THE LIFE AND THOUGHT

OF

NATHANIEL BEVERLY TUCKER, GENTLEMAN-SCHOLAR OF OLD VIRGINIA

by

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INTRODUCTION

What was the South? Educated guessing at the nature of antebellum Southern American civilization has been one of the favorite pursuits of professional and amateur American historians from Herbert B. Adams and W. J. Cash to C. Vann Woodward and Dewey W. Granthem, Jr. Conclusions range widely: a feudal society, an Athenian slaveholding democracy, an eighteenth century squirearchy, a plantation aristocracy, an unegalitarian liberal republic, and, in the grandiose verbiage of Thomas Nelson Page, a combination of "the three great civilizations which since the dawn of history have enlightened the world."[1] Part of the problem of definition or description results from the Aristotelian attempt by some historians to categorize the South as a whole, identical or similar to one or more of its historical bedfellows. A multitude of elements, however, some indeed similar to those of other civilizations, composed the South before the War of Secession; and these elements were unique to a particular time, place, and action.

Five regions became increasingly more apparent after 1820 in the area from the Potomac to the Rio Grande: the Virginia Tidewater under the leadership of Richmond, the new cotton states under the leadership of South Carolina, the Gulf States under New Orleans, the frontier across the Mississippi, and the backcountry. Each region demonstrated singular characteristics demanding individual study and inimical to the

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[1]Thomas Nelson Page, The Old South (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), p. 5.

myth that the South was "solid." The South began with Virginia, and its early history was largely that of the colonial Tidewater. It is with the Tidewater, therefore, that this study deals. More precisely, it deals with a Virginian, his life and his ideas of self and society as reflected in the novels he wrote. Novels are only one source of knowledge about a people, but, in many instances, a source more spontaneously revealing than any other. Some regard the novel as likely "to give back a very imperfect reflection," but even an imperfect reflection of life can be an almost perfect reflection of what people throught or wanted to think and why.[2] To know and to understand motivation and its conditions is to know the soul of society. "To know the soul of a people and to find the source from which flows the expression of folk-thought is to comprehend in a large measure the capabilities of that people."[3] And to comprehend the capabilities of a people is to understand some of the riddles of humanity.

The Tidewater, in the period from the end of the American Revolution to the 1850's, experienced intense political, social, economic, and intellectual fluctuation. This period, in which the new United States was scrambling, bounding, and clawing its way over obstacles in the path of progress, was doubly traumatic for the Virgin state, because she who had once led came to realize slowly and painfully that in this great time of national growth she had scarcely a thing to recommend her but her past. Virginia, in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, had developed

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[2]Jay B. Hubbell, Southern Life in Fiction (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1960), p. 6.

[3]Howard Odum, Folk, Region and Society (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), p. 7.

a pattern of life which depended on the possession of land and enough income to keep a dignified and honorable position.[4] This pattern of life was not the product of a cavalier aristocracy but of a potpourri of middle-class enthusiasts who aspired to an aristocratic living--freebooters, small feudal landowners discontented in England with the depreciating value of estate and tenancy returns, tenants discouraged with the insufficiency of land, second sons searching for a substitute birthright, and others.[5] With the expansion of the tobacco market and the importation of African slaves, the "most important single factor in the evolution of the Virginia aristocracy," the Virginia of the small farm and the yeoman farmer gave way to the Virginia of the great plantation and the planter.[6]

By 1776 the plantation had become the basis of society in the Piedmont and Tidewater, and the English yeoman tenant who had once envied the trappings of his lord now built a Georgian home, planted boxwood hedges, and drove about in a coach-and-four.[7] His heritage, his relative isolation, and the tobacco trade encouraged this new aristocrat to find in England and sometimes in France his literature, the models for his manners and dress, and the seeming essentials of his value system. He cultivated what he thought to be the attributes of a real gentleman, at first, in a spirit of emulation, later, by inclination and a sincere desire to lead a good life. He joined the Order of the Cincinnati and

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[4]Louis Wright, The First Gentleman of Virginia: Intellectual Qualities of the Early Colonial Ruling Class (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1940), pp. 4-5.

[5]Charles M. Andrews, The Colonial Period of American History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), 1, 56.

[6]Wright, p. 45.

[7]Charles Henry Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia from 1776 to 1861 (New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1964), p. 8.

swore publicly and privately that his great, great-grandfather had fought against Cromwell at Naseby. He was generous to all and hoped he was humanitarian toward his slaves, whom he considered to be a necessary evil. If scholastically inclined, he espoused the physiocratic agrarianism of Quesnay and Du Pont de Nemours and duly hated capitalistic exploitation.[8] Willingly devoting himself to public service, he fought the centralization of national government, valiantly defended the personal liberty ideals of the great revolutions, and denied outright that all men were equal. He thought he was a good man and a gentleman, a squire of the distinguished commonwealth of Virginia. He was, in reality, a proud and wealthy dreamer, a reactionary enigma in a country rapidly outgrowing him. And then the financial basis of his dream began to totter....

After 1815 a new trend became evident in Virginia. Gradual exhaustion of Tidewater soil, lure of the West, lack of commercial enterprise and facile means of communication contributed to a loss of population and an encroaching decadence. By 1824 this change was obvious, and the planter was finally forced to accept the fact that the days of Virginia's political, economic, and even intellectual hegemony were over.[9] He now had, in effect, nothing but his glorious past, and this past eventually became for many a more than acceptable reason for living.

The crucial economic trends of the 1820's were inextricably bound up with a qualified change in Virginian intellectual life and social thought.

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[8]Vernon Louis Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought, Vol. II: The Romantic Revolution in America 1800-1860 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), p. 3.

[9]Intellectual leadership passed to Charleston and the school of "southern imperialism." Ibid., p. 62.

The Tidewater Virginian was by nature a romantic. His isolated living environment, his legend-producing frontier past, his dreams of lordly grandeur, and a galaxy of other factors made him so. Jeffersonian liberalism, prior to its founder's confrontation with the hard realities of the presidency, was romantic and idealistic, if only in intent. Now, just as the Virginian awaited an uninspired future and clung to a dream-like past, the European romantic movement in its literary and artistic form began to manifest itself in the United States.

Romanticism as a state of mind was apparent in ancient times and in the Renaissance.[10] It is indigenous to the American frontier spirit, particularly, to the South. As a literary and artistic movement, however, romanticism began in Europe around 1760 and grew to a "surging, self-conscious movement" in a period spanning a century.[11] It was essentially an effort to create new values necessitated by the intellectual, social, and political revolutions of the eighteenth century. As a reaction against the Enlightenment, it emphasized senses over mind, subjectivism over objectivism, experience over knowledge, imagination over fact, myth over reality.

In New England the romantic movement spent itself on the Transcendentalism of Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Alcotts and on the social reform of Dorothea Dix and the Grimkés. In Virginia it became a vehicle for expressing the patrician dream of an agrarian plutocracy. It began in the early 1770's as a form of self-delusion; it expanded into an opiate

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[10]Rollin G. Osterweis, Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 8.

[11]Ibid.

to deaden the sense of failure and the suspicion of real moral guilt attached to the whole fabric of a slave society.[12] Manifestations of the old Liberalism, exemplified in the legislative sessions of 1831-2, were mere flickers of sunlight in an engulfing shadow. With the formation of the anti-slavery societies in the early 1830's and the horror of the Turner rebellion of 1831, the pleasant myth of chivalric living became an aggressive defense of a past which, some admitted and most suspected, had lost its meaning but which was, in the final reckoning, all that remained.

The first literary expression of what became known as the "plantation myth" is generally believed to be John Pendleton Kennedy's Swallow Barn published in 1832.[13] Evidence indicates, however, that the expression of this romantic ideal is at least anticipated in George Tucker's Valley of the Shenandoah (1824), the first novel of importance written by a Virginian and one which included more "typical aspects of the life of the state" than any other novel of Virginia.[14] While some would argue that Valley is not properly a sentimental novel, the later work of George's cousin Nathaniel Beverly Tucker is unquestionably a well-defined expression of Southern romanticism in the 1830's.

Nathaniel Beverly Tucker was one of those "who rose to the defense of their agrarian, slaveholding society and unleashed a barrage of novels,

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[12]Parrington, p. vi.

[13]Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land (New York: Random House, 1950), p. 172.

[14]Jay J. Hubbell, The South in American Literature 1607-1900 (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1954), pp. 251, 252.

poems, sermons, and tracts damning the individualistic North and praising the communal South."[15] He deserves "to be better known and understood by modern Americans."[16] Why? Many reasons support this contention--he is representative of Virginian intellectual life during the literary renaissance of the late 1820's and 1830's; he exemplifies the "blighting effect" of intense sectional feeling on literature; he reveals the apparently complex but surprisingly simple psychology of a minority group attacked from without, attached to its past, and frightened by its future.[17]

Tucker's first novel, The Partisan Leader, was published in 1836 in the midst of the literary renaissance engendered by the advent of the English romantic movement. This movement was represented in the early stages of its American interlude by Byron's poetry, Moore's songs, Greek revival architecture, and, especially, by the novels and poems of Sir Walter Scott. It is impossible to deny the impact of the Waverley Novels on the American romantic movement. They were America's first best-sellers with five million volumes off the presses between 1813 and 1823.[18] The first of Scott's writings to excite the novel-reading South were the romantic poems--Lay of the Last Minstrel, Marmion, The Lady of the Lake, etc.--published between 1805 and 1815; and from that time forward his works enjoyed amazing popularity.[19] Planters liked to describe themselves in terms of "The Chivalry," "Southron," "aristocratical." Scott's theme,

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[15]Clinton Rossiter, Conservatism in America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1962), p. 126.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Clement Eaton, Freedom of Thought in the Old South (New York: Peter Smith, 1951), p. 508.

[18]Osterweis, p. 42.

[19]Carl Van Doren, The American Novel (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1940), p. 3.

the glorification of the chivalric ideal with emphasis on the cult of manners, woman, the knight, caste, found an increasing empathetic reaction.[20] At a time when "Southern thinkers found themselves forced to show that slavery was not a necessary evil but a positive good, when they abandoned conservatism for reaction," Scott's blend of romanticism and realism permitted them to cover the "shiftless realities" with idealism, to rationalize the slave system with the feudal principle.[21] His romanticism, too, was rooted in intense local feeling and patriotism, both indigenous to the Southern psychology.[22] The Southerner, in short, and especially the Virginian, given his inclination and environment, could identify with the world of Scott and escape from frustration in the enjoyment of a world not his own.

The vicarious and vehicular qualities of escape and identification, with the possible exception of literary techniques, are the extent of Scott's influence on the Southern novelist and, most certainly, the extent of his influence on Nathaniel Tucker. To assume without individual study that Tucker or any other Southern novelist reproduced the images of the Scott novels is historical sacrilege; and to assert or to endorse the assertion that the Waverley romances may be the cause of the Civil War is, in the writer's opinion, patently absurd.[23] "Scott was born a Tory, and died a Tory...."[24] He was, it is true, the "eternal Conservative," but

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[20] Osterweis, pp. 46-49.

[21] Irving H. Bartlett, The American Mind in the Mid-Nineteenth Century (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1967), p. 80; Parrington, p. 99.

[22] Osterweis, p. 42.

[23] The term "images" is used here to denote mental representations of actualities not present to the senses, in this case, Scott's concept of the subjects of his writings.

[24] Crane Brinton, The Political Ideas of the English Romanticists (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), p. 110.

what he wished to conserve--the old idea of personal submission, aristocratic government, the richness and variety of a society with "picturesque gradations," in effect, the feudal fabric of the Tory myth--was "determined by the conditions of his time."[25] The American Southerner undeniably borrowed the argument of the feudal reaction, but the conditions were different. At the basis of Southern thought was not feudalism but slavery.[26] This is the distinction which must be made, for slavery by its very nature is not serfdom, and the "agricultural capitalism" of Virginia and the South was not manorialism.[27]

The Southern novelist wrote within the context of his own social thought and tradition. While it is culpable fraud for this paper to presume an opinion on any Southern novelist save Nathaniel Tucker, it is entirely justified to propose that he was not an American Tory or a Scottist. He cherished conservative principles but only to defend a way of life which did not fit "any basic categories of Western social theory."[28] He did not write of Rotherwood, Netherby Hall, and Giles Gosling's inn; he wrote of frontier Missouri, a settlement in the Blue Ridge mountains, and a Tidewater plantation. He was not a Tory but a Southern conservative; not English but American. With such a framework in mind, therefore, this study proceeds with an investigation of the thought of a Virginian, Nathaniel Beverly Tucker, the elements which molded his thought, and the symbols of that thought, the major novels

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[25] Ibid, p. 117.

[26] Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1955) pp. 46-47.

[27] Stanley M. Elkins, Slavery (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1963), p. 43.

[28] Hartz, p. 147.

he wrote. Here was a man born to a tradition. He set out for new frontiers but, finding them wanting, returned to his past. He, too, was an "eternal Conservative."

I. A VIRGINIAN IS BORN

The war had been over since January of the previous year. From the seaboard settlements to the Mississippi it was America for the Americans. Thomas Jefferson and his committee were hard at work on a plan for temporary government in the West, a plan which would serve as the basis for the Northwest Ordinance. Robert Livingston had recently resigned as first Secretary of Foreign Affairs; and John Jay, now in Europe, would, after a long delay, be named to succeed him. Captain John Greene and the Empress of China dropped anchor in Canton harbor on August 30; and tea and silk would soon crowd the docks of Boston, Philadelphia, and Providence. Congress would presently vote itself out of Trenton and into New York, and commissioners had been appointed to lay out a federal district on the banks of the Delaware. It was a year of beginnings. It was 1784.

Virginia gardens were purple with fall colchicum when Nathaniel Beverly Tucker was born on September 6, 1784, at his mother's plantation "Matoax."[1] He had been well-provided by his parents with a properly impressive and acceptably Virginian English background. Mrs. Tucker, née Bland, was the widow of the elder John Randolph and mother by him of three sons, Theodorick, Richard, and the soon-to-be-famous John. Nathaniel was her fourth child by her second husband, St. George Tucker.

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[1] About two miles west of Petersburg, near the mouth of the Appomatox River.

St. George Tucker had immigrated to America in 1771 at the age of nineteen and was heir to an illustrious name and an admirable array of talents.[2] According to legend, the Tuckers, of Norman descent, bore the original name of Tout Coeur (all heart) which had been modified to Toukere, Toucker, Tuckere, and, eventually, to Tucker. Another legend attributed the name to the occupation of weavers or tuckers of cloth. Whatever its origins, however, the name of Tucker soon came into prominence.[3]

William Tucker, a Norman yeoman who crossed the Channel with the Conqueror in 1066, established the English branch of the family; and his son was granted the estate of Lamertin in Devonshire. All the Tuckers, henceforth, traced their earliest Anglo-Saxon locale to this area and that of Kent, both in Southeastern England. The Conqueror granted the family a coat of arms in 1079, guaranteeing it hegemony over its own fraction of English land and life.[4] The story of the Virginia Tuckers properly begins with Daniel, who was appointed Master-of-the-Port-of-the-Thames by Queen Elizabeth and granted an estate on which he built Milton Manor. Daniel's brother George was a member of the Warwick party in the Virginia Company, and his son, George jr., immigrated to Bermuda in 1648.[5] The Bermuda Tuckers, in

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[2]Noma Lee Goodwin, "The Published Works of Nathaniel Beverly Tucker" (Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of History, Duke University, 1947), p. 2.

[3]Beverly Randolph Tucker, Tales of the Tuckers: Descendants of the Male Line of St. George Tucker of Bermuda and Virginia (Richmond: The Dietz Printing Company, 1942), p. xv.

[4]Ibid., pp. xv-xvi.

[5]Ibid., p. xvi.

the person of St. George Tucker, Nathaniel's father, fostered the Virginia branch of the family.[6]

St. George Tucker, the personification of the well-rounded eighteenth century man of letters, was graduated from the college of William and Mary in 1772 and obtained a license to practice law.[7] On September 23, 1778, he married the widow of John Randolph, the brilliant and vital Frances Bland Randolph and united the Tucker line with the proud old Tidewater house of Randolph which traced its lineage to John Rolfe and Pocahontas. The American Revolution had already enlisted the sympathies of the elder Tucker; and, after sending his family to Bizarre, another of Mrs. Tucker's plantations ninety miles up the Appomatox, he joined Greene against Cornwallis at Guilford.[8] At the war's end, Colonel St. George Tucker returned with his family to Matoax where Nathaniel was born the following year.

Young Beverly's early boyhood was spent in the plantation world of Matoax which revolved around a "kind and admirable" father and "an affectionate and excellent" mother.[9] It was a leisured world for a boy, a world of dogs and Negroes, of cock fights and sling shots; a world of sunny gardens and soft winds, tall pines, cool clear water, and clay

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[6] Ibid., p. 1.

[7] Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), XIX, 38.

[8] He later became a lieutenant-colonel and took part in the siege at Yorktown. Ibid.

[9] He rarely used his first name. Beverly Randolph Tucker, p. 18; Henry Adams, John Randolph (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1898), p. 6.

roads cutting thin red gashes through fields of wheat and tobacco. It was also a world of reading and music, of dancing and the refinements of the drawing room. It was a life which encouraged a boy to be free and to emulate the better qualities of his elders. It could also encourage him to imitate the worst characteristics of his inferiors. Life, in short, was a paradox in which liberty was deified and equality denounced. But this was not a boy's worry....

Mrs. Tucker died in 1788, and after her death (or shortly before, possibly at the time of St. George's appointment to a judgeship in the general court of Virginia) the Tucker family took up residence in Williamsburg.[10] Their home stood with other notable edifices on the tree-lined Palace Green. It was a wide, double, frame house of colonial architecture, connected by a wide hall and facing two directions, one toward the Duke of Gloucester Street and the other toward the meadows. Wide, hewn, pine planks covered the floor; and panelled pine wainscoting adorned the walls. From the main floor, two similar staircases swept upwards to the second and top story.[11] It was a wonderfully roomy place for a boy to play, advantageously located in a fascinating college town well-populated by historical ghosts.

Many times young Beverly must have passed the Governor's Palace now half-burned and fallen into disrepair, stopped, perhaps, to peer through the tree box hedges at the bowling green or even surreptitiously invaded the holly maze or the shadowy yew alleys of the North Garden. Many times, too, he must have visited the dark brick home of George Wythe,

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[10] Webster's Biographical Dictionary (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1953), p. 1490.

[11] Beverly Randolph Tucker, Tales, p. 4.

his father's old teacher, picked the paw-paws arching over the Brinton Churchyard wall, and played in the shade of the two proud elms guarding the Ludwell house on Duke of Gloucester Street. Here, the scent of hyacinths, the patchwork shadow of grape arbors, the rosy hues of Flemish brickwork created a timeless charm and simple elegance. And the charm, the elegance, the memories of Jefferson, Spotswood, and Patrick Henry, the traditions of balls, fairs, races, and a "season,"" Williamsburg bequeathed its children. So well did Beverly assimilate the values of the Tidewater and so well did he love them that he unquestionably deserves the epithet, "Virginianissimus."[12]

As a result, perhaps, of his mother's early death and his father's remarriage to Lelia Carter on October 8, 1791, Beverly Tucker was periodically a difficult child, moody and restless, often complaining that he was taken advantage of and misunderstood.[13] His subsequent close association with his half-brother, the morose and irascible John Randolph for whom he felt deep affection, served only to intensify these temperamental qualities.

Having previously been tutored at home, Tucker matriculated at William and Mary where his father was a professor of law.[14] These were scarcely the days of the "attic society" of Governor Francis Fauquier, George Wythe, and the young Jefferson, the era when Williamsburg had been a glamorous and exciting capital; but the intellectual revolution of the

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[12]Parrington, p. 35.

[13]Dictionary of American Biography, XIX, 38; Hubbell, South, p. 424.

[14]Dictionary of American Biography, XIX, 38.

eighteenth century encouraged young men to read Locke, Montesquieu, Voltaire, to debate the law of nature, deism, the contract theory of government, in short, to experiment, to conjecture, to permit their minds a freer range than at any other time in Christian history.[15] For Beverly, who found "pleasure in a mind well stacked with robust prejudices and a wit to phrase them tellingly," the climate was stimulating.[16] Had he not practiced Virginianism so religiously, the brilliance and versatility of his mind might one day have revealed to him the pathetic, ludicrous, and fraudulent pattern of Southern life and liberalism. "Il croyait sincerement au caractere sacre des institutions sudistes, esclavage compris," however, and, given his heritage, he could scarcely do otherwise.[17]

At William and Mary, Beverly studied under his father and elected to follow the legal profession.[18] He was graduated in 1801 and began the practice of law in Charlotte County. He continued to read law in Staunton under the tutorship of John Coalter whose sister Mary became the first of his three wives.[19] Beverly's practice in Charlotte County, meanwhile, met with little success, partly as a result of his poor voice.[20] In 1809, therefore, he moved his small household to "Roanoke," the plantation of his half-brother, John Randolph.[21]

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[15]Carl Bridenbaugh, Myths and Realities (New York: Atheneum, 1965), p. 36.

[16]Parrington, p. 35.

[17]Theodore, Hunt, Le Roman Americain 1830-1850 (Paris: Librairie L. Rodstein, 1937), p. 49.

[18]Beverly Randolph Tucker, Tales, p. 18.

[19]Ibid., p. 19.

[20]Hubbell, South, p. 424.

[21]John did not take up residence at "Roanoke" until he left "Bizarre" after quarreling with his brother's widow in 1810. Adams p. 248.

Tucker's association with his half-brother is one of the most fascinating and, certainly, crucial episodes of his life. He deeply loved that romantically rationalistic, sentimentally cynical, madly sad and morbidly glad, philanthropically avaricious, liberal conservative (who proudly exclaimed, "I am an aristocrat; I love liberty, I hate equality."), that brilliant and eloquent Tertium Quid, John Randolph.[22] And it was this human contradiction in terms who profoundly influenced the life and thought of Beverly.

The move to "Roanoke" exposed Beverly to the studious and literary tastes, the general knowledge of John; but the isolated life with a crotchety older man intensified his early tendency toward depression. While his mind grew, he became morose and restless. John Randolph enjoyed flattery, attempted to arouse jealousy, and with cunning perception played off one admirer against another. He encouraged Beverly to resent and to criticize others by making him feel that only he, John, understood him and that only they revered the memory of their mother, Francis.[23] Randolph's influence over his young half-brother grew to such an extent that it prevailed over Beverly's inclinations toward his father. Around 1810, John had quarreled with the good-natured St. George over the rights of entail and had broken off relations with his stepfather. In the same year he was barely dissuaded from bringing suit against the Judge for fraudulent management of his estate during the Judge's guardianship, even though he knew the charges were false.[24] These actions were not sufficiently

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[22]Russell Kirk, John Randolph of Roanoke (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1964), p. 28.

[23]Beverly Randolph Tucker, Tales, pp. 18, 21.

[24]Adams, pp. 248-249.

incendiary to prevent Beverly from his move, which implied that he had cast his lot with his half-brother.[25]

The young Tuckers remained at Roanoke until 1812 when they took a home of their own in Charlotte County.[26] The "Roanoke" years of intermittent close contact with Jack Randolph, however, must have crystalized much of Beverly's political and social thought, for not long after he began to vocalize his opinions.[27] He advocated, as did Randolph, a strong defense of slavery, states' rights, free trade, and, for that matter, all so-called Virginia institutions. In this approach, he broke with the traditions of Jeffersonian democracy and, more specifically, on an intellectual plane, with his father who, as early as 1796, had published his Dissertation on Slavery in which he portrayed the institution as an unmitigated evil. His position indicated, moreover, the generation gap, the difference between the Virginian of the 1700's and his son. St. George Tucker, for all of his impressive English background was an immigrant. The tradition of Virginian land, which lay behind the Randolphs, did not clutter the scope of his vision. His son, on the other hand, was more a Randolph than a Tucker and, in some ways, a typical product of an affluent generation. Even though a member of the intelligentsia as opposed to the planter class, Beverly Tucker envisaged the plantation system as the preserver and protector of the life he loved. He wanted to guarantee that this life would survive, and, responsibly enough, he was

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[25]Neither brother, perhaps, ever forgave the father for his remarriage. Frances Bland Randolph Tucker was a difficult woman to replace.

[26]Goodwin, pp. 4-5.

[27]Randolph, as a congressman, was in Washington part of the year.

willing to work for that guarantee. "Il craignait et meprisait la forme republicaine" and understandibly.[28] He failed to realize, however, that in his intent he was pathetic; there simply was no such guarantee.

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[28] Hunt, p. 49.

II. A VIRGINIAN MEETS THE FRONTIER

The war was over! Madison's "fugitive administration" was safely back in Washington; the United States had an inspiring new anthem; and a good deal of cotton on the north bank of the Mississippi near New Orleans had been badly and needlessly bullet-ridden.[1] Not much else had been accomplished. An exciting new era, however, was in the making, an era in which the American became aware of America and her potential. Manufacturing supplanted shipping and farming in New England and Pennsylvania, and even the Carolinas experimented with cotton mills. The Northwest expanded in population and began to figure as a political entity, while the cotton kingdom advanced from South Carolina and Georgia into the new gulf states. In the Senate, Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun began trading the internal improvements necessary to the South and West for the protective tariffs desired by the East; and, in the House, James Tallmadge introduced a measure prohibiting the further introduction of slaves into Missouri. William Lloyd Garrison would become an apprentice to the editor of the Newburyport Herald; and Beverly Tucker, having seen some action during the war, first as a lieutenant and later as Adjutant General on the staff of Major General John Pegram, decided to seek his elusive fortune in Missouri.[2]

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[1] Samuel Eliot Morison, The Oxford History of The American People (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 393.

[2] Goodwin, pp. 4-5.

During the westward rush after the war, several thousand slave-holders had moved into the territory of Upper Louisiana where they established corn and cotton plantations in the rich bottom lands of the lower Missouri or on the west bank of the Mississippi near St. Louis. In this energetic and expanding pioneer society, a knowledge of law was a financial and social asset. On this assumption, Beverly Tucker, his wife, and their two children left his beloved Virginia in 1815 and set out to meet the frontier.

The Tucker family lived for a time in a log cabin near Florissant, an old French town located north of St. Louis in the right angle of the Missouri north-west of its confluence with the Mississippi.[3] Life was hard, and the two children died of fever shortly after their arrival. So primitive were facilities that Tucker kept his office inside the stump of a huge sycamore tree, an experience recorded in one of his novels.[4] He soon became, however, a person of importance in the area. Lawyers were needed for every kind of case--those centering around farming, land speculation, fur trading, lead mining, boating, merchandising, and other activities vital to the economy of a mushrooming frontier community.[5] On the frontier, people regarded law as a shield against governmental authority, and lawyers gained popularity and respect if they held themselves accountable to the general will.[6] For Beverly Tucker, who feared the

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[3]Hubbell, South, p. 425.

[4]Ibid.

[5]William Francis English, The Pioneer Lawyer and Jurist in Missouri (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1947), p. 66.

[6]Ibid., p. 19.

the ever-growing tentacles of Washington, serving in this capacity was singularly rewarding.

Success came quickly. In 1816, Tucker assisted in the organization of Jefferson County, and in 1818 Governor William Clark appointed him to succeed David Barton as judge of the northern circuit, a position he was to hold for five years.[7] Circuits were huge and covered miles of backwoods country. The only transportation was horseback, and the territory was tempestuous and turbulent. Tucker became known for his remarkable vitality, a trait possibly inherited from his mother who thought nothing of ordering her carriage and spending half the night at assembly in the neighboring market town after a day of "household drudgery."[8] Often Beverly would mount his horse, ride thirty or fifty miles at a gallop, hold session, and ride back as rapidly.[9] Combined with such great enthusiasm was a markedly increased ability to handle himself before a jury. The years with Randolph had done much to transform the "poor voice" of the Charlotte County days. Beverly's charge to a grand jury in St. Louis in 1820 "was a classic in English prose, the product of a classical scholar and an able jurist."[10]

The legal profession was not the only field in which the new Judge acquired prominence. From 1817 to 1820, he served on the Board of Directors of the Bank of St. Louis, as President of the Missouri Auxiliary

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[7]Goodwin, p. 5; English, p. 64. His salary was not less than $2,000.00 per year. Such high salaries created so much criticism that an 1822 amendment allowed the legislature to set them. In 1824, they were reduced to $1,000.00. Ibid., p. 81; Goodwin, p. 5.

[8]Kirk, p. 230.

[9]English, p. 30.

[10]Ibid.

Bible Society, as a committee member to raise funds for a Protestant Church, and as an unsuccessful candidate for election to the Missouri House of Representatives.[11] Such a social and professional position, in addition to a decided penchant for political involvement, ordained that Judge Tucker be immersed in Missouri's critical battle for statehood, an issue which, like one of a thousand streams feeding a great river, wore away at the groundwork of American unity until that groundwork crumbled away in a mighty flood.

In the February of 1819, a bill for Missouri's statehood came before the House of Representatives. The proposed constitution of the territory permitted slavery. Representative James Tallmadge of New York, in an upsetting move, proposed an amendment prohibiting the further introduction of slaves into Missouri and requiring that all children subsequently born therein of slave parents should be free at the age of twenty-five. This amendment, which immediately aroused the amazement and hostility of the South, passed the House but was lost in the Senate.

Congress adjourned in March, and the question of "slave or free" went to the people of Missouri. Everywhere it was discussed and argued--in the newspapers, the legislature, the journals, the taverns, on street corners, and at church socials. Slavery had not yet become the overt moral issue of the 1830's on. It was, more properly, a question of sectional political balance and prestige. This question was settled, of course, by the next session of Congress which constructed the great and fair Compromise of 1820. For a decade or more, the problem of slavery expansion would lie dormant; but for one brief flaming moment the

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11Goodwin, pp. 5-6.

dark angel had waved a brand over the land, and that brand had kindled a fire in men's souls.

Tucker's contacts with northern men during agitation over Missouri's admission (and it is reasonable to assume that in this transitional area these contacts were extensive) made him something of a Yankeephobe, in addition to his cherished role as defender of Southern rights and traditions. He became so enraged as to urge the expulsion of all Yankees from Missouri. He disliked everyone and everything from politicians, authors, and teachers to New England speech and Webster's dictionaries. Half-humorously and half-seriously he proposed a plan for expulsion: every newcomer ferried across the Mississippi should be required to pronounce cow; all who said keow were to be kept out.[12] The Missouri Compromise, which he violently opposed, removed Tucker, for a time, from the field of combat; but the reaction it elicited was to crystalize as events transpired.

After the Compromise controversy, Tucker turned his organizational abilities to the field of socio-religious endeavors. He was one of the creators and second Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons of Missouri from 1821 to 1824. In 1832, he made one last attempt at political office, offering himself as a candidate on the Democratic ticket for a seat in the Federal House of Representatives. Once again, he was defeated, and this defeat, while a provocative commentary on the political sympathies of the area, marked the end of his political aspirations in Missouri.[13]

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[12]Hubbell, South, pp. 424-425.

[13]Goodwin, p. 6.

Tucker, perhaps, regarded his defeat as symbolic of the passing of political control from the hands of the Southern gentleman. He bemoaned this passing as well as the election of 1828 which realized it.[14] In what other light could this Tidewater aristocrat, this man of letters, this lover of the South and all it stood for view the rising power of masses of newly enfranchised voters and all that power represented? He feared it, for it threatened his image of white columned mansions; book-lined, secluded libraries; velvet lawns; blooded horses; silks and madiera; in short, the culture, prestige, privilege, and wealth of the life he idealized. Not that he had always enjoyed that kind of life; he had not. But he was a Southerner; and Southerners are romantic. He was also sufficiently perceptive to realize increasingly that what he thought was beauty rested on the reality of slavery. The defense of the Southern myth would soon be tantamount to a defense of slavery. The battle would presently be joined; and for his role upon the field, Nathaniel Beverly Tucker would return to his homeland, Virginia.

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[14]Eaton, Freedom, p. 28.

III. A VIRGINIAN COMES HOME

It was 1833. More than a year had elapsed since the son of John Marshall and the grandson of Thomas Jefferson had launched their abortive anti-slavery campaign in the Virginia legislature. Eastern Virginians still recoiled with disdainful horror at the name of Nat Turner, and Southern resentment against Garrison and the Liberator had reached hysteria proportions. South Carolina's legislative-summoned convention would repeal the nullification ordinance in March but claim a victory, and on December 4, the American Anti-Slavery Society would be formed in Philadelphia with a doctrine of "immediate emancipation, defined as gradual emancipation immediately begun."[1] Slavery would soon become a moral as well as political issue; supporters, for and against, would come to embrace their positions with religious enthusiasm and to construct pseudo-theologies no less zealously. John Randolph was dying, and Beverly Tucker returned to Virginia.

The reasons for Tucker's return to Virginia are vague. Why should a social and financial success in Missouri decide to return to a locale where he had not enjoyed such good fortune? John Randolph was partly responsible for the decision. Randolph was dying, and, perhaps, he knew it. He had started upon the long and arduous journey to the Continent in the hope of revitalizing his health, but his last reserve of strength

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[1] Dwight Lowell Dumond, Antislavery Origins of the Civil War in the United States (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964), p. 27.

lapsed when he reached Philadelphia.[2] There he died in a public inn on May 24.[3] Before his departure Randolph had, apparently, offered "Roanoke" to his half-brother as a residence during his absence. This was a strange offer, for Tucker's father had died in 1828, and the home on the Palace Green now belonged to him. The Tuckers at any rate, were on their way home when they learned of Randolph's death, and the Judge immediately took them to Williamsburg and his old home.[4] It is very likely that he, quite simply, was homesick. The condition and offer of his half-brother may have been coincidental to his basic plan. The traumas of frontier life had never quite agreed with this product of Tidewater sophistication; he had always longed for the peace and tranquility of his childhood. The years in Missouri had been successful in many respects. They had been tragic in others, for the new family on the Palace Green was far different from the foursome that had set out in 1815. Mary and her two children died in Missouri, and in 1828 Tucker married Elizabeth Taylor who died five months later.[5] On April 13, 1830, he married for the third time, this time the beautiful and accomplished Lucy Ann Smith, daughter of Brigadier-General Thomas Adams Smith.[6] Two years later, a daughter was born, Cynthia, who was to become her father's favorite.[7] Five more children lived to adulthood, two daughters and

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[2]Adams, p. 303.

[3]Kirk, p. 191.

[4]Beverly Randolph Tucker, Tales, p. 19.

[5]Goodwin, p. 6.

[6]Beverly Randolph Tucker, Tales, p. 19.

[7]Goodwin, pp. 6-7.

three sons--St. George, Thomas, and Montague.[8]

To support his growing brood, Tucker accepted a position as Professor of Law at William and Mary, a position once held by his father and one peculiarly suited to his temperament and abilities. Academic affiliations and inclination soon flung him into the maelstrom of controversy over states' rights and slavery. Tucker did not condone South Carolina's nullification policies, but he did favor secession; and his course of action represents the heretofore relatively uninvestigated relationship of academia and the intellectual to the South and secession. His philosophy was rooted in eighteenth century agrarianism, and he represented, along with his mentor, John Randolph, the survival of eighteenth century thought in pre-war Virginia.[9] Aristocratic government, self-determination, landed property, a stratified society, all constituted a life Tucker loved and tried to preserve. An attack on slavery, which he romantically interpreted as a patriarchal institution, or on any other Southern institution was an attack on all Southern rights and privileges. The disastrous results of emancipation in the West Indies, the Turner insurrection, and the increased violence of the Garrisonian abolitionists served only to augment his fears that his South was fast fading away.

Three years passed. In the election year of 1836, Duff Green, owner and publisher of Washington's Telegraph and an intimate of John C. Calhoun, secretly published in Washington a two-volume romantic novel of intrigue and insurrection--The Partisan Leader: A Tale of the Future by Edward William Sidney. The author, according to the tale, was an artilleryman

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[8]Beverly Randolph Tucker, Tales, pp. vi, 21.

[9]Dictionary of American Biography, XIX, 37.

who "witnessed and partook" in Virginia's future "struggle for freedom."[10] The title page was fictitiously dated 1856. Six or seven years after the actual date of publication, Beverly Tucker admitted that he was the author of The Partisan Leader. The book was a financial failure. It appears to have been in some fashion suppressed, or, at least, Tucker thought so.[11] At the request of friends, he had permitted its publication before completion in the hope of swaying the election.[12] They hoped in vain; Martin Van Buren, Jackson's candidate and the heir to his "democracy," captured 170 votes out of 294 and became the eighth President of the United States.

Van Buren's success did not mar the enthusiasm of the new novelist. In the same year he completed a second and more subtle exposition of his philosophy--George Balcombe--published by Harper & Brothers in New York and rated by Poe and Simms as one of the best of American novels.[13] It was superficially the story of a Missouri gentleman-pioneer and his adventures; but the gentleman was a thinly-veiled portrait of Tucker and what he wanted to be.

Tucker's literary attempts were not an unusual turn of events. He belonged to a family caught up in the intellectual milieu of the times, and his position as an academician served to encourage him further.

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[10]Edward William Sidney [Nathaniel Beverly Tucker], The Partisan Leader: A Tale of the Future (New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1861), I, xiii.

[11]Hubbell, South, p. 429.

[12]Dictionary of American Biography, XIX, 37.

[13]See Chapter V.

He was probably, in addition, much concerned with the movement to sponsor a distinctive regional literature in the South. The success of the Waverley novels undoubtedly demonstrated to him the advantages of popularizing a political idea through the medium of fiction. He had, in fact, issued at least The Partisan Leader primarily as a "political tract," and he thought of himself as a lawyer, first, and a novelist "only by avocation."[14] This self-designation was confirmed in 1837 when William and Mary conferred on him an LL. D.[15]

Tucker soon maintained, in addition to his teaching, a considerable literary output. Letters and essays began to appear in newspapers under the pseudonym of "A State Rights Man."[16] The Southern Literary Messenger, one of the three most distinguished periodicals of its kind to circulate in the ante-bellum South, published his articles--on states' rights, the importance of studying political science, oratory, the Constitution of the United States, and a novel, Gertrude. The Southern Quarterly Review, a Charleston publication and the second of the Southern literary triumvirate, provided another outlet for Tucker's writings. Increased involvement in the political and literary world brought increased contact with the exciting and strangely fascinating men of that world. Thomas Willis White, owner of the Southern Literary Messenger, counted the Judge among his trusted advisers; and William Gilmore Simms, newly appointed to the editorial chair of the Southern Quarterly Review, regarded him as a fast friend.[17] Thomas R. Dew, president of William and Mary and one of the

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[14]Edd Winfield Parks, Ante-Bellum Southern Literary Critics (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1962), pp. 67, 66.

[15]Beverly Randolph Tucker, Tales, p. 24.

[16]Hubbell, South, p. 425.

[17]Ibid., p. 431.

ablest pro-slavery writers of the period, was not only another personal friend but an inspiring contributor to Tucker's formulation of his already-determined political views, as well. Legendary names from the rolls of the United States Senate frequently appeared in his correspondence--John C. Calhoun, John Tyler, James Henry Hammond, and Henry A. Wise--and met their literary counterparts--Edgar Allan Poe, Thomas Carlyle, and the publisher, Duff Green.[18]

Though beginning as late as 1849, Tucker's correspondence with William Gilmore Simms reveals much of his matured personality, a personality not unappealing in its inclinations. His friendship with the Charleston novelist and editor developed from a mutual interest in literature and secession and began when Simms, the new editor of the Southern Quarterly Review, asked Tucker to review Macaulay's History.[19] Simms, in the same letter, expressed a wish to meet and to correspond with the Judge as he had been favorably impressed by George Balcombe and thought the author "a sound man, an able thinker and a charming writer."

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[18]Virginia's aristocratic Henry A. Wise, leader of the states' rights Whigs in the House and, later, Governor of Virginia, was a close friend of Tyler. He and Tucker tried to influence the then--President Tyler to oppose Henry Clay's "centralism", for example, his attempt to establish a United States Bank in 1841. Glyndon G. Van Deusen, The Life of Henry Clay (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1937), pp. 344-345; James Henry Hammond, Senator and, later, Governor of South Carolina, was a fiery defender of the Southern system, also, a correspondent of Simms; Mistaking Carlyle's Toryism for his own Southern Conservatism, Tucker fostered a correspondence with the British author. He was unpleasantly surprised, however, by Carlyle's letter of October 31, 1850, in which he held that "the relation of the white man to black is not at present a just one...." Elkins, pp. 216-217; Duff Green, a Washington publisher and close friend of Calhoun, became editor of the United States Telegraph in 1826. He aided in the managing of Jackson's campaign but turned against him after his break with Calhoun.

[19]Mary Simms Oliphant et al. (eds.), The Letters of William Gilmore Simms (Columbia; University of South Carolina Press, 1952), II, 498, 500.

Tucker complied with Simms' request for a review, and the editor read his work "with great pleasure." From that time until Tucker's death, two years later, the two maintained almost constant contact. Simms confided to Tucker that there was "nothing, certainly, which I better prefer to read than your letters, which I find always at once racy & thoughtful." Tucker, doubtless, felt the same of Simms' contributions. Their feeling for each other was warmly affectionate but always dignified. In a letter to John Esten Cooke, written eight years after the Judge's death, Simms revealed that he had once written to the Judge and inadvertently closed with "Yours lovingly." Tucker was "touched by the use of a word which men employ femininely only...." He displayed, on the other hand, all the testiness of pride puffed up, perhaps, by old age whenever Simms ventured a diplomatic criticism or suggested a topic for an article. His retaliation in these cases consisted of long silences usually concluded by Simms' abject appeal for some kind of response.[20]

During the brief association with Simms, Beverly Tucker became a "valued contributor" to the Southern Quarterly Review.[21] His publications included the review of Macaulay, a scathing review of Garland's Life of Randolph, a play, Viola, and an article, "The Present State of Europe." The Southern Quarterly Review, meanwhile, developed into the leading quarterly of the South and one of the best of the period.[22]

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[20] Ibid., pp. 300, 510; III, 93; IV, 164; II, 536, 539.

[21] Ibid., I, cxlii.

[22] Osterweis, p. 117.

Beverly's association with it and with the Southern Literary Messenger along with his letters and his teaching made it possible for him to exert strong influence in furthering his views.[23] His growing reputation provided him one last great opportunity to serve his cause--the Nashville Convention of 1850.

While Webster, Clay and Calhoun debated Clay's proposed compromise on the admission of California and the restriction of slave territory, citizens of eastern Virginia talked of secession and the formation of a Southern Confederacy. At the instigation of Calhoun, a Mississippi convention (October 1, 1849) and the state legislature (March 6, 1850) had adopted resolutions calling a convention of the slave states to meet at Nashville on June 3. The purpose of this convention would be the consideration of the Southern position on Clay's compromise and the broader problem of Southern rights. The Virginia Assembly, therefore, under the control of the east passed resolutions recommending that the state send delegates to this proposed convention; and it was not surprising that Judge Beverly Tucker, distinguished professor of constitutional and common law, was chosen as one of these delegates.

In the oppressive heat of the summer of 1850, delegates from nine of the slave states met in the terminal city of the famous Natchez Trace. The extremists, of whom Tucker was one, under the leadership of South Carolina's Robert Barnwell Rhett, were intent on increasing the support for secession. Tucker, himself, addressed the convention in behalf of disunion and the formation of a Southern Confederacy.[24] It was said that

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[23]Hubbell, South, 425

[24]For the text of the speech see the Petersburg Intelligencer, July 27, 1850, and the National Intelligencer, August 3, 1850. It was also reprinted by West and Johnston as "Prescience" in Richmond in 1862. Ambler, pp. 245-246.

he imitated the oratorical style of John Randolph and proved himself "one of the most violent delegates present."[25] The moderates, however, controlled the assembly, and the convention adjourned on June 12 after passing several harmless resolutions denouncing Clay's compromise and calling for the extension of the Missouri Compromise line westward to the Pacific. This turn of events thoroughly disgusted the Judge who claimed, with some validity, that Old Hickory's ghost still walked at Nashville.[26] In early September, the essential bills of the second Great Compromise passed Congress. Both North and South obtained what they wanted, but the time for compromising was over.

Beverly Tucker did not live to experience the secession which he had so greatly desired, although one of his sons would carry the Tucker name into the muster rolls of the Army of Northern Virginia. In the summer of 1851, William Gilmore Simms visited his friend the Judge for the first and last time. As Simms described him, Beverly Tucker was tall, about six feet, slender, and erect with fine eyes and forehead. He must have fulfilled Simms' expectations completely. Together the two men set out for a brief vacation at Capon Springs, and on August 13, 1851, Simms wrote to George F. Holmes that Tucker was "seriously indisposed."[27] Simms left the Springs to return home; and, soon after, on August 26, Nathaniel Beverly Tucker died in Winchester at the age of sixty-six. The cause of death, most probably, was heart failure brought on by a combination of heart trouble, heat, and exertion.

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[25]Eaton, Freedom, p. 51.

[26]Van Duesen, p. 408,

[27]Oliphant, III, 345, 120, 139-140.

The death of Tucker marked the passing of a true Southern gentleman not far removed from the ideal. He was, in modern terminology, a racist and a reactionary. He was also the dignified, kind-hearted scholar who took the German refugee, Charles Minnegerode, into his home, delighted in the German Christmas which young Charles planned and executed, and made the candles, the gilded nuts, the songs, and the games a family custom.[28] He was a fine friend and an able enemy, an orator and an artist of sorts, a public man with the courage of his convictions, and, finally, a romantic with an impossible dream. This dream he defended in his novels, the most creative, by their very nature, of all his writings and, perhaps, the most truly representative of his thinking and that of others in his situation. The South and much of what it symbolized was a distorted shadow on a petal-flecked stream, but it was real in the hearts of its people.

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[28]Minnegerode served as a Confederate soldier during the war and afterwards became an Episcopal clergyman and rector of St. Paul's in Richmond. Beverly Randolph Tucker, Tales, p. 20.

IV. A VIRGINIAN WRITES OF REBELLION

He was presumptuous, but he had the audacity (or was it honesty) to write of it in those years when the plantation legend was just beginning.[1] He was wrong about its scope and intent; but he admitted it could and would and did happen, while Caruthers and Kennedy and his cousin George limited themselves to literary descriptions of social life. Beverly Tucker's The Partisan Leader: A Tale of the Future was published by Duff Green in Washington in 1836 under the pseudonym of Edward William Sidney and with the fictitious publication date of 1856. It was reprinted in New York in 1861 as A Key to the Disunion Conspiracy and, again, in 1862 by West and Johnson of Richmond. It was a tale of insurrection based on an idea which supposedly came from John Randolph's letter of March 17, 1832, to William Wallace; and it blatantly admitted that the Virginian way of life--that is, the Virginian way of life, as Tucker saw it--demonstrated a growing incompatibility with that of the "northern regime."[2]

The Partisan Leader, even for the contemporary reader, "est emovant et terrible a cause de l'impression qu'il donne d'une tragedie imminente," a tragedy arising not from a conflict of real values but from a conflict of mythical values which gave substance to the reality Tucker and his social group believed to exist and which structured their own existence.[3]

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[1]The most active period of Southern mythmaking began in the eighteen thirties. Taylor, pp. 43 and 126.

[2]Hubbell, South, pp. 429-430; Sidney [Tucker], Leader, I, 130.

[3]Hunt, p. 51.

Social groups, as a unit, and the individuals within them form "mental pictures" or myths of what they think they are or ought to be, what they hope to be, and what other groups think they are.[4] Such myths, partly emotional and partly intellectual, become more than mere ideas; they become controlling images in accordance with which a man will mold his entire life insofar as he is able; they become reasons for living and, if the circumstance dictate, reasons for dying. And, in the end, men did die, men from the North and men from the South. They died for a myth; and, in their own time, they became myths for a new group and in a new literature.

The close and reciprocal relationship of literature to the myth-making process of a social group is the most convincing argument for its use in understanding the actions and motivations of that group. Literature like myths is composed of symbols--in the first instance, the symbolization of words and word-constructs; in the second, that of words, actions, emblems, etc. which of themselves are capable of conjuring up the entire image. The function of literature is to describe, through the use of such symbols, the reality which its author <u>believes</u> to exist, an image composed, again, of symbol-patterns. In a literary work, therefore, myth builds upon myth. The so-called reality which the literature describes is only what the author believes to exist; the description is, in turn, communicated through symbols loosely defined; and those same symbols,

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[4] From an essay by George B. Tindall. Dewey W. Grantham, Jr. (ed.), <u>The South and the Sectional Image</u> (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 9; This "myth" is not to be confused with the legends associated with religious rites and beliefs, although religious myths may be part of a social group's collective image.

worked upon by the imagination, give rise to other, more elaborate images. Peeling back successive layers of myth by a careful study of a piece of literature and the known fact content of the times which produced it gradually reveals the original canvass of a man and his times--what he believed to exist, what may actually have existed, what he believed himself to be, and what he actually may have been. This is, in part, the value and the fascination of literature for the historian.

Three images control the narrative of The Partisan Leader: a divided country, a divided state, and a divided family. The diametric opposition within these three concepts immediately indicates the romantic quality of the book. The tale begins in 1849; the Southern states have seceded as a result of the North's resolve "to give a master to the South"; Virginia is disturbed by guerrilla warfare to determine her loyalties; and the Trevor family of Virginia is split in sentiment.[5]

The North and its government, in Beverly Tucker's eyes, was the personification of crushing despotism. A league of Southern states for good and sufficient reasons have seceded from the "Central Government," negotiated a treaty with England on a free trade basis, and achieved growing economic and political advantages. The League's reasons for secession are Tucker's and indicate the thinking of his constituents. The "Southern States, including Virginia, are properly and almost exclusively agricultural.....it is not certain that any labor can be judiciously taken from the soil to be applied to any other object whatever." The manufacturing interests of the North are fatal to the South which needs free trade. Nowhere in the book does Tucker attempt to justify the

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[5]Sidney [Tucker], Leader, I, 40.

secession on the grounds of Northern aggression against the institution of slavery. He is, however, anxious to point out that the institutions of his society "are based on domestic slavery," that the "Yankees pretend to be so sorry for" the Negro and that they "want to set the negroes free."[6] This attitude plus the novel's arguments justifying slavery indicate that Tucker was concerned about the anti-slavery movement and antagonistically eager to defend peonage as a positive good.

Tucker's description of northern reaction to southern secession presents the central government, in the person of its President Martin Van Buren, as taking advantage of its majority position to subjugate the League:

> It was clearly seen....that he had determined to use the power thus obtained, and to administer the government solely with a view to the interest of that sectional faction, by which he had been supported...! Woe to the vanquished!' was the word. It had gone forth; and northern cupidity and northern fanaticism [a side-swipe at the abolitionists] were seen to march hand in hand to the plunder and desolation of the South.

Only the League's alliance with England, the desire to sway the Virginia State Legislature, the "absurd relic of <u>imperium in imperio</u>," into abolishing itself, and the wish to "dispose the people to acquiesce in the union of all power in the hands of the Central Government" prevented the "usurper" from "putting down, by force, their resistance to his authority."[7]

Having delineated the menacing and despotic nature of the Washington administration, Tucker proceeds to draw an analogy between it and the

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[6] <u>Ibid</u>, pp. 156, 242; XIV, 14.

[7] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 40, 156, 42.

monarchies of the continent. He displays, in this instance, the fraudulent and perverted condition of Southern liberalism by employing a satirical form of liberal argumentation against a political body, liberal in form and intent, to conserve an aristocratic pattern of life. It is as though he were Thomas Osborn using Lockian theory to attack the Earl of Shaftesbury. In Tucker's portrait of Van Buren's government, the White House becomes the "palace....in conformity to the nomenclature of foreign courts." The President's furniture is "rich and costly....adapted to the use of a man, who, [is] devoted to business, yet loved his ease." The President, addressed as "your Excellency" by his subordinates, becomes something of a fop, powdering his head and attending his personal appearance with care. He is well aware that there is "admiration in a foot, the beauty of which was displayed to the best advantage by the tight fit and high finish of his delicate slipper." His pose and posturings are those of a king--"his glance rested on his hand, fair, delicate, small, and richly jewelled. It hung carelessly on the arm of the sofa....and performed sundry evolutions on which the eye of majesty dwelt with gentle complacency." Van Buren's attendant is a "gentleman in waiting," and his henchman, the prototype of Oliver Dain, the instrument of Louis XI in Quentin Durward.[8] It is, indeed, the old English liberal's traditional view of the king and his court.

Tucker's queer brand of liberalism is a hopelessly tangled affair. He laments that "the reign of an individual had been restored," but he also abhors the "revolution in public sentiment which....had abolished all the privileges of rank and age; which trained up the young to mock at

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[8] Ibid., pp. 132, 140, 134, 135.

the infirmities of their father, and encouraged the unwashed artificer to elbow the duke from his place." He approves a time when "the sovereignty of numbers was acknowledged, and the convenience of the multitude had set the fashions," but he castigates the Northern majority which elected Van Buren.[9] The basic incongruity resulted from the fact that Tucker, the liberal, was really an arch Southern conservative.

The immediate object of Washington's malice is the state of Virginia, then in the throes of a partisan upheaval. Tucker's love for the state and her people is instantly evident. The Partisan Leader is dedicated to Virginia's "gallant people, whose struggle for freedom I witnessed and partook...." The alleged author, Edward William Sydney, an artilleryman in the partisan forces, has formed connections which have identified him with Virginia and which have "been the source of all my happiness." Here, indeed, is a man who loved his state. One of his characters, Arthur Trevor, can easily recognize a Virginian: "I heard it in your voice; I saw it in their eyes; and I felt it in my heart...." Here, indeed, is a romantic, a man who "feels" life. And his beloved Virginia, is beset with difficulties--

> Look at your rivers and bay, and you will see that Virginia ought to be the most prosperous country in the world. Look at the ruins which strew the face of your lower country, the remains of churches and the fragments of tombstones, and you will see that she once was so. Ask for the descendants of the men whose names are sculptured on those monuments, and their present condition will tell you that her prosperity has passed away. Then ask all history. Go to the finest countries in the world....ask what has laid them desolate, and you will receive but one answer, "Misgovernment."[10]

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[9] Ibid., p. 134.

[10] Ibid., pp. xiii, 9; II, 249.

Unable to accept Virginia's inevitable decline, Tucker takes the recourse of radicals, conservative or liberal, and lays the blame at someone else's doorstep.[11] For thirty years, Virginia, "had been sacrificing the substance of liberty and prosperity to the forms of a constitution devised to secure, but perverted to destroy them."[12] Tucker loved the Constitution of the United States, a sentiment probably stronger in the pre-war South than in the North.[13] The document he loved, however, was the narrowly construed document of the fathers not the more broadly interpreted form which accrued more and more power to the central government. Tucker could not abide growth; on the other hand, he deplored decline. He was caught in an eternal state of abeyance.

Beverly Tucker's portrait of Virginian life and thought reaches completion in his treatment of his characters and plot. In true romantic vein, he tends to be heroic in dialogue and verbose in narrative and description. Plots and subplots are variations on a few themes which involve the extensive employment of providence and coincidence. Characters tend to be stereotyped and idealized, strongly contrasted and little-motivated. They simply are.

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[11]Such resentment was, at least partially, the result of Virginia's status as semi-colonial, a status encouraged by Tucker and others of the so-called elite. As a colonial construct, Virginia for more than two centuries had produced raw materials which were exchanged on unfavorable terms for manufactured goods. From the address of B. B. Kendrick, "The Colonial Status of the South." George Brown Tindall (ed.), The Pursuit of Southern History (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), p. 90. This kind of dependence breeds a sense of irresponsibility which explains certain aspects of the desire to find a scapegoat.

[12]Sidney [Tucker], Leader, II, 323.

[13]Parrington, p. 84.

The main plot, as mentioned above, involves a band of partisans based in the Blue Ridge Mountains and dedicated to Virginia's secession and eventual alliance with the Southern League. Opposed to them are United States Army forces stationed throughout the state to combat the partisans and to oversee coming elections. The leader of the Partisans and the hero of the story is Archibald Douglas whose real name is Douglas Trevor.

The Trevor family is composed of two branches: the family of Hugh Trevor, a man of good lineage, high principles, and wealth and the family of Bernard Trevor, a man of intelligence, strong conviction, and moderate means. These two brothers, their families, and their friends symbolize Tucker's idea of Virginian social thought in regard to the difference between the North and the South, the ideals of Tidewater life--the plantation, the gentleman, the lady, the slave, the yeoman farmer--the code of Tidewater conduct. They provide, in short, however idealized or distorted, revealing pictures of a social grouping's image of itself.

Hugh and Bernard Trevor were "opposite poles of the same needle."[14] In all but the great principles of life, they were complete contrasts. Both were what was thought of as good men and gentlemen; but there the similarity ceases, and Tucker begins to separate his union men from his secessionists. He is quick to disassociate the cause of secession from the landed planter of distinguished position and to associate it with the intellectual of comparative obscurity, a device apparently the product, in part, of his own experience and a desire to relieve the cause of secession from accusations of self-interest.

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[14]Sidney [Tucker], Leader, I, 46.

Hugh Trevor, the elder brother and father of twelve children now in retirement at the age of seventy, is an unequivocal symbol of success, in terms of his time and even in terms of the present. He has amassed considerable wealth and held many distinguished state offices. He is firm and prudent but amiable. He is known to be cautious and a compromiser (a characteristic Tucker dislikes), but his opinions are respected and sought. Here was an eminent public man, and he believed without reservation that "'union, on any terms, was better than disunion, under any circumstances.'" The younger brother, Bernard (suspiciously similar to the author), the father of two daughters, was an undoubted symbol of unpretentious intellectualism. He possessed only moderate means, subscribed to inexpensive tastes, and lacked public prestige. He was gifted and educated, demonstrating strong convictions and clear views; yet, while "beloved by a few,... [he was] misunderstood by many." His hasty temper makes him appear rash, inconsiderate, and impatient; but he believes without reservation that secession is the only course for Virginia and the South.[15]

Having presented secession as a matter of principle rather than of self-interest, a provocative attitude for study, Tucker brings his hero into focus. Douglas Trevor, son of unionist Hugh, is a graduate of West Point and a lieutenant in the United States Army; but "his long residence in the North had not weaned him from his native state/....His heart never ceased to glow at the name of Virginia, and he returned to her as the wanderer should return to the bosom of his home...."[16] Douglas, as the story opens, is home on leave, and many festivities are in progress.

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[15] Ibid., pp. 46, 45.

[16] Ibid., pp. 52-53.

Among the participants in these functions are his cousins, Delia and Lucia, and Philip Baker, the personification of all that is evil and ugly, who is paying court to Douglas' sister, Virginia. News that the Southern League has completed a treaty with England, inspires Philip, a political aspirant, to insult the beliefs of Bernard Trevor in the presence of Delia. As a gentleman, Douglas attempts to extort an apology to Delia from Philip by challenging Philip to a duel. The humiliated Baker reports the situation to his father, Judge Baker, a henchman of Van Buren.

The situation involving Douglas and Philip provides the opportunity for Van Buren and Baker to subject Douglas to court martial for what young Baker reports to be treasonable statements and through him to reach the rebels. Lieutenant Edgar Whiting, a good friend of Douglas, acquaints the President with the true facts; and this revelation stymies the original plan. Douglas, meanwhile, has decided to resign his commission rather than submit to court martial. His decision prevents discovery of Philip's part in the matter, but Van Buren determines to use it as a means of controlling and using the elder Baker to his best advantage. To further his plan, he stations troops to interfere with the state election, knowing this action will goad patriots, including Bernard Trevor and Douglas, who is returning his cousins' visit, into an uprising. They can then be removed to Washington on charges of treason, tried by Judge Baker, who knows the proceedings to be unconstitutional but is rendered helpless by Van Buren's knowledge of his son's slander, and properly dispensed. The President's scheme, however, is destined to fail.

Bernard and Douglas, who has been undergoing indoctrination into the intricacies of states' rights theories, Virginian decline, and slavery from his uncle and a mysterious Mr. B___, reacts as anticipated; but

Van Buren errs in dispatching Lieutenant Whiting to make the arrests. When the young officer appears (in a most gentlemanly manner) at the Trevor residence to carry out his orders, Bernard offers him a night's hospitality (always offered to guests regardless of mission), sends a contingent of his "black watch" to deceive and surround Whiting's men, and forces the lieutenant to escort the family and Douglas to safety in North Carolina.[17]

From North Carolina, Bernard and Mr. B___ send Douglas, now a confirmed states' rights man, to South Carolina to study the political and military aspects of the situation in preparation for assuming command of the guerrilla forces in the mountains. The object of the partisan strategy is to draw Federal troops from Richmond so that the state legislature may meet and declare Virginia seceded from the Union. Douglas assumes the name of Archibald Douglas and enjoys considerable success in his campaigns. His brother, Colonel Owen Trevor, a foppish and ambitious man who, for personal advancement, has remained a unionist soon learns of the partisan leader's exploits and, perceiving an easy means of acquiring fame, transfers his regiment to Lynchburg to apprehend and defeat the guerrillas. In the ensuing conflict, Owen Trevor is defeated, captured, and recognized by his brother who treats him courteously. Leaving his captive at the home of another partisan, Douglas leads his men against the federal base at Lynchburg. They are on the verge of carcying the day when the federals regroup and stage a counter-attack during which Douglas disappears. The counter-attack is repulsed; and after the battle it is learned that Owen Trevor broke his parole, joined his men, had Douglas kidnapped, and sent him to Washington. It was he who ordered the attack as a cover for the deed, and heppays for his betrayal with his

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[17] Ibid., p. 194.

life before the day ends. Douglas' lieutenant, Schwartz, pursues the company bound for Washington but fails to overtake it. In the city Schwartz meets Whiting who has left the army and is anxious to aid Douglas and the Southern cause. The story ends here on the optimistic note that one of Van Buren's most trusted accomplices is verging on defection and will be of some aid to Douglas and the South. Tucker's desire to use the book to influence the elections of 1836 is responsible for such an abrupt close.

As the story unfolds, Douglas Trevor emerges as the symbol of young Virginian or even Southern manhood. He is in appearance, bearing, and nature all the things which the young Virginian aristocrat hoped or thought he was or would be. "He was a handsome youth, whose native grace had been improved by his military education, and in his manners uniting the frankness of a boy with the polish and elegance of an accomplished gentleman...." He exhibits, in addition, the characteristics the Virginian liked to call cavalier! "...he did possess great merit. A high sense of honor, strict principles, great openness, and generosity, were united in him with talents of no common order."[18] At this point Tucker departs from a strictly Southern image, an image it should be added of some popularity in the North of the 1830's, and touches on the national image of the American frontiersman. Not only is Douglas brave, true, and courteous, he is also practical. He is quite capable of donning the buckskins of the woodsman and learning the rudiments of life in the open air. But he is first and foremost a Virginia gentleman. As in the conventional romance, he sets out from everyday life on a grand adventure,

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[18] Ibid., p. 59.

returning to that life (it is assumed from the introduction) after the completion of that adventure. The adventure required a full American; the life, a Virginian.

While Douglas Trevor is "assidious, discreet, temperate, and disinterested," his brother Owen, a colonel in the United States Army, is "indifferent to duty, frivolous, self-indulgent, and mercenary."[19] The character of Owen Trevor symbolizes, in part, three images: The Southerner's of the yankee, the yankee's of his alter-ego, and the gentleman's of the fop, the extreme example of social rigidity and ostentation which the gentleman eschewed.[20] Both Owen and Douglas had enjoyed "the simple joys of...[their] childhood's home" and were graduated from West Point, but Owen had succumbed to "the pleasures of an idle life and the schemes of ambition." As the Southerner's yankee and the yankee's alter-ego, he is ambitious, acquisitive, self-interested, hypocritical, self-indulgent, traitorous, and deceitful. He is, in short, a fiend. He revels in the accoutrements of rich furnishings, sconces and astral lamps, wine, cordials, fruits, and cigars. He "glitter[s] with gold and flutter[s] in lace." He has learned that "any display of fixed principle....was no passport to advancement; that rewards were only for the mercenary, and that they were always dispensed with a freedom duly proportioned to the eagerness with which they were sought." Acting on such principles, Owen

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[19] Ibid., II, 327.

[20] The Yankee's alter-ego, as opposed to the "transcendent Yankee" (a combination of frontiersman and gentleman), personified, in the Yankee's imagination, the weaknesses of his society, i.e., self-interest, acquisitiveness, etc. William R. Taylor, Cavalier & Yankee (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963), pp. 85-86.

forsakes his state, betrays his brother and ultimately meets a well-deserved and poetically bloody end. Tucker hints that Owen's behavior is partially a result of his having been sufficiently old to witness his father's rise in life from a class lower than the "intellectual order of men, in which he had at last found his proper place."[21] If Tucker is suggesting that Hugh Trevor was not a gentleman born and that he followed the pattern of the American success-story, the fate of Owen might be of interest in a study of the cavalier myth. It remains, however, that he was a traitor, and for a Virginian there was no greater crime.

Two sets of brothers--Hugh and Bernard, the older generation, Douglas and Owen, the younger. The times indeed had changed. The Trevor fathers were of opposing positions, but both were men of principle; the Trevor sons were also in opposition, but only one was a man of principle, and he symbolized the South. In Tucker's characters Niebuhr speaks before his time of guilt and innocence, of the North and its unequivocal guilt, of the South and its unimpeachable innocence. The Southerner, in the person of Tucker, had forsworn moderation and compromise and now defined unionist sentiment or support as indicative of every evil, moral and physical.

Lesser characters from the so-called aristocracy people Tucker's world--the gnomish rogue, Philip Baker, another opportunist of Northern sympathies; the ungentlemanly planter of the common room who represented Tucker's revulsion at the boorishness of the new South's nouveau riche; and others. He does not neglect, however, the class which Frank L. Owsley rediscovered in the 1930's--the yeoman farmer. Here was an image

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[21]Sidney [Tucker], Leader, I, 54, 53; II, 319, 326, 325.

older than all the others--an image of the Jeffersonian South.[22]

Tucker's representatives of the yeoman class are the two lieutenants of Douglas, Jacob Schwartz and Christian Witt. These two men and their constituents symbolize Tucker's combined version of yeoman farmer and what William Taylor calls the "transcendent Yankee." Tucker's "transcendent Southerner" is a combination, with some exception, of Harvey Birch, Natty Bumpo, and Horseshoe Robinson. These men,were, in a word, "pathfinders." It was their function "to interpret wilderness to civilization." They managed to isolate themselves from the hectic competition of society, and "by reducing...material needs to a minimum, ...attained a degree of self-sufficiency which provided...a fresh perspective on an acquisitive society."[23]

Schwartz and Witt are the mentors of a typical frontier community in the Blue Ridge mountains. Their settlement gives the "appearance of discomfort and poverty....The walls and chimneys of unhewn logs, the roofs of loose boards....together with the smoked and sooty appearance of the whole, betokened an abundance of timber, but a dearth of everything else." Each home has a "rude garden," a corn and oat field and a small meadow. Such a community existence was not part of the "transcendent Yankee's" image. He more likely enjoyed an isolated or hermit-like life, and this characteristic distinguishes Tucker's characters from the image. Schwartz and Witt are not only members but leaders of a community, a concept closely linked to the communal sense which permeated the South. The communal sense, however, does not, according to Tucker, stifle a

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[22]From an essay by George B. Tindall. Grantham, p. 16.

[23]Taylor, pp. 83-86 et passim, 84, 86.

strong spirit of independence. The mountain men refuse to acknowledge superiors, a characteristic more descriptive of the Southern aristocrat and one which would ultimately create innumerable difficulties for Lee, Jackson, Johnston, and a host of similar leaders, military and political. In describing the march to Lynchburg, for example, Tucker emphasizes that there was "no necessity for harassing men....by forcing them to keep in ranks." There were no officers, for "where every man is an officer, each must be told individually beforehand what is expected from him....they will be apt to fulfill such instructions, and will fight with the terrible efficiency of individual animosity. Hence the formidable character of partisan warfare."[24]

As is typical of the Rousseauan intellectual, Tucker, as does Cooper, insisted that his frontiersmen were much more than mere primitives. They display all the marks of the natural aristocrat or "beau savage." They possessed "simple virtue and instinctive patriotism....untaught wisdom, which finds its place in minds uncorrupted by artificial systems of education and undebased by abject and menial occupations." Attired in half-dressed buckskins, they are masters of the trail, the rifle, the knife, and the tomahawk; but, as in the case of Witt, "a second glance might have discovered something intellectual in his countenance, with less of boorishness in his air and manner than the rest of the company displayed."[25] They are practical men, little given to fantasy or even the appreciation of natural beauty, but their practicality has no connotations of self-interest. They are brave, true, and loyal

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[24]Sidney [Tucker], Leader, I, 2; II, 341, 348.

[25]Ibid., I, xiv, 6.

to the end. As do most characters in a romantic novel, Schwartz and Witt act within the confines of a stereotype not from personal motivation, but they reflect the Tidewater Virginian's concept of the frontier yeoman farmer.

Some basis for Tucker's description of backwoods life did exist, but his exposition of the farmer's patriotism and political sentiments is almost totally unfounded. The farmer of the Virginia backcountry, i.e. the Blue Ridge mountains and the Shenandoah Valley, never espoused the perverted liberalism of the Tidewater and the piedmont. He was historically at odds with state government and settled the matter once and for all in 1863 when West Virginia was admitted to the Union. She indeed seceded, but from Virginia not the Union. Why, then, did Tucker, who must have been aware of the political situation, make the Blue Ridge area the base for partisan movements and its people their participants? He hoped, perhaps, to elicit and encourage backwoods support in the elections of 1836 and to make these people feel an important part of Virginian life. It is likely, however, that he thought he perceived an innate pioneer love of freedom, in their attitude and unrealistically thought it his own.

The Trevors, the Bakers, Schwartz and Witt--three pairs symbolic of Tucker's images. One pair and one man remain which deserve attention--Delia, daughter of Bernard, and her mother, the representatives of Southern womanhood, and a mysterious Mr. B___, friend of Bernard and, possibly the prototype of John C. Calhoun.

"There was a saying in Virginia that it takes three generations to make a gentleman and four to make a lady." Whether or not ladies and gentlemen adhered to this time schedule is propositional, but such a statement indicates the importance and distinction which the Virginian

accorded or thought he accorded his women. In Virginia, the "belle" was, unquestionably, an institution and her mother the "keystone" of the domestic establishment.[26] Delia Trevor, the seventeen-year-old daughter of Bernard and the love interest of Douglas, is Tucker's image of such a "belle." She is, of course, idealistically lovely--

> Her person, her countenance, her hair, her eyes, her complexion, should all be described, and the whole summed up in a tout ensemble of surpassing beauty.
>
> And how light and elastic is her step....her swan-like neck outstretched, her face slightly upturned, her eye swimming in light, and looking as if....all the gay visions of hope stood disclosed in bright reality. Is she not beautiful....Who can wonder that each man's mistress, wearing this Cytherean zone, is in his eyes the Queen of Beauty herself?

Her conversation was "always cheerful, sprightly, and intelligent....her voice melodious, distinct, articulate, and richly flexible...." She had been educated at home; and "her manners were formed in a domestic circle--characterized by refinement, and delicate, but frank propriety." While Delia, as a "belle," did not care to be regarded as an intellectual, "her love of reading had been cultivated by throwing books in her way; and, the taste once formed, her attention had been directed to such as might best qualify her for the duties of woman's only appropriate station."[27] This "station" was, of course, marriage.

The Southern "belle" who failed to marry was, indeed, in sad straits. She became an old maid at twenty, sentenced to the fringes of society, and, unless amply provided for by an indulgent papa, doomed to the never-ending role of visiting-aunt. To avoid such unhappy prospects, the young girl from puberty on was faced with the problem of securing an

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[26] Hubbell, Life, pp. 38, 55.

[27] Sidney [Tucker], Leader, I, 60, 128, 61, 58.

appropriate husband. To this end, she had to be at least a reasonable approximation of the Southern gentleman's ideal of womanhood. And he asked a good deal. Delia's mother, for example, verged on being the great "earth mother" herself. She was "matronly in her dress and air; tall, majestic, and/graceful in her person; and with a countenance beaming with frankness, animation, and intelligence. She had been a beautiful woman and....was still handsome." In disposition she was courteous and gentle, high spirited, generous, and as patriotically Southern as her husband. She firmly believed and she had taught her daughter that "in society, self-respect is the first duty of woman; and that the only inviolable safeguard for that, is a care never to offend the self-respect of others." This sense of self-respect eschewed the fashion (Northern, presumably) of exposing a woman to notoriety, the fashion which encouraged her to "go North; write books; patronize abolition societies; or keep a boarding school." Were she a devotée of this fashion, she was "no longer fit to be the wife of a Virginia gentleman."[28]

The role of wife required much self-discipline as well as self-respect. While most lords and masters whored about with every other (sometimes, every) mulatto on the place, they insisted that they be able to return to the soft white sheets of their four-posters and the chaste embraces of their paragon-wives nestled therein.[29] The ladies, on the

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[28] Ibid., pp. 102-103, 69, 123.

[29] This, too, was partially a myth. "Though white women were less involved in interracial sexual contacts than men, their role, especially in the colonial period....was never entirely negligible."
Kenneth Stampp, The Peculiar Institution (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1956), p. 352.

other hand, (and Tucker takes care to point out that they exist only south of the Roanoke) must continue "to walk in the steps of their chaste mothers--safe in that high sense of honor which protects at once from pollution and suspicion." A wife must believe her husband always honorable and must never fear for his safety but "when she doubts his truth." She must be his consolation and joy, his "sage adviser and useful friend." In turn, she derives her security and self-confidence from the feeling (and this may be all it is) that she is his "second self" and "lives in his heart."[30]

Tucker's male characters are well-deserving of unbounded love and loyalty from their wives, as was Tucker, apparently, and most of those in the academic and literary circles he frequented. He moved, however, in a refined and dignified atmosphere, an atmosphere with which he gilded, intentionally in part, the raw edges of his "Southernism."[31] The ablest exponent of Tucker's Southernism, with the exception of Bernard Trevor, is the elusive Mr. B___.

The character of Mr. B___, statesman, cloak and dagger rebel, and friend of Bernard Trevor, lends an aura of intrigue to the story. It is a matter of conjecture whether or not he was intended as the figure of John C. Calhoun.[32] Tucker greatly admired the South Carolinian and

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[30]Sidney [Tucker], Leader, I, 130; II, 279; I, 187; II, 279.

[31]Grantham, p. 1.

[32]Parrington regards the book as an attempt to dramatize the philosophy of Calhoun. Parrington, p. 36; Hubbell doubts the book is so intended, for he claims that Tucker did not admire Calhoun until after 1836. Hubbell, South, p. 430; In a letter to William Gilmore Simms, Tucker revealed that John Randolph had sent him in 1833 to Calhoun to warn him of Clay and his compromises and to ask him not to let South Carolina down. Tucker, therefore, was at least acquainted with Calhoun. William P. Trent, William Gilmore Simms (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1892), p. 183.

staunchly affirmed his political beliefs. Calhoun, on the other hand, might not have appreciated the parallel drawn between himself and the rebel statesman, for he was engaged at the time in persuading the Senate to accept his impassioned views of the abolitionists' petition campaign, the "gag rule," and the compact theory of the Union. Whatever his intended origins, however, Mr. B___ bears little physical and temperamental resemblance to Calhoun. Tucker's character is a man of sixty years, "slightly formed, but tall, erect, clean-limbed, and sinewy. His vigor seemed little impaired by time, though his high and strong features look at least as old as he was." His eyes are a clear bright blue; his glance, quick, "but settled and searching in its gaze."[33] His suntan and silver hair contrast markedly and make him a figure of distinction. Calhoun at the date of publication was fifty-four. He was described as a "tall, gaunt, sickly man with....traplike mouth."[34] Surely such a figure claimed some sympathy for its weaknesses, but Mr. B___'s appearance was "imposing....commanded the respect due to the wisdom of age, and seemed to claim no pity for its infirmities." He was not "venerable" but "no man was held in higher veneration."[35] Calhoun's colleagues in the Senate respected his mind and integrity, but his intensity and dialectic often left them cold or convulsed. He was seldom congenial, and "his political popularity was not personal but abstract."[36] Mr. B___, in contrast, was congenial, assured (without the insane self-confidence of Calhoun),

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[33]Sidney [Tucker], Leader, I, 121.

[34]Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1948), p. 74.

[35]Sidney [Tucker], Leader, I, 121.

[36]Hofstadter, p. 74.

and reassuring (decidedly not a characteristic of Calhoun), relaxed in the wisdom of his years. He was, at the risk of contrivance, the benignly paternal combination of Roman patriarch, Southern colonel (a post-war image, it is true), Grecian democrat, and Jeffersonian colonial. In this role, he becomes the mentor of Douglas and the inspiration of Bernard, conversing at length on every subject from slavery to courts-martial to secession to woman's role in society. His conversations with them reveal much of Virginian thought on the institutions of its society, particularly, that institution bred of land, climate, and convenience which made the ante-bellum institutional South unique. This institution was slavery.

Freedom, in the definition of Bernard Trevor, is for "all, who, in the economy of Providence, are capable of freedom."[37] The Negro, of course, simply was not capable of freedom. Accepting this premise as self-evident, Tucker's characters (and, presumably, most Virginians) are forced into a rigidly a-prioristic argument to justify it. Abolition and rebellion had led them a long way from the belief that the practice is a necessary evil, and they now affirmed with Calhoun that it was "instead of an evil, a good--a positive good."[38] They offered, in defense of their position, a number of arguments--racial, cultural, Biblical, economic. The sterility of these arguments had apparently begun to impress Tucker, himself, although he reaffirmed ever more vehemently the need for the system. Douglas Trevor voices Tucker's confusion when he discusses the Trevor Negroes' successful subterfuge against Whiting's company with Whiting. Douglas proposes that "there must be something, by nature, in the moral constitution of the negro, intrinsically different from the

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[37]Sidney [Tucker], Leader, I, 99.

[38]Hofstadter, p. 79.

white man." Whiting allows that this must be so, but then they must reject "the authority which tells us that all are of one race." Douglas meets this objection by drawing a somewhat silly analogy between the Negro and the dog. The wolf and the Newfoundland are of the same race but behave differently because of "circumstances." As these circumstances are slavery, the proponent is led into a vicious circle. He confesses it is difficult for him to chose "between rejecting the evidence of my own senses, or...of God's word, or the philosophy...that man is to be considered as a unit." Ultimately, "philosophy must go by the board," and Douglas concludes that "it may be...what is best for me is best for my friend Jack [a Negro] ....and vice versa; but as long as neither of us thinks so, why not leave each to his choice? Besides, there is more room in the world for both of us, than if both always wanted the same..."[39] Douglas' talk of "choice" is pathetically ludicrous. He offers nothing but a tautological argument that slavery is because it is and a Malthusian suggestion that there was not sufficient "room" for both races to prosper. His thinking represents, perhaps, the impasse to which Tucker had come. Impasse, however, is more dangerous than error, for it leaves no recourse. Either a man must defend what he believes to be the core of his existence, good or bad, or he must go down with it.

The questioning conversation of Douglas and Whiting is even more provocative because of the distinction it makes between their views and those of the older generation. Mr. B___ and Bernard Trevor are convinced that slavery is a benevolently patriarchal system. Mr. B___ informs Douglas that all Negroes "are one integral part of the great black family,

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39Sidney [Tucker], Leader, II, 224, 225.

which, in all its branches, is united by similar ligaments to the great white family." Douglas, according to the older man, has the "parental feeling of the old who nursed [his] ...infancy.... [and] the equal friendship of those with whom" he played. He was taught "to claim [no]...privilege, in a fight over those whom...[he]treated as equals in play. Then ...[he]...[had] the grateful and admiring affection" of his playfellows, and, presumably, other slaves. As a result of this love and affection, Douglas need never suspect his slaves could "rise against...[his] family."[40]

While Tucker, perhaps as a result of his father's influence, displays sufficient common sense to avoid pro-slavery arguments based on race, culture, religion, etc., yet he firmly supports the view that a patriarchal form of slavery is a necessity for the Negro's situation, a necessity desired by his masters and himself. The propaganda of the "Amis de Noirs" or the abolitionists is "cant and sophistry." They have mistaken the "proud humility" of the domestic slave for the "servile sulkiness" of the "ferocious" servants in the North. They confuse his "disinterested devotion" with their own "calculating selfishness."[41] They, in effect, would misunderstand any system based on mutual service, love, and benevolence.

Tucker's facility for blindly idealizing the system of slavery is understandable, in part, and may suggest why the South, which in 1860 reported only 46,274 persons owning as many as twenty slaves and only 2,292 of these owning as many as 100, was so willing to support secession and why it became so unwilling to support the war, itself.[42] It believed,

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[40] Ibid., p. 204.

[41] Ibid., I, 99; II, 205.

[42] Clement Eaton, A History of the Old South (New York: Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 445.

quite simply, in a dream, a dream which colored the imaginations of everyone from planter to academic to small farmer, a dream that whatever he found good in life derived ultimately from the plantation system. This system defined a nation, a nation below the Mason-Dixon Line; and its dreams of nationalism extended outward to include Lebensraum in the West and Southwest, trade alliances with the Continent, and, ultimately, independence. Slavery may not have caused the War of Secession, but had it not existed would such a conflict have exploded? Tucker's characters and Tucker, himself, answer this question--it was inevitable.

The Partisan Leader, as a literary work and propaganda piece, has evoked diverse criticism. Parrington called it a "romantically extravagant book, quite the absurdest in the library of the old South."[43] Moses insisted that Tucker's book breathed "defiance, hate, and suspicion, [and] clearly...[indicated] that...[the] novel was a text-book of rebellion.... prompted in the spirit of Calhoun--with none of his genius."[44] A more valid criticism, on the other hand, is that of Carl Van Doren when he affirms that Tucker prophesied disunion but did so with classical restraint, pride, and conscious Virginianism.[45]

Tucker's novel may have depicted the romantic absurdities of Virginian and Southern life, but these absurdities did exist, and Tucker thought them the essence of a system. If it was a "text-book of rebellion," the lessons it presented--the locale of partisanship and the

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[43]Parrington, p. 37.

[44]Montrose J. Moses, The Literature of the South (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell and Co., 1910), p. 253.

[45]Van Doren, p. 56.

guerrilla nature of the war--were certainly too miscalculated for a man of Tucker's obvious ability and learning. The book's primary purpose, was as Tucker claimed--to sway the election of 1836. It was intended as propaganda and hypothesized on secession only as contingent on certain factors--Van Buren's election, the reality of a Southern League, foreign alliances--which did not exist at the time. It made an obvious play for the sympathies of the backcountry and a subtle appeal to the South as a whole. It portrayed a way of life Tucker loved and suggested what he and others could and would do to protect that life. It displayed questionable literacy--a shifting point of view, stereotyped characters, contrived situations--but, in the first place, this reflected Tucker's and, perhaps, the South's romantically stereotyped and contrived thought patterns; and, in the second place, literary quality was not the primary objective of the author. Tucker, in effect, was proselitizing for the religion of Southernism. In his dreams the messiah had come and conquered. How, in the insane confidence of dreams, could he possibly suspect the messiah would be crucified?

V. A VIRGINIAN WRITES OF VIRGINIANS

From all authors there comes but once (or twice) in their lifetime a novel singularly theirs. This is the novel most perfectly expressing the essence of their particular authorship, the novel lying in their souls from the beginning. George Balcombe was so completely the novel lying in the soul of Beverly Tucker that Poe, in his review written prior to the revelation of Tucker as the author, exclaimed "The mind of the chief personage of the story, is the transcript of a mind familiar to us....George Balcombe thinks, speaks, and acts, as no person, werare convinced, but Judge Beverly Tucker, ever precisely thought, spoke, or acted before."[1]

The new two-volume work was published in New York by Harper and Brothers the same year as the Partisan Leader which met such discouraging financial difficulties. The author's enthusiasm in producing a second book so soon after the failure of the first could only have been the product of a deeply-rooted desire to erect a worthy monument to the earthly god he zealously worshipped--the spirit of Tidewater Virginianism. There is no evidence that George Balcombe met the same fate as its predecessor, but it was markedly different. While the Partisan Leader emphasized a superficial plot which may have struck even its Southern readers as too improbable and upsetting to contemplate, George Balcombe emphasized characters with whom the reader could identify in thought, if not deed, and situations which, if confused and contrived, were, at least, believ-

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[1] Edgar Allen Poe, Review of George Balcombe, by Nathaniel Beverly Tucker, Southern Literary Messenger, III (January, 1837), 58.

able. The creed so ardently propagated in the former was transmitted more subtly and with greater depth and regard for form in the latter with the result of achieving what Poe termed "the best American novel" and what might also be termed one of the best revelations of the Southern mentality.[2]

As the story begins, the reader finds himself traveling by moonlight on the Missouri prairie with William Napier, a young Virginia cavalier. William soon encounters the gentleman-frontiersman, George Balcombe, whose hospitality he accepts and whose admirer he becomes. William, in the course of conversation, discovers that George is a distant relative who, with William's grandfather's aid, had graduated from William and Mary and then embarked on an adventurer's career which he terminated for marriage and a home in frontier Missouri. William, in turn, discloses that he is in search of the villainous but religiously superstitious Edward Montague, another recipient of Grandfather Napier's favors and, like George, a witness to the old man's second and final will. This will named William, his mother, and his aunt heirs to the family estate and replaced an earlier document drawn up prior to William's birth naming a distant English relative as devisee. Upon the death of the elder Napier, Montague had absconded with the second will and now lived in the neighborhood of George's Missouri estate. He was supported as George had inadvertently learned, by an annuity paid for his silence by the original English heir who had acquired the family property. George, because of his affection for William's family and his dislike for Montague, agrees to help William recover the valid will.

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[2] Ibid.

The efforts of William and George are soon complicated by the arrival of James Scott, brother of Mary Scott who had once rejected George's love for Montague's. Montague had ruined her reputation (apparently in an amourette in the rose arbor), caused her father, Grandfather Napier's overseer, to die of a broken heart, and, after half-hearted attempts to compensate the little family financially, left them impoverished. James bears a parcel and a letter for Montague from Mary which she has instructed him to exchange with her former lover for provisions for James' education. In an accompanying letter, she informs George that the parcel and letter to Montague contain information and a talisman for recovering a packet left by him with her and which she has heretofore refused to relinquish. Both George and William, of course, suspect the packet in Mary's possession, unbeknownst to her, contains the will, but they are too honorable to investigate her letter and parcel meant for Montague.

Montague agrees to Mary's conditions of exchange but arranges to ambush George and James. His plot is foiled by the frontier ruffian, John Keizer, ostensibly an accomplice of Montague but, in reality, a loyal friend of George. William and Colonel Robinson, the father of Mrs. Balcombe, have meanwhile apprehended Montague who had escaped with the parcel before the intervention of Keizer. Again in possession of the parcel, George orders Montague to return to Virginia with them to untangle the conditions of the will and to provide for the Scotts' livelihood.

Employing subterfuge, Montague, informed by Mary's letter and parcel that, upon presentation of the talisman to Mary's old nurse, Amy, he would be given the packet he had left behind, escapes to Virginia leaving George and Keizer to stand trial for the murder of one of Montague's hirelings involved in the ambush. Released on bail, Keizer sets out in

pursuit of the villain and is soon followed by William. Montague deceives the St. Louis sheriff who apprehends Keizer for jumping bail while Montague continues his journey by steamboat. William arrives in time to enlighten the sheriff, and he and Keizer return to George for the trial.

Exonerated by the unexpected testimony of Sam Todd, Montague's accomplice in planting the evidence implicating George and Keizer in the murder, George, his wife, William and Keizer set out for Virginia. Eluding Montague's delaying tactics, they arrive at William's home in King and Queen county and learn, in a letter from Mary, that her mother has died and she has gone to Grandfather Napier's home, Raby Hall, to care for Amy who has fallen ill and to act as housekeeper in Amy's place. She further explains that Montague had come to the hall for the packet but was forced to leave by Major Swann, the steward, who with his wife has befriended her. The villain returned, again, having spied Mary contemplating the packet in its hiding place under the floorboards, finds it, and flings it into the fire. Again, it is Major Swann, who hearing Mary's screams, rescues the papers and, in his capacity as constable, takes them into custody. George and William go immediately to Raby Hall and arrive in time to witness someone trying to set it afire. George recognizes the arsonist as Montague, but the villain escapes for the third time. William and George pursue him to Fredericksburg and then, assured that he has gone to Baltimore, return to William's home leaving Keizer at Raby Hall.

In a romantic interlude, George, already aware William is deeply in love with his cousin Ann, learns that Ann reciprocates her cousin's affection, although she feels she is obligated to marry the young and

wealthy Henry Howard. Howard, accusing George of meddling, challenges him to a duel which George accepts to protect his honor but with the intention of striking Howard's pistol from his hand before he can fire. William, meanwhile, has learned that his sister Jane had maliciously told her lover, Douglas, a cousin of Howard, that George has instigated the match between her brother and her cousin. Jane hoped that Ann's marriage to Howard would effect a marriage between William and Douglas's sister. Jane, in turn, would then have the opportunity of marrying Douglas whose father disapproved of his son's match with an impoverished girl. During the duel, George shoots the pistol from Howard's hand; and, the match declared terminated, Howard attempts suicide. He is prevented from this only to succumb to a nervous breakdown during which he apologizes to George and from which he soon recovers.

On a subsequent trip to Fredericksburg to attend to legal matters related to the possession of the packet, not yet opened, William, James, George, and Keizer are attacked by Montague and his henchmen. In the melée, James, who now knows the complete story of his sister's dalliance with Montague, conveniently and poetically kills Montague. The packet presumably containing the will, however, is lost in the scuffle. Disconsolate at his loss of fortune, William continues with his companions to Fredericksburg where George announces that he is going to Northumberland county to claim an estate which he will share with William. He reveals that he received this estate through Grandfather Napier's will, a remark which surprises William as he believes no one had seen the contents of the packet. The men are interrupted by Keizer who explains the mystery to William. Keizer had overheard James, William, and George discussing the packet the night of Montague's death and realized that they wanted

William to have the contents but that James was worried about having given his word to surrender the packet to no one but Montague. To overcome this dilemma, Keizer found the packet and gave it to George. George could now, without dishonor to James, give the will to William. By the terms of the will, George received half of the estate in the possession of Raby Hall, and William received the estate of Barnard's Castle. On Valentine's Day, William and Ann, Jane and Douglas marry. George returns to Missouri where, fifteen years later, James Scott marries his daughter. A true Virginian at heart, George plans to return eventually to his homeland, bringing Keizer with him.

It is clearly evident that Beverly Tucker had something to say about Virginians in George Balcombe and wanted very badly to say it. The setting for his message--Missouri in 1820--was a brilliant choice, for he was familiar with frontier society; and the rusticity and violence of such an area provided a backdrop against which the culture and refinement of the Virginia settlers stood out in bold relief. The vehicle for Tucker's message and the controlling image of the novel, whom he consciously modeled after his concept of himself, is the leading character, George Balcombe.

The gentleman-philosopher-pseudo-frontiersman, George Balcombe, represented many ideals held dear by all Virginians, but, primarily, he was the universal civilizing agent holding aloft forever the standards of gentlemanly behavior, stratified society, organic government, and God-ordained order. He was, indeed, an extraordinary man! His appearance was not prepossessing. He was "a weatherbeaten man, of about five-and-thirty, who never had been handsome. A bright gray eye, high sharp features, a sandy complexion, and sandy hair, were the particulars

that would strike a careless observer." Nor was his customary dress of a white shirt, shabby waistcoat, country-linen trousers, and slip-shod pumps pretentious. But, contrary to the popular conception of a Southern gentleman and as George was careful to point out, physical appearance did not constitute a gentleman. The state of gentleman was contingent on the state of character, and character he certainly had. It was reflected in his face with its "high, prominent forehead, a flat compressed mouth, and in the peculiar setting, and varying expression of the eye. It corresponded with his style of conversation, which, always serious, but never grave, found a moral in the most frivolous subjects...." He demonstrated repeatedly his "hardness of thought and freedom of speech," his "perspicacity....and quickness," his brilliance in formulating ideas and his encyclopedic knowledge of everything from military tactics to the nature of women.[3] The list of subjects about which George Balcombe arrogated authority was decidedly similar to the table of contents appended to the Aristotelian codices; and the presumed scope of his knowledge plus the audacity of his presumption indicated, with some few exceptions, the narrowness, the intolerance, the fanaticism of a so-called intellectual community which had set impassable boundaries to the infinity of the mind.

George Balcombe's calvinistic (albeit his probable Anglicanism) picture of the universe was essentially a response to the dilemma of his society--how to combat the disrupting factors which challenged the authority of the "establishment." As first premiss, Balcombe postulated what was for him the self-evident proposition of a transcendent God, one who

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[3]Nathaniel Beverly Tucker, George Balcombe (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1836), I, 85, 25.

"rules over the events of every passing hour.... and whose general purpose is just, benevolent, and wise." The duty of every man who hoped to attain God was submission to providence, whether it bestowed upon him the bounties of the Divine or His discipline. If the rewards of God be his lot, and Balcombe hastened to equate such rewards with earthly prosperity, then he acquired a consequent responsibility to be a worthy steward "of God's benevolence" by caring for those less fortunate. Only the careful disposition of this responsibility justified wealth to the "principles of universal justice." If a man, on the other hand, were even the undeserving recipient of God's discipline (apparently indicated by adverse fortune), he should count himself fortunate as he was a "more hopeful pupil" than his wealthy brother and better endowed (by God, of course) with qualities needful of hardening but capable of producing great satisfaction (preferably, monetary).[4]

His first premiss established to his satisfaction, Balcombe proceeded to set up a stratified society which his God had ordained and over which he presided. This society, the elements therein, and their relative positions attained, therefore, by reason of their God-ordination, the status of articles of faith; and he who would change them, the stigma of sinner. God presided only over evolution; over revolution, never!

The first class of society was, without benefit of doubt, that of the gentleman, "a man who scorns what is base, and detests what is brutal, and whose manners, either by nature or by training, conform to those sentiments." This order was not, as in England, an order of the state. None, regardless of wealth or position, were denied entrance save those

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[4] Ibid. pp. 261. 262.

who through their own fault were possessed of "baseness."[5] These unworthy souls, as Balcombe in righteous anger and with an intended slap at abolitionism, pointed out often resented their lack of the proper qualities but were quite willing to accept the favors and advice of those who did not lack them.

The gentlemanly pre-requisites, thus far and at least superficially, demonstrated as much profundity and regard for the genuine values in life as George Peacham's famous exhortation to gentlemen to direct their affairs properly "ut in honore cum dignitate vivamus...."[6] Peacham's sincerity in preaching nobility over solvibility, however, loses something in Balcombe's translation; for the fluidity which the latter claims for his class system is tarnished by the fact that those of the population not already gentlemen--the Scotch-Irish yeoman farmer, the small merchant, the Negro--could not by their very nature become so unless, as in the case of the farmer for example, he were to change his lineage, give up his homespun, acquire table manners, graduate from William and Mary, buy more land and slaves, and marry a "lady."

The most perfect gentleman, the gentleman's gentleman as it were, was the Virginia cavalier, a distinction not frequently emphasized in social studies of the period. The cavalier myth was peculiarly Virginian. True, it had traveled south with the new cotton barons and west with the corn and cattle barons; it had formed a superficial alliance with similar French and Spanish myths, and it had tried to settle-down in white-columned mansions with rose gardens; but it just was not the same thing

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[5] Ibid. p. 24

[6] Henry Peacham, Peacham's Compleat Gentleman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1634), p. 222.

once it had crossed the Roanoke or passed through the Valley. The Virginia cavalier was unique and, in the last analysis, was recognized as such from Maine to Texas. George Balcombe, for example, immediately designated William Napier as a Virginian for numerous reasons: he was not loquacious and curious as one "from the western country," and he was a "judge of horseflesh;" he was too frank to be from the East, and he graciously, without wearisome apologies and embarrassing expressions of gratitude, accepted Balcombe's offer of hospitality (both imperative acts of Virginian behavior). These characteristics, however, were only indicative of the cavalier's nature which was composed of certain basic elements. He had:

> sprung from a race of men without fear and without reproach--the ancient cavaliers of Virginia in whom the spirit of freedom was so blended with loyalty as to render them alike incapable of servility and selfishness; and who when their sovereign tore himself from his place in their hearts, transferred their allegiance to their country, and again poured out their blood like water, and scattered their wealth like chaff.[7]

Lineage and the qualities it produced, character and the proper inclinations it nourished--all, if carefully tended by environment and individual conscience, combined to produce the beau-ideal of the plantation myth, the cavalier. And it was primarily just that--a myth; for beneath the gilded trapping lay a rougher coat.

Unless he was a most unusual specimen, the Tidewater Virginian descended not from Charles' cavaliers but from fairly common folk. He had come to new shores with a dream which he had passed on to his descendants, a dream of emulating the life of the English country gentleman. The plantation system provided the economic basis for the material realization of such a vision, and the Virginian did emerge as an aristocrat of

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[7] Tucker, Balcombe, I, 11, 22.

sorts, a status held in contempt by the poorer quarters of a materialistic new nation; but the same system substantially altered his intellectual and psychological outlook. His isolation from diverse intellectual and personal contacts, his total independence in decision-making without the concomitant sanctions demanded from those not so vested in interests, his life-and-death powers over his subordinates, in short, his omniscience in his own society, created an individual incomprehensible, if not intolerable, to men of lesser caste. The aristocrat retained and encouraged, in addition, the myth of his past and took immense pride in styling himself as heir to and guardian of a great and chivalric tradition. This tradition became, ultimately, the justification for his material comforts, a justification without validity.

The Southern aristocrat and, particularly, the Tidewater Virginian was zealously devoted to and defensive of the chivalric cult and its codes of conduct the more so, perhaps, because he knew it to be appropriated and not earned. Everything, from horsemanship to the skillful use of arms, from obligations to inferiors and methods of courtship to hospitality, found its pattern in the code. Deviation from the rule shocked society in proportion to the gravity of the deviation and could result in the death of the offender or, worse, that of his accuser. Such behavioral rigidity was the natural product of a closed, stratified society which was not quite at home with itself. Just as those newly elected to the New York "400" memorized the words of Emily Post for fear of a social faux pas, so the FFV's, a young social set by comparison even at the outbreak of the Civil War, meticulously observed a certain unalterable format in social relations. A particular situation required, automatically, a particular action which, in turn, required a particular

response. William's lack of bed and board, for example, required Balcombe's offer of hospitality which, in turn, required William's willing and happy acceptence. Actions such as these, however, were simply the manifestations of a greater principle, for through them all "ran a concept of honor that was of tremendous importance in regulating and determining the conduct of the individual."[8]

For the Southerner, the concept of honor was something

> inviolable and precious to the ego, to be protected at every cost. It promoted extravagance, because of the imputation of poverty which might follow retrenchment. It sanctioned prompt demand for the redress of grievance, because of the imputation of guilt that might follow a less precipitate policy. It countenanced great recklessness of life, because of the imputation of cowardice that might follow forgiveness of injuries. The honor of the Southerner caused him to defend with his life the slightest suggestion of irregularity in his honesty or integrity....To him nothing was more important than honor.

Hence, George Balcombe was forced by his code to accept young Howard's challenge to a duel even though Balcombe did not plan to harm or allow himself to be harmed.[9] In most dueling cases, however, the opponents were not blessed with Balcombe's magnanimity, and the results were more tragic. No considerations of morality or even practicality restrained the Southerner from refuting by word and/or action any "imputation" that

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[8] John Hope Franklin, The Militant South (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 34.

[9] Ibid., pp. 34-35; A duel reminiscent of the John Randolph-Henry Clay affair in 1826 which grew out of Randolph's criticism of the manner in which Clay, then Secretary of State, had handled matters relating to the proposed Conference of Latin American Republics. Clay was furious and demanded satisfaction. The two men met on the Virginia side of the Potomac. Both discharged their pistols on the first round without effect; on the second, Clay missed Randolph, and Randolph discharged his weapon in the air, having been determined from the beginning not to harm Clay. Tucker, doubtless, knew the story in detail. See Ibid., p. 51.

he was something he was not or thought he was not or, worse yet, hoped he was not. This outlook combined with an overdeveloped sense of arbitrary independence and overlaid with the violent reactions bred of the slave system and a frontier tradition created an atmosphere pregnant with explosive power. Here, indeed, lay the essence of Virginia's (and the South's) tragedy, a tragedy reaching back through time to a day when a Saxon comitatus swore blood allegiance to its chieftain, crossed a turbulent, long sleeve of water and settled on an island now called Great Britain. Throughout the colonial and revolutionary period, the Virginian had revered his heritage and used it to become the supreme arbiter of thought in the New World. He had understood freedom and loyalty and goodness and dignity. He had fought to acquire it (or so he told himself), and he had raised up Washington, Jefferson, Henry, and Monroe to preserve it. He loved his country and its Constitution more, perhaps, than any other citizen; but the time came when his mind ceased to grow because it ceased to recognize reality. Freedom became selective, and loyalty, oligarchical; goodness became aristocratic, and dignity, a distorted dream. So when another Britain insulted his honor, the Virginian fought again to preserve his freedom which was not freedom; and, this time, he lost because he was not the Virginian of his dreams. But until then and even after, the Balcombes and the Tuckers, the Lees and the Taylors, the Stuarts, the Masons, and the Randolphs continued to swear they were "of the race of Antaeus" and no man was their equal.[10]

The female counterpart of the gentleman, the lady, was, even by contemporary standards, a lovely ideal of grace and beauty and a complete enigma of function and class. She was, as a matter of fact, an enigma in

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[10]Tucker, Balcombe, I, 25.

the society of which Tucker wrote, for she was both its backbone and, at the same time, a threat to its existence. In the first capacity, she ruled the home, the basic unit of society; in the second, she was capable of using her power to overturn that basic unit and with it the institution of slavery and the cult of the gentleman.

The plantation mistress was the "heart and soul" of the system, "the most important personage about the home, the presence which pervaded the mansion, the centre of all that life, the queen of that realm."[11] As some southern fiction portrays:

> While aristocratic life has destroyed the planter's initiative and made him passive and indolent, the demanding routines and unending responsibilities of the plantation household have made the woman stronger and increased her status and dignity.

While assigning the woman such a role in the household, the plantation legend also assigned her the role of spiritual or moral preceptor, at a time when morality was of secondary importance to material survival.[12] When the emancipation of women and the abolition of slavery became the two great moral issues of the day, Southern women, naturally enough, were caught up in the ensuing fray either personally or as a group whose status, intrinsically related to the preservation of a static society, was in question. They formed, as a matter of fact, the second in importance of three groups which, whether by inclination or not, threatened the plantation system or, on a more personal level, the superiority of the "gentleman." The other two groups--the Negro and the yeoman farmer--will be treated in order of their class position, but it is not premature to

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[11] Taylor, p. 142; Thomas Nelson Page, Social Life in Old Virginia Before the War (New York; Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), p. 34.

[12] Taylor, pp. 142, 154.

suggest that abolition, emancipation, and populism were related by blood and were indigenous to the very nature of an open society. Forces drawn up in favor of one usually wound up (or would wind up) defending the the others. Populism awaited the half-century after the Civil War to reach its political development; but, in the years immediately preceding the war, women who personally found emancipation appealing and/or morally imperative could easily be suspected of viewing abolition in the same way. The gentleman-class and its admirers could never allow this. The economic depression in Virginia had already shaken the foundations of the gentleman-planter myth in a society which Calvinistically and practically (but not theoretically) associated wealth with class. Any further inroads into this rigid class construct involving women and the Negro threatened it with total annihilation. The glaring example of the Grimké sisters, born and bred as ladies in a South Carolinian slaveholding family, was sufficient to prostrate any Southern gentleman with fear for his position as head of the house as well as of the plantation. Not only had these two shy ladies determinedly embraced the abolition movement, but they had "dared to speak in public" in its behalf.[13] No one was quite sure which was worse--supporting abolition or demeaning the female image by public display. Such behavior was a poor example for young girls such as "Fanny" Andrews who, staunch Southerner that she was, dared to announce that "marriage is incompatible with the career I have marked out for myself...." Even certain young gentlemen, who should have shunned the indomitable "Fanny" as a sporting female, were ultimately sucked into the conspiracy, for at one party she danced eighteen sets besides round dances and

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[13]Gilbert Hobbs Barnes, The Anti-Slavery Impulse 1830-1844 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964), p. 153.

"between times there were always three or four around talking to me."[14] Southern public opinion still proclaimed with an overwhelming voice that every woman should be, in the words of Mammy Harriet, "'a lady from de crown o' her head to de bottom o' her foot,'" but Beverly Tucker, his friend Thomas R. Dew, and others like them felt the unexpressed need for retrenchment and a redefinition of woman's place in society.[15]

Tucker's "portrait of a lady" is unique in its importance as a class ideal, for he is the only author on the subject who "spoke from the point of view of the professional Southerner and Tidewater aristocrat." He has been accused of preaching "the gospel according to Dew," but, as he was Dew's good friend, he must have discussed the subject with him innumerable times and probably contributed much of his own thinking to his friend's more scholarly treatise.[16] Both present a highly idealized and romanticized concept of woman, a concept accepted in substance during the romantic movement. But it was uniquely Southern in its connotations, as well. Tucker and Dew and the South insisted (and enjoyed considerable success in their insistence) that woman be what they chose to make her. But, as do all men who create gods and goddesses, they could not help but worship their own creation; and, as they worshipped it, they came to fear it.

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[14]Eliza Frances Andrews, The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl 1864-1865 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964), p. 153.

[15]Susan Dabney Smedes, Memorials of a Southern Planter (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), p. 43.

[16]Taylor, pp. 143, 152; The treatise referred to is "Dissertation on the Characteristic Differences between the Sexes and on the Position and Influence of Woman in Society" which was serialized in the Southern Literary Messenger in 1835.

All the women in George Balcombe are, in true romantic vein, ideally beautfful. Bet, George's wife, was of "striking female form.... tall and queenlike....in the bloom of youth, and with a countenance corresponding in expression with the air of her person." William's beloved Ann "'was a beautiful child; and the character of her face....large blue eyes, fair skin, and flaxen hair, was too marked to leave any doubt as to her style of beauty.'" Even the fallen Mary Scott was a "glorious creature" with fair complexion, regal bearing, and lustrous eyes, a tender, disinterested creature capable of exciting fierce passion. Such a pleasing appearance required the addition of the proper personality characteristics to produce "'the noblest of God's works....a right woman--a genuine unsophisticated woman.'"[17]

The characteristics of a "'genuine unsophisticated woman'" were exactly those which qualified her for the only "'vocation'" she should be permitted--that of marriage. Marriage, Balcombe emphasized, was an "'invention of civilized society for the benefit of women and the protection of children....Women must marry....And she must and will marry man as she finds him. It is their fate to take such husbands as Heaven sends.'" Should women fail to acquire mates for themselves,"'They must lose caste; a fate as terrible to the worshippers of fashion, as to those of Brahma.'" The "natural feelings of a woman's heart"--generosity, devotion, trust, tenderness, and weakness--if properly developed, prepared her to assume this function which "the law of nature" had ordained.[18] They fitted her

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[17]The name of Tucker's second wife was Elizabeth which may indicate some attempt at comparison; Tucker, Balcombe, I, 15, 89, 47-48, 273.

[18]Ibid., pp. 98, 278, 186, 273; Thomas R. Dew, "Dissertation on the Characteristic Differences between the Sexes and on the Position and Influence of Woman in Society," Southern Literary Messenger, I (May, 1835), 493.

for subordination "to him she loves," for merging her existence in his. Her husband would be "the master of her destiny and his own;" her "proudest feeling is that of admiration of him ....her strength is in her reliance on his prowess; her hope is in her confidence in his fortunes."[19] She should be concerned only, as Dew admonished, with making the "home of her husband a paradise on earth."[20] Only thus would the woman retain her proper position not only in society but in relation to the male, as well.

The view of marrige which Tucker expressed was, by contemporary standards, a frontier concept, i.e., a protective institution to preserve and perpetuate the species. In Missouri such an arrangement may have been quite valid in numerous cases, but in the long-established Tidewater which enjoyed a security allowing for more refinement of feeling it appears as somewhat contrived for the maintenance of the status quo. Balcombe, himself, exclaims of his own marriage that "'it is a great thing....It is the only anchor of the affections that will hold through the storms of life....'" and Tucker must have personally echoed the same sentiments about his Mary, Elizabeth, or Lucy. Balcombe's Bet (and probably Tucker's Lucy) was, indeed, the mistress of her home, but she was the mistress of her husband, in addition. She determinedly followed him to the rough quarters he had set up as a shelter while supervising some construction on his estate, and, as he plaintively explained, "'she will not go away....'"[21] Similar incidents accentuated the differences between the theory Balcombe expounds and the realities in his own life.

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[19]Tucker, Balcombe, I, 274.

[20]Dew, "Dissertation," p. 501.

[21]Tucker, Balcombe, I, 70, 26.

Mary, for example, who should by rights have died young or disappeared after the "fall," displayed sufficient firmness of character to pull herself together, provide a living for her mother and brother, and go after the remuneration she so richly deserved from Montague. Even the gentle Ann was quite capable of deciding when, why, and on whom she would bestow her hand in marriage. There must have been more than an element of truth in Dew's lofty but slightly fearful statement that "woman we behold dependant and weak; but out of that very weakness and dependance springs an irresistible power."[22] A similar dichotomy existed, between the theory Balcombe expounded on the subject of education for women and the realities of the Southern situation.

As woman's proper destiny was marriage, she "'ought not to be made ambitious of intellectual distinction, or distinction of any kind. Such a feeling unsexes her,'" and makes men her rivals instead of her protectors. The best education for women prepared her "'to receive instruction from her husband, and does not impair the natural and healthy disposition of her mind to receive his instructions as the teaching of truth and wisdom.'" There was no particular objection, as Balcombe pointed out, to a woman's acquiring a place in the limelight so long as she renounced her sexuality and disclaimed all thoughts of matrimony. The unfortunate Mary was intelligent and fond of reading. This habit, he implied gently, encouraged and even inspired a dangerous turn for romance which led her to Montague and ultimately to ruin. How much more secure and beloved was the docile Ann who had "'no turn....for the 'ologies and prefers to learn the housewifely duties and plain old fashioned sense of a Virginia lady.'"[23] This was by all counts the kind

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[22]Dew, "Dissertation," p. 496.

[23]Tucker, Balcombe, I, 275, 282, 88.

of woman a man would prefer!

Whether Ann were as ignorant of the "'ologies'" as she professed to be or not, she was certainly clever enough to let her men think she was. In this ruse, the Southern lady met no match! She knew from her cradle that the men in her life would expect her to profess abysmal ignorance while, at the same time, understanding perfectly everything that was said to her, discussing articulately any topic they chose to introduce, and acting with flawless competence in any enterprise they requested of her. The intelligent and articulate diarist, Mary Chesnut, read Shakespeare, Thackeray, Eliot, Sué, Coleridge, Holmes, Milton, Schiller, Hugo (in French), and myriad others; and she was a lady. The embullient "Fanny" Andrews was graduated with a bachelor of arts degree from the La Grange Female College in 1857, and by 1926 her work in botany was recognized by the International Academy of Science in Italy. She, too, was a lady. Even the plantation mistress, Susan Smedes, was an excellent harpist and found time to produce an authoritative, if biased, commentary on plantation life. And the list of bright, vigorous, albeit housewifely, women goes on--Susan Blackford, Mary Anna Jackson, Varina Davis, perhaps, Belle Boyd, herself. Yet, they were all ladies, one, the first lady of the land. True, they were the exceptions; but did the North, by comparison, produce any more or better, or does contemporary society? These ladies and their Southern sisters give credence to the romantic legend that the women of the Confederacy, through their strong moral influence, perpetuated the war into its last year even though material resources dictated capitulation. Mrs. Chesnut sagely expressed "a nervous dread and horror of this break with so great a power as the United States," but she was "ready and willing"

for secession and "wanted them to fight and stop talking."[24] "Fanny" Andrews sewed furiously away at a Confederate flag she was manufacturing in her bedroom unbeknownst to her Unionist father, the first of her endeavors in behalf of the "cause." And a Georgia matron, in summation, added her enthusiastic avowal that "many men in the Southern homes.... were disposed to be more conservative and to regret the threatened disruption of the Union, but the ladies were all enthusiastically in favor of secession."[25] Well, secession came, and with it the war; and the women were more affected by that war than any other class of the population.[26] Theirs was the waiting, the impoverishment, the responsibility, the agony, without the relief of physical combat. But they survived, and they never forgot. They kept it in their hearts and told their grandchildren about the gallant Stuart and the noble Lee. So another and yet another generation grew up believing that once there had been a rose-garden world where god-like men and lady-queens loved and laughed and lounged in luxury. And the myth began again....And again the "right" woman was the docile, dependent, unsophisticated soul who, in reality, wielded an "irresistible power."

While women enjoyed the dubious rewards of their household matriarchy, a second group, as yet unaware of its political potential and still too pre-occupied with the necessities of life to see beyond the rose-tinted, mythical goals set up for its inspection by the élite, provided a second threat to the establishment. It was no mere coincidence that the wily

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[24]Mary Boykin Chesnut, A Diary From Dixie (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), p. 3.

[25]Henry Steele Commager, The Blue and The Gray (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1950), p. 62.

[26]Paul H. Buck, The Road to Reunion 1865-1900 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1937), p. 39.

frontiersman, John Keizer, was a Dutchman from the same Virginia mountain area to which Tucker had directed so much of his proselytizing in the Partisan Leader, for Keizer represented the class of backwoodsmen and yeoman farmers which was so serviceable but so dangerous to the system. The debates in the Virginia constitutional convention in 1829-30 and in the legislature two years later had emphasized the growing differences between the eastern and the western portions of Virginia. These controversies had actually brought the yeoman's loyalty to Southern institutions into question and conjured up the spectre of a sectional split for the tuckahoe's contemplation. Tucker's treatment of John Keizer and his relationship to George Balcombe reveals the aristocrat's attitude toward the yeoman class and the means he intended to utilize in preserving its loyalty.

The Southern gentleman behaved toward the backwoodsman in a half-condescending, half-ameliorating manner. He considered him inferior, but he grudgingly admired his abilities; he feared him, but he needed his services. The woodsman, in the first place, was not and could never be a gentleman. John Keizer, Tucker is quick to point out, did not look like a gentleman, act like a gentleman, or talk like one. In direct contrast to the dignified and handsome bearing of Balcombe and William:

> He was a long slight figure, apparently about twenty-five years of age, with an olive complexion; long, lank, black hair; small, keen, jet-black eyes....He was clothed....in half-dressed buckskin; hunting shirt, leggins and moccasins all glazed with grease and mottled with blood. A fillet of bearskin....tied around his head....He carried...a formidable rifle, and wore a butcher knife...at his belt.

Only, apparently, in the service of Balcombe were the rifle and knife employed in honest work, for Keizer was a "tool of the knave kind," a

tool, however, without which Balcombe could not have survived.[27] It was Keizer who discovered Montague's plot to ambush Balcombe and James Scott and saved them; it was Keizer who found Sam Todd, the witness who exonerated Balcombe at the trial; it was Keizer who overheard the intentions of the stagecoach driver and his friends, hirelings of Montague, to ambush Balcombe's and William's coach in the Alleghenies; and it was Keizer who found and preserved the will after the final confrontation with Montague. Without his intervention, in short, the story would have resulted unhappily for all concerned.

For all his condescension in describing Keizer as a knave sort, Balcombe cannot help but display an unbridled admiration for the woodsman's qualities. Keizer's "'activity, courage, hardihood, coolness, sagacity, and plausibility'" rank high in his estimation; although he does not hesitate to assure William that "'John....does nothing that other people cannot do.'" And, not only did Balcombe admire his henchmen's talents, but he proudly regarded him as "'such a friend as few men have.'"[28] Admittedly, Balcombe's definition of friendship left something to be desired (on his side of the relationship, that is), but there was an undeniable bond between the two men.

The bond between Balcombe and Keizer was, in part, composed of what the aristocrat considered a fair bargain between himself and the frontiersman. In exchange for the key to the wilderness which the woodsman possessed, the gentleman offered the key to civilization. As the former's knowledge was primarily instinctual and his value-system virtually nonexistent, it was highly doubtful (and undesirable) that he could attain

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[27] Tucker, Balcombe, I, 77, 75.

[28] Ibid., p. 76; II, 69; I, 75.

the rank of gentleman, but he was capable of being civilized. Keizer was a case in point and proved that the proper influence could produce a loyal, affectionate (also, serviceable) friend out of an uncivilized barbarian. The frontiersman differed from the slave, in this respect, for his failings were the result of environment, while the slave's were natural. If the proper influence were lacking, however, or, out of ignorance, refused, the result was the repulsive brute, Thomas Johnson, who presented a spectacle of "ferocity and beastliness" that was "horrible to look upon."[29] This type personified an anti-social sentiment which embraced every institution from slavery to God and then some. The prospect of scores of Faulkner-led Thomas Johnsons with their "elevated love of freedom" (a love not necessarily embracing the Negro) marching down to Richmond to plead that their section be spared the economic blight of slavery was frightening enough to give any Tidewater aristocrat indigestion over his favorite sheeps-head dinner; and, as Tucker knew, that prospect was not altogether incapable of realization.[30] More terrifying, however, was the possibility of social turmoil produced by the third group constituting a threat to the elite. This group, the axis around which the plantation system revolved, was none other than the Afro-Americans, the Negro slaves.

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[29] Ibid., p. 237.

[30] In the debate over slavery in the Virginia legislature in 1832, Charles J. Faulkner, as the delegate from Berkeley County in the Shenandoah Valley and as spokesman for the small farmer, demanded that slavery be abolished in the state. His remarks typify the antagonism between the plantation system and the Jeffersonian ideal of a society of small landowners. He is quoted in Smith, Virgin Land, p. 152.

One of the most incongruous and most striking passages in George Balcombe is the one in which Tucker draws the relationship between the woman and the slave, designating them as the only two classes which should be left alone by moralists and allowed to continue "in their humility, their grateful affection, their self-renouncing loyalty, their subordination of the heart...."[31] That a Southerner should even speak of women and the Negro in the same breath was in itself extraordinary, but to attribute to both the same qualities of the affections was amazing! The emphasis Tucker gave to the problem of prolonging the "subordination" of the woman and the slave indicates that he suspected (and, perhaps, sincerely believed) that their "loyalty" was not so "self-renouncing" as he might have liked. Emancipation for women was a more subtle, less immediate threat to society, one which would change but, not necessarily, destroy the institutional fabric. The abolition of slavery, however, was an entirely different matter, at least in Tucker's estimation. Slavery was an element which constituted the core of the existing social pattern. Without it, there simply was no plantation systems as such.

Tucker's exposition of the pro-slavery argument in George Balcombe demonstrates considerable more polish than his more impassioned defense in the Partisan Leader. His views are, again, similar to those of Dew, and, again, Dew's more scholarly treatise on this subject might be described as the theory behind the drama of the novel.[32] But, as in the case of

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[31] Tucker, Balcombe, II, 166.

[32] This treatise is Dew's "Review of the debate in the Virginia Legislature, 1831-32" which was reprinted with his "Letter of Appomattox to the People of Virginia, on the subject of the Abolition of Slavery" in The Pro-Slavery Argument: As Maintained By The Most Distinguished Writers Of the Southern States (Charleston: Walker, Richards & Co., 1852).

woman's role in society, Tucker certainly possessed his own well-defined views, views which were common, in part or wholly, to a large segment of his society.

Tucker believed implicitly but unreservedly that the Southern way of life rested on the ownership of property--landed and slave. As Dew so crassly but so aptly put it, "the exclusive owners of the property ever have been, ever will, and perhaps ever ought to be, the virtual rulers of mankind."[33] Any blow whatever against property, regardless the type, constituted a blow against those rulers (among whom were, by status if not property, Tucker and Dew) and their way of life. So far it was a simple matter of finances. The blow immediately threatened, however, involved more than finances or even semantics; it involved a matter of humanity. Tucker was sufficiently intelligent, and reveals as much, to suspect thet the Negro was a person; he was also well aware that the property status was incompatible with the personal.[34] Should the Negro be proved a person, then, by all the laws of nature and humanity which the pro-slavery advocate was so fond of citing, he could no longer be a slave. To meet this dilemma, Tucker resorted to an apparently absurd but really ingenious defense. He avoided all mention of the natural racial inferiority of the Negro and affirmed that "'right or wrong, they feel themselves inferior in point of fact....Whether the negro race is inferior to the white is not the question. The inferiority of the in-

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[33] Ibid., p. 312.

[34] The dilemma arising from the incompatibility of the slave's status as property with his status as a person is treated by Stampp, pp. 192-236 et passim.

dividual is the thing, and this inferiority, left to himself, he will never question.'" Just which characteristics of the Negro slave were inferior and to what degree Tucker left to the imaginations of his readers. He describes with some condescension their "grotesque manner of displaying their feelings, the contortions of his dusky figure....swaying his body back, and writhing from side to side like a wounded serpent" and adds that this demonstration of joy would be "amusing" to those "not accustomed to the negro character." But, oddly enough, the account of this performance is balanced against another which follows, the description of Negroes assembled to greet William on his return home:

> One by one they approached me; and as I extended my hand to each, each bowed himself with reverence and affection before me; the expression only varying in each, as it seemed with the quiet expression of their feelings of hereditary loyalty.[35]

Why the dissimilarity in these two situations--the gravity and dignity of the second in comparison to the childish exhibitionism of the first? Does it indicate a more objective re-appraisal bred of a guilty desire to observe at least some of the tenents of rationalism, or does it indicate nothing? It probably represented nothing but the universal inconsistency of Southern thinking on the subject of slavery, an inconsistency produced in part by a growing moribundity in the intellectual community.

After the early 1830's, the South's intellectual communities virtually ceased demonstrating any kind of antislavery thinking. They had never really admitted of a well-defined faction opposed to the institution, but there had, at least, been "the sentiment, widely shared at the end of the eighteenth century, that the institution was uneconomic, morally dubious,

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[35]Tucker, Balcombe, II, 164, 154, 161.

and a burden on both the slaveholder and the community."[36] That sentiment gradually dissipated, and now the intellectual elite held almost without exception, as Tucker was one of the first Virginians to argue, that slavery was a "positive good."[37] Not only was it ordained by God and sanctioned by "Aristotle, and the great men of antiquity," but it was "the slave labor in Virginia which gives value to her soil and her habitations; take away this, and you pull down the Atlas that upholds the whole system"[38] So decisively was the Virginian intelligentsia turned to the exhortation of solidarity in that belief, it blatantly ignored the reality that the "soil" of Virginia and "her habitations" were rapidly losing their value. This unhappy situation was not necessarily the result solely of slavery, but the perpetuation of the institution was not likely, on the other hand, to mitigate the difficulties. Hence, another example of the growing inconsistency between theory and practice. One of the prime instances of such delusion was the attempt to project the lot of the slave as a happy one. The tragedy of this attempt lay not only in the treatment of the Negro but also in the increasing self-delusion bordering on paranoia which affected an untold and large percentage of the South's 8,098,000 whites in addition to its relatively select intellectual circles.[39]

Not only was slavery a "positive good" for the economic and social structure of Virginia and the South, it was so for the slave, as well. A host of intellectuals from Tucker to Dew to Hammond of South Carolina

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[36] Elkins, Slavery, p. 208.

[37] Taylor, p. 286.

[38] The Pro-Slavery Argument, pp. 461, 358.

[39] Statistics, Stampp's, p. 30.

and from George Fitzhugh to Albert Taylor Bledsoe later on, reflected this assumption, proffered it for public consumption, and accepted it in private sincerity. The South was a garden, as they pictured it, in which Negroes and whites abided happily together in a God-ordained feudal idyll of mutual dependency and affection based on the childlike Negro's need for guidance and "protection" and the slaveholder's need for "services." As Balcombe exclaimed:

> Here is a race of men incapable of tracing themselves beyond ancestors who, a hundred years ago, came out of a slave ship into the family....They know nothing of themselves but in connection with that family, and that connection has become, by tradition and use, to be/regarded as one of the conditions of their very existence. Meantime, under the influence of the kindly affections growing out of this connection, there has been a gradual though steady improvement in their situation....Here is a cause of gratitude; and to man uncorrupted by unpurchased prosperity, gratitude is a natural sentiment....This is God's plan for securing the hearts of his creatures....

Balcombe then continued with the standard pro-slavery catalogue of paternal, maternal, and fraternal relationships (all elevating) which resulted from such a system:

> The negro woman loves the child she nursed; he loves his foster-brother and is beloved in turn; and all the little woolly-headed urchins love the young master, whose favours they continually experience. These things produce a feeling not unlike that of Scottish clanship.[40]

This picture of the Negro-white relationship is not an altogether unpleasant one, and it is undeniable that there were, indeed, such slaveholders as Thomas Dabney who could not "'punish people with whom I associate every day'" and who, in the words of one of his people, "'buys de best ob eberything for us.'"[41] But what this picture implies in

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[40] Tucker, Balcombe, II, 164, 161-162.

[41] Smedes, pp. 178, 46.

its evasions, its contrivances, and its avoidance of real issues offers a far greater indictment of slavery as an unspeakable evil than it does a vindication.

Tucker began his picture by resting the institution of slavery on "God's plan" and sanctifying it with "tradition and use." As did the ante-bellum Southerner, he "found considerable solace in the fact that they had not invented human bondage."[42] They had, however, used it to bestow the benefits of civilization upon those who, one could only assume, were originally uncivilized barbarians. Such convenient ignorance of the Negro's background and potential might have been understandable in a Georgian overseer, but in a man of Tucker's position (and of Dew's) it could only bear the stamp of dangerous self-delusion.[43] The cultures of the Ashantis and Fantis of the Gold Coast, the Yorubas and Binis of Nigeria, the Mandingos and Hausas of the western Sudan, and the Congolese may have been primitive by the American standard (although, "white men were scarcely in a position to judge Africans severely for sanctioning slavery, indulging in inter-tribal warfare, and cherishing superstitions") but never sub-human.[44] The African ancestors of the Negro had developed an agricultural economy which, in some areas, approached the organization of the plantation system. These same Africans expressed themselves through music, the dance, the graphic and plastic arts, and a rich folklore. And, what should have been most obvious to a teacher who deals in

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[42] Stampp, p. 14.

[43] Dew presumed knowledge of African tribes in his "Review of the debate in the Virginia Legislature, 1831-32."

[44] Stampp, p. 13.

communication, the Negro, who came "out of a slave ship" with absolutely no preparation, save the brutal agony of the Middle Passage, for life among the Southerners, learned virtually by observation and experience alone to live their kind of life and to communicate with them in a language structurally different from his own.

Tucker refused to admit the intellectual potential of the Negro, but he did make him almost the "affectional equal" of the white man.[45] In discussing the familial sentiments which bound the Negro to his masters, he implied that nothing could inspire the slave to seek escape from his situation or to rebel against it; in virtually the next breath, however, he ominously warned that the "philanthropy" of the "amis des noirs" should consider well what "may be the result" if they should eradicate the slave's "sense" of inferiority and substitute for it a "theory of equality."[46] That result was, of course, insurrection, the dark fear which lurked at the back of Tucker's and every other pro-slavery man's mind.

The Turner uprising of 1831 was the last of the slave insurrections; but the South was scared, and that fear grew to alarming proportions as its victims hardened in their attitudes and closed off all avenues of compromise. A moralist might have called it a guilt-produced fear, something the historian cannot validly do (or the moralist either, for that matter). The historian can, however, point out the evidence which indicates that what a man wrote was not necessarily what he thought or suspected or what actually did happen. Dew affirmed, like Tucker, that "a

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[45]Taylor, p. 287.

[46]Tucker, Balcombe, II, 164.

merrier being does not exist on the face of the globe, than the negro slave of the U. States;" on the next page, however, he too warned that "let the wiley philantropist but come and whisper into the ears of such a slave that his situation is degrading and his lot a miserable one.... and that moment, like the serpent that entered the garden of Eden, he destroys his happiness and...usefulness."[47] Why should a devoted Negro slave permit a mere suggestion to destroy his life? Why does Tucker fear the elimination of an affectionate bondsman's "sense" of inferiority? Precisely because he and Dew and the others at least suspected that the picture of the joyful Negro singing in the sun as he affectionately picked cotton was a fraud. Precisely because they suspected that there might be something wrong with a social system which permitted and promoted the relegation of possibly-human beings to the status of property.

If Tucker and his colleagues suspected the plantation slave system to be a moral or physical wrong, why did they not at least allow themselves the openness of discussion or investigation? As men of letters, they theoretically subscribed to the tenets of the liberal mind; as Christians, they theoretically subscribed to the tenets of charity in its broadest sense. They were not ignorant, nor were they wicked. They were slightly selfish in their intense desire to keep the life they had always known and enjoyed, but this is true for most men in whatever circumstances. The crux of the matter was, most probably, very simple. Slavery was to the Southerner as, in a loose analogy, slums are to modern man. He recognized its disadvantages, but it had become part of his life, a necessary part so he thought. Emancipation of the slaves in a society in which

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[47] The Pro-Slavery Argument, pp. 459, 460.

one-fourth the population was Negro was tantamount to modern relocation of a fourth of the population of an upper middle-class white suburb and their replacement by colored families. The Southerner had difficulty living in the nineteenth century let alone living in a quarter-black community. This, as the familiar statement goes, did not excuse them, but it did explain a portion of their thoughts and actions. They were afraid; of what, they were not quite sure. But they did know it involved the Negro, and the safest course of action was to keep him in his place.

The woman, the frontiersman, the Negro--three groups which constituted a threat to the gentleman class in direct proportion to the importance of their roles in his real-imaginary society. These three pillars shored up the bad-gothic structure of ante-bellum Southern life; the first, in the home; the second, in the wilderness, and the third, in the fields. The gentleman and his class were fast becoming superfluous, and any disruption threatening to hasten the process caused him to clutch more closely to himself what he thought to be the essentials of his position, and which were, in reality, only its superficialities. No longer was freedom from "baseness" the primary consideration of a gentleman; he was more concerned with maintaining an establishment and the empty mannerisms and privileges that went with it. These latter symbolized "gentleman" to him, and this avocation he prized and nurtured to the exclusion of all others. Tucker, and Dew, Simms and Fitzhugh, Hammond and all the others could have been and actually were much more than <u>just</u> gentlemen; but they persisted in their pathetic delusion that, whatever else they might be, they were first and foremost dedicated to

the proposition that some men were created gentlemen and endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights--a gracious life, an unrestricted liberty, and an unbridled happiness.

CONCLUSION

The century was in its fourth decade. Tidewater Virginian fields were gradually yielding their cotton and tobacco virginity to scrub oak and pine. Apples lay ungathered and rotting in lonely orchards; and dealers in Petersburg, Lynchburg, Richmond, Norfolk, and Alexandria bartered human flesh instead of cotton bales.[1] The gentleman forsook the hunt and poured hourly over his ledgers while his lady wept over poor Bessy's children "gone, gone--gone and sold" south.[2] Nat Turner's bloody hand still scratched its warning on slave-plastered walls, while Faulkner demanded equality and freedom for the west and Garrison, in a strangely prophetic tone, was insisting that churches open their pulpits to anti-slavery agitation or "the wishes of pastor and churches are to be disregarded."[3] Debates over the sale of public land had led to an ominous re-examination of the nature and origin of the Union, Jackson had broken with Calhoun, and tariffs had incited Hamilton and Rhett to threats of secession. This was the economic, social, and political circumstance of Tucker's Virginia, but for him there was another Virginia, another level, as it were, in the ascending hierarchy of perception.

The Virginia which existed in the romantic dream of Beverly Tucker was the ideal of truth, beauty, and goodness. The cavalier, the lady,

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[1] Ambler, p. 112.

[2] From a slave mother's lament for her children.

[3] As quoted in Barnes, p. 93.

the Tidewater plantation were unique, and nowhere met their equal.[4] Nowhere were the fields greener and the corn more golden; the belles more beautiful and the horses better blooded. Nowhere were gentlemen more gallant and hospitality more princely; servants more responsive and syllabub more frothy. Nowhere, in short, could one live so happily, so graciously ever-after. True, this lovely vision was beset from within and without by a reality full of falsehood, ignorance, evil, and ugliness; but it could and would survive and triumph as it had once done not so very long ago in the days of Washington and Jefferson.

In the 1840's the introduction of rotation and fertilization produced an agricultural revival which alleviated Virginia's economic drain, but the abolitionist crusade, the Union dilemma, and sectional incompatibilities mushroomed and joined. The colossus they produced threatened an institution which Tucker and his constituents believed essential to their dream--the institution of property, landed and slave. For this institution the Virginian had fought the Indian; for this institution he had fought the French and the English; and for this institution he did not long hesitate to fight the Union.

The novels of Nathaniel Beverly Tucker clearly and tragically reveal the Tidewater Virginian's response to the problems of his age--a narrow conservatism, pure and simple, uncompromising and aggressively hostile. Against national encroachment, held largely responsible for economic difficulties but not quite yet identified with the anti-slavery crusade, the Virginian could fight, as the Partisan Leader pointedly suggested. The

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[4] "Literary plantations are almost always in the older South, and when they are situated in the new, developing Southwest, they are unhistorically depicted as duplicates of the Virginia and Carolina estates on which the convention was first based." Smith, p. 173.

west, for the time being, could be appeased with a few flattering sops while the abolitionists were to be beaten from the gates. On the sectional level, George Balcombe raised the specter of encroaching liberalism--a liberalism which evoked sinister predictions for the institution of gentlemanly supremacy, already undermined by financial blight. The woman, the yeoman, and the slave were inadvertently or overtly laying claim to their place in society; and the establishment of that place long denied them by the gentry pre-supposed the dissolution of class barriers and individual privilege. National and sectional disruptions converged and created a series of crises which were, in themselves, only the manifestations of internal tension; but these crises rose in crescendo to such an emotional pitch that only outright physical combat could achieve catharsis for the explosive Southern temperament. From the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions to the Dred Scott Decision to the Davis Resolutions, the North and the South chipped away at each other in Congress, in the courts, in state legislatures, at Washington's banquet tables and White House receptions, in saloons and on street corners, until they forswore words and went at it with bare hands and naked bayonets.[5] Given such multiple disruptions, the Tidewater Virginian was a man beset by

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[5]On February 2, 1860, Jefferson Davis introduced into the Senate a set of resolutions embodying the program of the Southern extremists. This set asserted that 1) no state had the right to interfere with the domestic institutions of other states; 2) any attack on slavery within the slave states was unconstitutional; 3) it was the Senate's duty to oppose all discriminatory measures against persons or property in the territory; 4) neither Congress nor a territorial legislature was empowered to impair the right to hold slaves in the territories, and the Federal government would extend all needful protection to slavery in the territories; 5) the territories might not decide on the question of slavery until admission to the Union; and 6) all state legislation interfering with the recovery of fugitive slaves was inimical to the constitutional compact.

traumas of one sort or another. Quite likely he was too concerned with the realities of survival to react quite so extremely as his academic counterpart, Beverly Tucker; but Tucker was the closest thing to an aristocrat which Virginia or the south could produce, and he did reflect, up to a point, the thinking of his class.

From his veranda overlooking the Palace Green, Beverly Tucker must often have watched the afternoon sunlight fade to misty twilight. Perhaps, he sat alone thinking about the threats to his world and the means of meeting them. More likely, he sat or stood and paced in heated discussion with Dew, while his children ran and tumbled on the lawn, and Lucy sewed nearby. Sunlight blinds, and twilight distorts, and beyond the Palace Green events were forcing reactions which a "brave old Virginia Gentleman" had prophesied but failed to prophesy correctly.[6] Virginia would not lead a seceded South, just as she no longer led the Union. A new breed of men would supplant the aristocrat--men from the upcountry like Calhoun and Yancy, Westerners like Davis and Toombs, a self-educated Memminger, and the anti-secessionist son of a poor dirt farmer, Alexander Stephens. No Jeffersons or Madisons, Washingtons or Randolphs flocked Montgomery's saloons or talked guns and dogs in the lobby of the Exchange Hotel that December before Sumter. Not until Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers did Virginia forsake the Union. By 1860, unionist sentiment was strong there, and slavery was disappearing. It still existed as an institution, and life was still intrinsically bound to it; but Virginia's ties to the North were strong. She had refused to recall her congressmen from Washington with those of the "cotton states" and to attend the Montgomery Convention. Her Hunter worked with Crittenden (as did Jefferson Davis,

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[6] Oliphant, The Letters of Simms, III, 344.

for that matter) on the last-ditch compromise, and the Sumter conflict failed to dislodge her. But, she would not furnish troops to invade her sister states; moreover, she considered this invasion a violation of states' rights, a position not far removed from that of Jefferson.

On April 17, the fate which Beverly Tucker prophesied for his native state was fulfilled, and Virginia seceded. As Governor Letcher's proclamation exhorted, Virginia must now defend her borders against another Britain.[7] Defend she did for four years, down to the last smoking shell pit around Petersburg. And she lost, the result of a course of action for which she was, unquestionably, largely responsible. But profound historical connotations encourage a certain leniency in assessing Virginia's role in the "irrepressible conflict." She was, in one sense, a martyr--on the one hand, to the cotton coalition which needed her buffer position, her population, and her ironworks; on the other, to a federalism which insisted that she abjure the art of compromise. In her loftier and highly imaginary rationalizations, Virginia fought for the "spirit of '76", and so did her sister states. It was the same spirit, distorted by its travels and expanded by pride, passion, and greed, which the English had birthed almost two centuries ago in the narrow neck of land between the York and the James Rivers. Here, two cultures began, one which found it morally and economically feasible to support the freedom of all but those who denied freedom to others; and one which found it or hoped to find it morally and economically feasible to support the freedom of anyone, whether or not he denied freedom to others, so long as he was white.

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[7] From the account in Clifford Dowdey, The Land They Fought For (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1955), p. 104.

What was the South? Many things--a slaveholding democracy, a capitalistic agronomy, a romantic's utopia. But by whichever of its kaleidoscopic faces one chose to call it, it remained always and everywhere one thing. It was a distorted but, nevertheless, integral and viable part of the great American experiment.

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