earlier writers. In this respect, it is his most ambitious allegory written "For the Old Batchellor."

Still, the work has obvious flaws. Not least among these is the lack of allegorical characters with whom Contentment can interact. While Tucker does include Health, Temperance, and Industry it is only at the last moment, without warning; moreover, the thrust of Tucker's theme could have been more forceful had he devoted some attention to Contentment's way of life with her parents in the country, had he showed us how health, temperance, and industry actually produce contentment. As this allegory stands, there seems to be an imbalance between the kinds of moral examples Tucker employs: more attention is devoted to negative examples, to what we should not do to achieve content-

ment, than to positive examples. Furthermore, in introducing (also rather suddenly) a number of figures, rather than two or three, to carry the political satire of the work, Tucker leaves the characterization undeveloped; the same basic satirical objects -- British foreign policy and American war hawks -- concentrated in fewer characters would likely have proved more successful. A final flaw, also related to characterization, is Tucker's failure to connect the political characters with their various actions earlier in the allegory; we can guess but are never told which of them, if any, are insincere and capricious, which of them act with excessive levity and loose morals, for example, in courting Contentment. The effectiveness of the political satire and the intricacy of the allegory itself would clearly have been enhanced had such a connection been made.

As a writer in the tradition of the familiar essay Tucker's essays, oratorical, didactic, utilitarian, and satirical in several instances, competently reflect the conventional style and purpose of the day. As a well-read Jeffersonian man of the Enlightenment, the views he expresses are no less traditional. The manner in which he expresses these ideas, particularly in his allegories, is as instructive and often more amusing than the form used by many of the published contributors to Wirt's "Old Bachelor" series. The form taken by most numbers in Wirt's

series is expostulative and highly rhetorical rather than allegorical; at least, the series contains no extended allegories in story-form such as we have described in Tucker's "The History of Contentment" and others of his essays. The fourth number of the "Old Bachelor" will serve to illustrate Tucker's conventional viewpoint manifest in his essay on contentment as well as his far more sustained use of the allegorical form. In this number, appearing in the Enquirer in January, 1811, the "old bachelor," in his own homespun, familiar manner, relates the story of his visit to Switzerland several years earlier: "I could not help being struck, on my first entrance into it, with the picture of national happiness which every where presented itself."<sup>67</sup> The "old bachelor" had then asked a peasant the secret to Switzerland's unique well-being.

"The answer is very short and easy," said then the rural philosopher . . . "all that you see is the effect of industry, protected and not incumbered by government; for industry is the mother of virtue and health, and these are the parents of happiness."<sup>68</sup>

Clearly, Wirt was also concerned with personal and national contentment, and for Wirt and Tucker the manner of attaining it is almost identical. The differences in style and form, however, are apparent, and in some respects Tucker's is superior: while the "old bachelor" lapses into allegory at the end of the piece, it is only for a moment, more for convenience than for conscious artistic purpose, and the

number lacks the charm and creativity of Tucker's extended allegorical tales.

In his essays Tucker reflects the social and moral, political and national, didactic and utilitarian trends of contemporary American writers in the genre. In "The History of Contentment," chosen because it is representative both of Tucker's own essays and those of its tradition, one sees first a humanitarian concern for man's well-being in society; through primarily negative moral examples we are warned that such qualities as frivolity, pride, and avarice will not bring true happiness. Second, Tucker demonstrates concern for the state of his struggling nation; the qualities he warns against on the personal level are manifest as political greed, arrogance, and incompetence both here and abroad on a second level of the allegory. Third, Tucker utilizes the essay form to awaken and then teach fellow man the true way to both personal and national contentment; man must maintain a healthy body, a temperate mind, and an industrious existence to achieve a contented life and a contented nation. In his concerns, his desire to amuse, and his willingness to instruct mankind, Tucker is very much a part of the essay tradition. He does not possess the brilliant wit of an Addison or the gifted humor of an Irving; he lacks the moralistic persuasiveness of a Dennie and the rhetorical prowess of a Wirt; but in his essays as a group one finds moments of all of these qualities, and

always a sincere concern for the growth and welfare of his Virginia and the nation.

As a writer in the early Republic, Tucker is at once heavily dependent on foreign tradition and concerned for an emerging, uniquely American literature. In much of his poetry and in many of his essays (notably in his allegory on ignorance) he exhibits a heavy classical influence in both philosophy and allusion; in his use of allegory he reaches back to the Renaissance and to the previous century; and in style and diction he relies on a host of eighteenth century British writers. In another essay written "For the Old Batchellor" Tucker expresses, somewhat sarcastically, his true feelings regarding the importance of tradition; he laments the fact that it has become almost an "Article of Faith among us, that we are wiser than any of our predecessors. Consequently, were I to quote an author who had written in any other Age, or Country, I might be reproach'd with Retrogression, instead of Advancement.

. . ."<sup>69</sup> His writings attest that for him there could be little advancement indeed without constructive use of the past, not only in literature but in all aspects of life. At the same time, Tucker's greatest enthusiasm lies in his desire to write about things distinctly American, to describe all aspects of the American experience.

Aside from serving as a representative sample of Tucker's writing to point up his place in the tradition of



the familiar essay and in the literature of Jefferson's early Republic, "The History of Contentment" goes some distance in revealing Tucker's deep, personal feelings regarding his own life in the years surrounding its composition in 1811. Approaching age sixty, he had resigned his position on the Court of Appeals earlier in the year, resolving, as has been noted, "thereafter never to engage in any public Business, or office. . . ." Though his resolution was soon broken, he longed at this time for an existence quite similar to Contentment's own ultimate way of life, one away from the political center in which he had lived most of his life. In a letter to Wirt the day before he revised his allegory on contentment, Tucker complained of his failing memory and announced that "It would be mortifying, were I not resolved to Contentment, as my Head Anchor, and all I ask for is to continue in the same frame of mind that I now am."<sup>70</sup> He had come to a frame of mind that enabled him in 1813 to look back on his trip home to visit his parents as "the happiest [days of his] Life," a kind of happiness suggested in "The History of Contentment," and a frame of mind that led him to begin writing an essay series of his own two years later. In this series, called "The Hermit of the Mountain," Tucker describes in the first number his alleged "Hermitage" in the Blue Ridge Mountains where he lives a tranquil, contemplative life of solitude.<sup>71</sup>

Tucker's writings provide significant insight into the social, political, intellectual, and literary trends of his time. Writing out of a liberal, Jeffersonian spirit, a rational, "Enlightened" frame of mind, he expresses a deep, patriotic concern for America's destiny and well-being. While he cannot have made, of course, an influence on the future of literature in his unpublished essays, and perhaps no influence to speak of in his few published works, the writings of St. George Tucker offer in their dependence on the past and their reflections of the present an interesting and informative study. More than this, constructive use of the past is in fact an "Advancement" rather than a "Retgression," and in his emphasis of the individual in "The History of Contentment" Tucker anticipates Ralph Waldo Emerson. A generation later Emerson wrote:

A political victory, a rise of rents, the recovery of your sick or the return of your absent friend, or some other favorable event raises your spirits, and you think good days are preparing for you. Do not believe it. Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles.<sup>72</sup>

## NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup>Essay #5 "For the Old Batchellor," Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia.

<sup>2</sup>Letter of October 27, 1813 to Richard Rush, Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia. All of Tucker's autobiographical comments quoted in my text are to this letter.

<sup>3</sup>Charles T. Cullen, "St. George Tucker and Law in Virginia, 1772-1804" (unpubl. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1971), pp. 2-4.

<sup>4</sup>Cullen, pp. 5-8.

<sup>5</sup>Cullen, pp. 9-15.

<sup>6</sup>Cullen, pp. 18, 24.

<sup>7</sup>Cullen, pp. 26-29; "Tucker, St. George," Dictionary of American Biography. Hereafter cited as DAB.

<sup>8</sup>"Tucker, St. George," DAB.

<sup>9</sup>Cullen, pp. 31-33.

<sup>10</sup>Cullen, pp. 74, 80.

<sup>11</sup>Letter of October 27, 1813 to Richard Rush.

<sup>12</sup>Cullen, p. 85.

<sup>13</sup>Mary Haldane Coleman, St. George Tucker: Citizen of No Mean City (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1938), pp. 91-92; "Tucker, St. George," DAB.

<sup>14</sup>Cullen, pp. 164-67, 170-71, 196-200.

<sup>15</sup>"Tucker, St. George," DAB.

<sup>16</sup>Coleman, p. 106.

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<sup>17</sup>Richard Beale Davis, Intellectual Life in Jefferson's Virginia, 1790-1830 (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1964), pp. 245-46.

<sup>18</sup>Jay B. Hubbell, The South in American Literature (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1954), pp. 151-52.

<sup>19</sup>William Steven Prince, "St. George Tucker as a Poet of the Early Republic" (unpubl. Ph.D. dissertation, Yale Univ., 1954), p. 145.

<sup>20</sup>Prince, p. 93.

<sup>21</sup>Prince, p. 69.

<sup>22</sup>Prince, p. 158.

<sup>23</sup>Jill M. Coghlan, "The Library of St. George Tucker" (M.A. Thesis, The College of William and Mary in Virginia, 1973), p. 2.

<sup>24</sup>Coghlan, p. 21.

<sup>25</sup>Inventory of the Estate of St. George Tucker, Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia. See also, Davis, pp. 94-95.

<sup>26</sup>Davis, p. 255.

<sup>27</sup>Davis, pp. 263-65.

<sup>28</sup>Hubbell, The South in American Literature, p. 178.

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<sup>1</sup>It appears that the letters "bab" have been canceled here; perhaps Tucker started to write "baby," then decided on "beautiful little Foundling."

<sup>2</sup>The "Tokens" which Contentment brings include a spindle and distaff (instruments used to spin wool to make clothing), bread, and water; thus the family which discovers the child must supply her with clothing, food, and shelter, basic to the attainment of contentment in the allegory.

<sup>3</sup>The phrase "they recieved her with" has been canceled in favor of "was recieved with."

<sup>4</sup>"Foundling" is the catchword on the first side of the MS leaf.

<sup>5</sup>The word "proposals" has been canceled in favor of "advances."

<sup>6</sup>Tucker may have altered "their proposals" to "them"; both wordings are legible.

<sup>7</sup>The phrase "or other Obstacle" has been inserted by use of a caret.

<sup>8</sup>Possibly Tucker derives the name from the adjective florid, meaning ruddy, tinged with red -- resulting, in Florio's case, from too much drink.

<sup>9</sup>The second "to" begins a new line in the MS.

<sup>10</sup>In Tucker's time a levee was, "in Great Britain and Ireland, an assembly held (in the early afternoon) by the sovereign or his representative at which men only are received." Oxford English Dictionary. The possible identity of Pomposo, a name Tucker perhaps derives from the adjective pompous, is discussed in the critique. In Latin servilus means slaving, servile.

<sup>11</sup>The Latin word for cavalryman; a secondary meaning is middle-class, bourgeois, capitalistic.

## [NOTES TO THE TEXT]

<sup>12</sup>From the Latin for rustic, meaning country, rural -- a setting appropriate to the character's activity in the allegory.

<sup>13</sup>Thraso is the name of a braggart soldier in The Eunuch, by Terence. Publius Terentius Afer, The Comedies of Terence, trans. Frank Perry (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1929).

<sup>14</sup>From the Latin for nautical, meaning of, relating to, or associated with seamen, navigation, or ships.

<sup>15</sup>From the Latin for merchant.

<sup>16</sup>Tucker has canceled "and" in favor of "while."

<sup>17</sup>A Latin word meaning grasping, greedy of plunder, avaricious.

<sup>18</sup>Several names of this type are found in others of Tucker's essays, in his play, The Patriot Rous'd, and in Goldsmith's She Stoops to Conquer (1773). Oliver Goldsmith, Collected Works, ed. Arthur Friedman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), v. 5, pp. 101-220.

<sup>19</sup>It appears that the words "was invited" have been canceled here.

<sup>20</sup>Tucker writes the remainder of the essay, as well as his signature and the notation, in the left margin at a right angle to the bulk of the MS.

<sup>21</sup>Tucker neglects to underline the name in conformance to his practice elsewhere in the essay.

<sup>22</sup>The use of a pseudonym is consonant with The Spectator of Addison and Steele and other essays after which the "Old Bachelor" series for which Tucker wrote was modeled. Although Tucker's pseudonyms are sometimes thematically appropriate, this does not seem to be the case here. "Lycidas" is, however, the title of a pastoral poem by Milton, and perhaps Tucker had the pastoral mode in mind in his portrayal of Contentment's retirement to the country. (In Latin Lycidas is the name of a beautiful boy.)

## NOTES TO THE CRITIQUE

<sup>1</sup>Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele, The Spectator, 5 vols., ed. Donald Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. ii-iv.

<sup>2</sup>Bond, pp. xiii-xiv.

<sup>3</sup>Bond, pp. xv-xix.

<sup>4</sup>Bond, pp. xx-xxii.

<sup>5</sup>The Lay Preacher (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1943), p. v.

<sup>6</sup>The Lay Preacher, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup>The Lay Preacher, p. 96.

<sup>8</sup>Salmagundi; or the Whimwhams and Opinions of Launcelot Langstaff, Esq., and Others (New York: G. P. Putnam & Son, rpt., 1869), p. 4.

<sup>9</sup>Salmagundi, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup>Salmagundi, p. 11.

<sup>11</sup>Salmagundi, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup>Salmagundi, p. 55.

<sup>13</sup>Salmagundi, p. 57.

<sup>14</sup>Salmagundi, p. 174.

<sup>15</sup>Salmagundi, p. 173.

<sup>16</sup>William Wirt, The Old Bachelor (Richmond: Enquirer Press, 1814), p. 63.

<sup>17</sup>Letters of the British Spy (Richmond: Samuel Pleasants, Jr., 1803); "Wirt, William," DAB.

<sup>18</sup>Letter of January 16, 1804 to Dabney Carr. Cited by John Pendleton Kennedy, Memoirs of the Life of William Wirt, v. i (Philadelphia: Blanchard and Lea, 1850), p. 109.

## [NOTES TO THE CRITIQUE]

<sup>19</sup>Letter of June 8, 1804 to Dabney Carr. Cited by Kennedy, p. 113.

<sup>20</sup>Letter of January 16, 1804 to Dabney Carr. Cited by Kennedy, p. 112.

<sup>21</sup>Jay B. Hubbell, "William Wirt and the Familiar Essay in Virginia," William and Mary Quarterly, 23 (1943), 140.

<sup>22</sup>Hubbell, "William Wirt and the Familiar Essay in Virginia," 142-43.

<sup>23</sup>Wirt, Letter of December 24, 1810 to Dabney Carr. Cited by Kennedy, p. 263.

<sup>24</sup>Letter of December 15, 1811 to Dabney Carr. Cited by Kennedy, p. 272.

<sup>25</sup>The Old Bachelor, p. 63.

<sup>26</sup>The Old Bachelor, p. 69.

<sup>27</sup>Carl Dolmetsch, "Tucker's 'Hermit of the Mountain' Essays: Prolegomenon for a Collected Edition," in Essays in the Literature of Early Virginia, in Honor of Richard Beale Davis, ed. J. A. Leo Lemay (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, forthcoming 1974), typescript p. 2.

<sup>28</sup>See Kennedy, pp. 265-66; Hubbell, "William Wirt and the Familiar Essay in Virginia," 147-50; and Davis, pp. 283-84.

<sup>29</sup>The Old Bachelor, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup>The Old Bachelor, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup>Dolmetsch, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup>Letter of August 7, 1811 to St. George Tucker, Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia.

<sup>33</sup>Letter of August 8, 1811 to William Wirt, Letters to St. George Tucker, MS #1011, Wirt Papers, Maryland Historical Society.

<sup>34</sup>Letter of August 12, 1811 to William Wirt, Letters to St. George Tucker, MS #1011, Wirt Papers, Maryland Historical Society.



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<sup>35</sup>Letter of August 19, 1811 to St. George Tucker, Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia.

<sup>36</sup>Letter of August 25, 1811 to St. George Tucker, Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia.

<sup>37</sup>Letter of January 29, 1812 to St. George Tucker, Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia.

<sup>38</sup>Letter of August 22, 1812 to St. George Tucker, Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia.

<sup>39</sup>Letter of September 11, 1812 to William Wirt, Letters to St. George Tucker, MS #1011, Wirt Papers, Maryland Historical Society.

<sup>40</sup>Letter of September 12, 1813 to William Wirt, Letters to St. George Tucker, MS #1011, Wirt Papers, Maryland Historical Society.

<sup>41</sup>Letter of October 10, 1813 to St. George Tucker, Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia.

<sup>42</sup>The Spectator, v. i, pp. 67-68.

<sup>43</sup>The Spectator, v. i, p. 68.

<sup>44</sup>The Spectator, v. iv, p. 564.

<sup>45</sup>The American Museum, v. i (Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1787), pp. 154-55.

<sup>46</sup>The Lay Preacher, p. 24.

<sup>47</sup>Poor Richard: The Almanacks for the Years 1733-58 (New York: The Heritage Press, 1964), pp. 98-99.

<sup>48</sup>Poor Richard, p. 114.

<sup>49</sup>The Bagatelles from Passy, Text and Facsimile (New York: The Eakins Press, 1967), p. 48.

<sup>50</sup>The Bagatelles, p. 48.

## [NOTES TO THE CRITIQUE]

<sup>51</sup>The Bagatelles, p. 48.

<sup>52</sup>The Bagatelles, p. 49.

<sup>53</sup>

Essays #19 and #20 "For the Old Batchellor," Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia.

<sup>54</sup>William C. Bruce, John Randolph of Roanoke, 2 vols. (New York, 1922), v. i, p. 75. Cited by Davis, p. 124.

<sup>55</sup>Louis B. Wright et al., eds., The Democratic Experience: A Short American History (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1963), pp. 92-95.

<sup>56</sup>Davis, p. 389.

<sup>57</sup>The Old Bachelor, p. 63.

<sup>58</sup>A Glossary of Literary Terms, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), p. 62.

<sup>59</sup>Abrams, p. 5.

<sup>60</sup>Abrams, p. 4.

<sup>61</sup>Essay #12 "For the Old Batchellor," Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia.

<sup>62</sup>Coleman, p. 45.

<sup>63</sup>Essay #13 "For the Old Batchellor," Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia.

<sup>64</sup>Essay #15 "For the Old Batchellor," Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia.

<sup>65</sup>Essay #24 "For the Old Batchellor," Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia.

<sup>66</sup>Un-numbered essay "For the Old Batchellor," Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia.

## [ NOTES TO THE CRITIQUE ]

<sup>67</sup>The Old Bachelor, p. 21.

<sup>68</sup>The Old Bachelor, p. 21.

<sup>69</sup>Essay #9 "For the Old Batchellor," Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia.

<sup>70</sup>Letter of August 8, 1811 to William Wirt.

<sup>71</sup>"Hermit of the Mountain" Notebook, Papers MSS, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary in Virginia. The series was broken off later in the month in which Tucker began it following the news of his daughter's death.

<sup>72</sup>"Self-Reliance," in Selections (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957), p. 168.

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