

TO BE AMIABLE AND ACCOMPLISHED:  
FITTING YOUNG WOMEN FOR UPPER-CLASS VIRGINIA SOCIETY  
1760 - 1810

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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
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With Special Thanks to Anne Blair

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## ABSTRACT

Young women needed to be equipped with suitable skills and attitudes in order to assume their adult role in upper-class Virginia society (1760-1810). Prescriptive writings of parents, relatives, friends, and guidelines found in widely-published ladies morality books provided an outline of the ideal qualities a young woman should possess.

Literacy, particularly the ability to write well, was a vital part of a young woman's education. Although a young woman was supposed to study some academic subjects, such as geography and French, other areas of study were thought to be unsuitable. Musical training, dancing and drawing were widely encouraged accomplishments.

All endeavors were to be approached with diligence and application, however, a young woman was not supposed to boast of her superior skill or knowledge. Young women were urged to maintain a pleasing personal appearance. They were also required to adopt an unassuming and conciliatory behavior while avoiding affectation.

During courtship, a young woman was never supposed to take the initiative. Parents wanted their daughters to adjust their blissful marriage ideals to more realistic expectations. In marriage, the first aim of the wife was to please her husband and thereby insure domestic harmony.

Ideally, appropriate education and social training produced young women who were loved and admired in Virginia society.

TO BE AMIABLE AND ACCOMPLISHED:  
FITTING YOUNG WOMEN FOR UPPER-CLASS VIRGINIA SOCIETY  
1760-1810

Your "many amicable qualities of  
the mind, and charms of Person,  
are so endearing as to make me  
rejoice and thankful . . . ."

Joseph Nourse to Maria Bull  
10 February, 1784  
Nourse Family Papers

## INTRODUCTION

Gentlemen and gentlewomen occupied distinct social, economic, and intellectual spheres in late eighteenth-century Virginia society. In this society, where most activities were sharply appropriated according to gender, young men and women were raised to assume well-defined masculine and feminine roles.<sup>1</sup> These roles in Virginia were patterned after English precedents. To perpetuate polite society, as defined by English ideals, tastes, and fashions, Virginia parents needed to transmit educational and behavioral imperatives to their children. Upper-class Virginians (1760-1810) accordingly took great care to preserve what they viewed as the traditional, fashionable, and serviceable aspects of masculine and feminine roles.

Young men became respected adults by following the prescriptions found in the code of "gentlemanly behavior" so well articulated by Louis B. Wright in his First Gentlemen of Virginia. According to Wright, gentlemen should be shrewd, altruistic, well educated in the classics, hospitable, honest, and self-assured in the "habit of command."<sup>2</sup> These qualities fitted men for their roles as political and economic leaders.

Young women became admired adults by following a complimentary set of imperatives which modulated

"gentlewomanly behavior." Appropriate feminine education and behavior was derived from the prevailing perception of women's roles in society. Although speaking of all the colonies in general, Mary Beth Norton correctly noted that "Eighteenth-century Americans proved to have very clear ideas of which tasks were properly 'feminine' and which were not; of what behavior was appropriate for females, especially white females; and of what functions 'the sex' was to perform."<sup>3</sup> These clear perceptions provided an outline of the specific training needed for a young woman to assume her adult role equipped with appropriate skills and attitudes.

Contemporary prescriptive writings urged young women to conform to behavior thought most suitable and becoming to their niche in upper-class society. Writings of Virginia parents, peers, and guidelines found in widely-published ladies morality handbooks meshed well to describe the educational, artistic, and behavioral requirements thought to be conducive to producing "gentlewomanly behavior." The writings circumscribed the desired useful and ornamental branches of female education. They emphasized cultivation of an amiable personal character which combined softness and delicacy with well-bred good sense. The boundaries of feminine endeavor were restricted by these imperatives, which nonetheless urged industrious application to the areas of activity deemed suitable for young women. Mastering these prerequisites of feminine attainment meant that young women were ready to approach marriage. By cultivating the

conciatory behavior required to insure domestic tranquility, young women assumed their roles as married women within upper-class Virginia society.

Any description and analysis of prescriptive writings must take several things into consideration. Prescriptive writings can focus the image of the ideal or desired qualities a young woman could possess, but they do not guarantee that young women possessed these qualities or behaved in a certain manner. Often a parent's comments of correction indicated the daughter was actually behaving in the wrong way. Advice and admonitions given by parents, peers, and handbooks give us a better understanding of eighteenth-century attitudes about young women. These attitudes changed little during the period under consideration, and it could be argued that remnants of most are still visible today.

FOOTNOTES TO INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup>Daniel Blake Smith, Inside the Great House (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), chs. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup>Louis B. Wright, The First Gentlemen of Virginia (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1940).

<sup>3</sup>Mary Beth Norton, Liberty's Daughters (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), p. xiv.

CHAPTER I  
RUDIMENTS OF A POLITE EDUCATION

Upper-class parents in late eighteenth-century Virginia were responsible for the education of their children. Because there was no established system of public education, boys and girls were educated at their parents' expense. The knowledge children eventually acquired reflected their parents' ideas about what sort of instruction would be suitable to their station in society.

Parents, if they did not teach their children themselves, hired tutors, dancing instructors, music teachers, and made other arrangements to provide necessary training. Young men were often sent to the College of William and Mary and then to England for advanced study. Young women, however, received most of their education within the home where they were taught basic skills by their mothers, tutors and other instructors.

Education, in the broad sense of the term, was the vehicle for fitting young women to their adult roles. It guarded them against the pitfalls of ignorance, as the 1753 pamphlet "The Whole Duty of a Woman" cautioned: "the way of a virgin, just rising to the estate of a woman, is a path where the nicest foot will slip, if the hand beareth not on the staff of education."<sup>1</sup> In a similar vein, the

Countess Dowager of Carlisle stated that young women "are incited to mental attainments, but to render you still more valuable as women; and the better your minds are cultivated, the more you will see the propriety of attending to those minutiae which become the condition in which Providence has placed you."<sup>2</sup>

Although shaping attitudes and behavior were part of a young woman's education in the general sense, literacy and achievement in certain scholastic subjects formed the rudiments of a polite education.<sup>3</sup> Skill in writing alone was a vital indication of a woman's education. Educational aspirations for Virginia daughters stemmed from a long tradition of parental concern and feminine initiative. Colonel Daniel Parke admonished his daughter Frances in the 1690s to "Mind your writing and everything else you have learnt and do not learn to romp, but behave yourself soberly and like a gentlewoman."<sup>4</sup> Forty years later, Bessy Pratt, aged eleven, wrote to her brother in England regretting that "I find you have got the start of me in learning very much, for you write better already than I expect to as long as I live . . . ."<sup>5</sup> Later educators indicated that "Penning an epistle with Propriety and elegance" remained among the "useful attainments" because writing and accuracy in spelling were fundamental to any young woman's education. Parents and friends urged young female students to apply themselves in this area. "I am sorry," Mary Burwell Prescott wrote to her inattentive granddaughter in 1794, "to

hear the Acc.<sup>t</sup> your Mama gives of your hating writing."<sup>6</sup> Tutor Philip Fithian described the educational progress of the Robert Carter daughters in 1773 solely in terms of reading and writing. "The oldest daughter is Reading the Spectator, Writing, and beginning to Cypher - The second is reading out of the Spelling-Book, and beginning to write - the next is reading in the Spelling-Book - And the last is beginning her letters . . . ."<sup>7</sup> To further instruct Nancy Carter, Robert Carter gave Fithian the Ladies Compleat Letter Writer. In a letter to his eleven-year-old daughter Martha, Thomas Jefferson emphasized the basic skills of writing by cautioning "Take care you never spell a word wrong. Always before you write a word consider how it is spelt, and if you do not remember it, turn to a dictionary. It produces great praise in a lady to spell well."<sup>8</sup>

Letter writing was an important, measurable indicator of a young woman's literary and grammatical achievement. "Sweet remembrancers" passing between separated family members or friends gave the young students an opportunity to demonstrate their progress.<sup>9</sup> Judith Randolph praised seven-year-old Frances Bland Tucker's progress in 1792 by writing "I am happy to find my Dear Fanny so much improved in her writing, by which I will judge that she is as much so, in everything else."<sup>10</sup> These fledgling efforts at correspondence were often stiff and formal, yet grammatically correct and legibly written. Thirteen-year-old Betty Lewis's reply to her godmother was a good example

of this fledgling--and undoubtedly coached--writing attempt. "After thanking my Dear Aunt for her kind present of powder and cakes, I must let you know I esteem your offer of a correspondence a particular favor done me and shall keep it punctual," Betty wrote in 1777, ". . . as I expect a number of advantages arise from so doing."<sup>11</sup>

Recipients of these letters often took the opportunity to praise noticeable improvements or urge stronger application when the visible results were not commendable. Maria Rind's unschooled and unpracticed writing elicited unfavorable comments from her correspondents. An orphan, Maria was employed and educated in the St. George Tucker household. Letters to her future husband, John Coalter, are illegible and nearly incoherent. Letters to her brother James must have been of the same quality because he continually urged her to improve. "I will take the liberty too my dear Maria to mention your writing - " James Rind wrote from Kentucky in 1789, "Believe me my sister little pains will make anybody write well, and it is my first wish that you should do everything well . . . you (will) perceive at each attempt that your writing mends . . . ." Later in the letter James chided "believe me that next to the shortness of your letter I felt most pain from the badness of the writing because I am fully satisfied my dear Sister that you can write much better if you were not utterly careless whether you wrote legibly or not."<sup>12</sup> (See Appendix I.) A sixteen-year-old woman of more fortunate circumstances, Eleanor Parke Custis,

received favorable comments from her adopted father George Washington, who wrote

Your letter, the receipt of which I am now acknowledging, is written correctly and in fair characters, which is evidence that you command, when you please a fair hand. Possessed of these advantages, it will be your own fault if you do not avail yourself of them, and attention being paid to the choice of your subjects, you can have nothing to fear from the malignancy of criticism, as your ideas are lively and your descriptions agreeable.<sup>13</sup>

With more enthusiastic praise, Joseph Nourse complimented his future wife's proficiency in 1784: "Let me then acquaint you that your letter afforded me . . . pleasure, from the purity and elegance of its style . . . how widely different were my sensations from that of a person receiving a Letter from his Love ill spelt, badly written, devoid of Sentiment. Such advantages have you, my dear Maria, over the major part of your sex, who have not wanted an Education, but the application necessary to improvement."<sup>14</sup>

In the long run, study proved worthwhile because the ability to write well marked an accomplished woman. Even Landon Carter, speaking of John Adams, conceded in 1774 "That his lady had written him a most sensible letter . . . a fine woman this, if the letter was not made for her."<sup>15</sup>

Writing for such a sensitive and potentially critical audience may have made some correspondence labored and self-conscious. Such is the case with Maria Bull Nourse's letters. Under such circumstances, it would be natural to assume that letters between peers or siblings were less

self-conscious and more relaxed. Aside from Anne Blair's chit-chat to her sister at Newington in the 1760s, informality in letters between friends occurred more frequently in the 1790s. As a post-script in a letter to her brother Robert Beverley in 1798, Lucy Randolph added that "This is a correct epistle, but as I do not mind you, I always scribble on without feeling the least check."<sup>16</sup> Margaret Davenport's correspondence during the early 1790s was flighty, gossipy, entertaining, and unrestrained. In a typically carefree style, she explained to her friend F. Currie "I write now in a kind of agitation which must apologize - but no apologies - let us agree to banish them from our future letters, and write in any manner whatever occurs."<sup>17</sup>

In addition to basic literary skills and the subsequent refinements of letter writing, other subjects were thought to be suitable for a young woman's edification. The Countess of Carlisle recommended grammar, geography, arithmetic, French and Italian, music, drawing and painting for a young woman's study. Poetry, natural and moral philosophy, and chronology were additional subjects listed by Hester M. Chapone in her popular guidebook Letters on the Improvement of the Mind Addressed to a Young Lady. Mrs. Chapone suggested that these topics should be appropriately scaled down to conform to the capacities of a young woman's understanding. Virginia parents recommended these same subjects for their daughters. Thomas Jefferson

outlined a suggested arrangement of subjects for his daughter Martha in 1783 by instructing that "from 8. to 10 o'clock practise music. from 10. to 1. dance one day and draw another. from 1. to 2. draw on the day you dance, and write a letter on the next day. from 3. to 4. read French. from 5. till bedtime read English, write, etc." He requested reports on Martha's progress by asking her to "Inform me what books you read, what tunes you learn, and inclose me your best copy of every lesson in drawing." When Jefferson's younger daughter Mary joined him in France, he directed that she "shall be taught here to play on the harpsichord, to draw, to dance, to read and talk French and other things that you mark you more worthy of the love of your friends."<sup>18</sup> In a letter to his nineteen-year-old daughter Anne upon her marriage in 1786, Patrick Henry advised that "History, geography, poetry, moral essays, biography, travels, sermons and other well-written religious productions will not fail to enlarge your understanding, to render you a more agreeable companion, and to exalt your virtue."<sup>19</sup> Henry's suggested subjects were typical of the expanded curricula recommended for young ladies toward the end of the eighteenth century. Parents, like Patrick Henry, and educators in the new private academies for young ladies encouraged study of more diverse subjects.

An expanded curriculum was offered to young women at Maria Smith's school in Winchester in 1788 and the Norfolk Academy in 1795.<sup>20</sup> As they noted expanded curricula in

their correspondence, young female students often rather self-consciously mentioned the benefits of the additional subjects. "Geography is very entertaining and improving," wrote Eliza Ashton Alexander to Eliza Whiting in the 1790s, "yet too much reading confuses the idea and numbs the brain."<sup>21</sup> At Mrs. Cooke's school in Alexandria, Mary Walker Carter studied a wide variety of subjects. In 1802, she dutifully reported additions to her coursework to her parents in Williamsburg.

Cousin Fitzhugh who is ever anxious for our improvement, has persuaded on Mrs. Cooke, to let us employ some of (our) time in reading history, which is a very useful part of education, so she gave us on last Wednesday fifteen pages in the Grecian History . . . . We shall soon go to drawing maps and I shall send the first one I draw to you and Mama, and perhaps about the last of this month, to writing exercises so that our school employments will be much more numerous than they have ever yet been, which I am sure will greatly please you, and Mama . . . .<sup>22</sup>

While appropriate subjects were studied by young women, their brothers learned Latin, Greek, Logic, Astronomy and Navigation, subjects considered vital to a man's education.<sup>23</sup> The intellectual capacities of a girl, it was generally believed, could not sustain study of these more difficult subjects. Elizabeth Parke Custis recalled that

. . . the first day he (the Instructor) gave me the dedication of the Spectator to read and I heard Dr. S (her stepfather) tell him "that (I) was an extraordinary child and would if a Boy make a Brilliant figure" - I told them to teach me what they pleased and observed to them I thought it hard they would not teach me Greek

and Latin because I was a girl - they laughed and said women ought not to know those things, and mending, writing, Arithmetic and Music was all I could be permitted to acquire. I thought of this often - with deep regret & began to despise those acquirements which were considered inferior to the others . . .<sup>24</sup>

In her Letters, Mrs. Chapone asserted that there was no need for women to learn the ancient languages because English, French, and Italian "are much more than sufficient to store your mind with as many ideas as you will know how to manage."<sup>25</sup> The Countess of Carlisle stated the situation most bluntly: "The Greek and Latin tongues, form . . . no part of the polite system of female education at present, nor certainly ever can in the useful."<sup>26</sup>

Instead of heavy readings in classical languages, other reading material usually written specifically for females was substituted. Most books for women fit the requirements of Patrick Henry, who advised his daughter Anne to "Cultivate your mind by the perusal of those books which instruct while they amuse."<sup>27</sup> Guidebooks and textbooks such as The Ladies Calling, Newton's Ladies Philosophy, The Lady's Geography, The Female Academy, The Ladies Compleat Letter Writer, The Female Miscellany and the Ladies Library combined moral and academic instruction in a form palatable to young ladies. Philip Fithian assigned the Spectator to his students as did Eliza Parke Custis's tutor. On her own initiative, Frances Baylor Hill read from works such as the Inquisitor, the Spectator, and the Oeconomy of Human Life in 1797. The latter two, among many other works,

were recommended by Thomas Jefferson in 1818. (See Appendix II.)

In addition to the Bible and various sermons, Frances Hill read novels like Evelina and Louisa the Lovely Orphan. Novel-reading was often associated with emotional excess and unbridled passion.<sup>28</sup> With great enthusiasm, a young woman wrote Mary Farquharson in 1808 "O! Polly such a treat I had yesterday, you know I said I was in hopes of getting the Novice of St. Dominick read, whell, yesterday I was lucky enough to get it and O! What a treat! such beautiful language, and so interesting a story, never in my life did I ever read anything in the novel way I liked as much, the Children of the Abbey does not come up to it."<sup>29</sup> Anne Cary Randolph sheepishly confided to St. George Tucker in 1804 "You will certainly think my brain diseased when I tell you that I sat up a whole night, about a month ago reading a novel."<sup>30</sup> Wary of such excess and reinforced by ladies morality books, parents viewed novel-reading as a foolish yet unpreventable pastime. "Do not devote much of your time to novels," Patrick Henry objected, "there are a few which may be useful and improving in giving a higher tone to our moral sensibility; but they tend to vitiate the taste, and to produce a disrelish for substantial intellectual food."<sup>31</sup> In his comments on women's education, Jefferson wrote that "a great obstacle to good education is the inordinate passion prevalent for novels, and the time lost in that reading which should be

instructively employed . . . (contributes to) a bloated imagination, sickly judgment and disgust towards all the real business of life."<sup>32</sup> Distaste for novel-reading was even used to promote "serious" and worthy books. The publishers of Alexander's History of Women in 1796 begged to inform their subscribers, including several Virginians, that

We have not vanity enough to recommend our Work to the learned, they may have met with every anecdote related in it; but as the generality of the Fair Sex, whose reading is more confined, now spend many of their idle hours in poring over novels and romances, which greatly tend to mislead the understanding and corrupt the heart, we cannot help expressing a wish, that they would spare a part of this time to look into the History of their own Sex . . . .<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps because of widespread disapproval of novel-reading, eighteen-year-old Lucinda Lee Orr realized that "Books of instruction will be a thousand times more pleasing (after a little while) than all the novels in the world. I own myself, I am too fond of novel reading . . . ." <sup>34</sup>

While adults concerned themselves with supervising the written aspects of a young woman's language, they also guided the development of verbal skills. While most spoken errors were probably corrected on the spot by parents or tutors, Mary Walker Carter described formal punishment for verbal mistakes during her schooling in Alexandria. In 1802, "Poll" reported to her stepfather, St. George Tucker

On Friday evening we went to school, and I had never payed a fine, so the next morning was the one, on which Mrs. Cooke was to buy the sugar candy and she told us she had nearly four shillings, and there were, only four girls who were to have any, of whom Sukey and I made two of the number, so we began to exult over the

girls about it "well, says Sukey," (whose mouth already was set Sugar Candy fashion), "to morrow is Saturday", "Stop" (cried Mrs. C) "Miss Meade there is a fine, you ought to have said to morrow will be Saturday, when it comes it is Saturday." I began to laugh and said "so much the better for us as there are now only three of us, we shall have more," but Cousin Molly put me in mind that if I kept on talking I should probably have the same ill luck, but however I did not listen to her wise precepts and some of the girls sayd "why la, Polly, you are quite bald"----Ah (said I) "I am a poor old creature" "I am a poor old creature! (said Mrs. Cooke), if you please, to bring me to morrow a cent."

So you see Papa, Cousin Sukey and myself, both lost our Sugar Candy, and had to pay besides - Do you not pity us - but however I am sure it will have the good effect of making us speak properly and you know that I am in great need of being corrected in that . . . .<sup>35</sup>

These small grammatical mistakes were minor complaints compared to more serious matters of incorrect vocabulary and accent. Any deviation from standard English revealed association with ill-chosen company. Scottish tutor John Harrower felt pressured to speak with as little accent as possible. He wrote in 1774 that "I am also obliged to talk english the best I can, for Lady Daingerfield speaks nothing but high english . . . ." <sup>36</sup> William Beverley of Blandfield wrote in 1741 that a Scottish school master was desired for his offspring, "But they commonly teach the children the Scotch dialect, which they never can wear off."<sup>37</sup> Robert Carter was also concerned that his tutor's English pronunciation met certain standards.<sup>38</sup>

Traveler Johann Schoepf's comments in 1783 were helpful in suggesting actual language patterns.

. . . the Virginians are very conversable. They boast that among all the American colonies the English language is with them preserved purest and most complete, and one cannot altogether deny them. But here and there a few negroisms have crept in, and the salmagundy of the English language has here been enriched even by words of African origin . . . .<sup>39</sup>

Words of African origin were not a desirable part of a young lady's vocabulary. Anne Blair wrote "I do not observe her to be fond of Negroes Company nor Have I heard lately of any bad words . . .," which was a favorable report of her niece's progress in 1764.<sup>40</sup> Maria Byrd's complaint about her granddaughter's education was explicit: "I am greatly disturbed at the education of the little lady at Belvidere who's Mama Ly's in bed till noon and her chief time is spent with servants and Negro children her play fellows, from whom she has learnt a dreadful collection of words . . . ." <sup>41</sup>

Vulgar language and name-calling were also thought to be outside the realm of a proper young woman's verbal repertoire. Josiah Flag, visiting Petersburg in 1786, recorded many unfavorable impressions of the area. "As to the language," he wrote of Petersburg's young ladies, "they have as many Barbarisms as our most Countryfied market girls."<sup>42</sup> According to Fithian, Priscilla Carter had a commendable vocabulary for she "never swears, which is here a distinguished virtue."<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth Foote Washington, who was greatly concerned with proper conduct with regard to servants or "domesticks" chided herself in her journal

"never to think they were given me to domineer over by treating them with harsh expressions, because they are in my power, ---such as fool --- Blockhead --- vile wretches --- and many other names that I hope I shall ever think myself above using . . . ."44 Although she was a young girl in 1772, Sally Cary Fairfax had mastered many undesirable harsh expressions. She recorded in her diary "that vile man Adam at night killed a poor cat, of rage, because she eat a bit of meat out of his hand and scratched it. A vile wretch of new negrows, if he was mine I would cut him to pieces. a son of a gun, a nice negrow, he should be kild himself by rites."45

In spite of these unintentional diversions from the track of female education, other young women, like Eliza Parke Custis, wished to study beyond the prescribed areas. Ferdinand-Marie Bayard, a French traveler in Virginia in 1791, noted aspirations of some female friends in Winchester by relating that

Mrs. Smith's friend knew French well enough to read our writers in their language. She spoke to me of the works of Md. Genlis with much interest. The sex of the author tended also to make her love to read her works, and she assured me that if the education of women were less neglected, they would rival their husbands in fame as they do in love and goodness. Mrs. Smith listened with great pleasure to her eloquent friend defend the hopes of their sex, and I had no less pleasure in admitting everything that this pretty woman asserted.<sup>46</sup>

Not only did society frown on female study of Latin and Greek, but many morality books warned that too great a show

of intelligence was unbecoming. A female scholar incurred social disapproval if she grew too proud of her knowledge. "Be ever cautious in displaying your good sense," warned Dr. Gregory, author of the popular handbook A Father's Legacy to his Daughters, "It will be thought you assume a superiority over the rest of the company."<sup>47</sup> Mrs. Chapone clearly warned would-be scholars that "The danger of pedantry and presumption in a woman - of her exciting envy in one sex and jealousy in the other - of her exchanging the graces of imagination for the severity and preciseness of a scholar, would be, I own, sufficient to frighten me from the ambition of seeing my girl remarkable for learning. Such objections are perhaps still stronger with regard to the abstruse sciences."<sup>48</sup> A verse from a farcical poem written for St. George Tucker in 1781 suggests just such male jealousy:

To Patty Hall I must begin  
Lament the great and crying sin  
That Girls of this degenerate Age  
Are not more stay'd discreet and sage;  
That Men are Fops and Fools by nature,  
And for superior Wisdom hate her.<sup>49</sup>

In A Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters, Lady Sarah Pennington reasoned that "The great art of pleasing is to appear pleased with others; suffer not then an ill-bred absence of thought, or a contemptuous sneer, ever to betray a conscious superiority of understanding . . . ." <sup>50</sup> The whole issue was stated in "The Whole Duty of a Woman" which asked "Art though Letter'd, let not the difficulty of thy speech puzzle the ignorant; lest instead of admiring

thy knowledge, they condemn thee for pride and affectation."<sup>51</sup> For "ignorance makes a female companion contemptible, pedantry makes her ridiculous; nor is it easy to say which of the two is most disgusting."<sup>52</sup> This plain speaking was the wisdom of William Alexander, author of *History of Women*. Young women, bombarded with adages like "Wit is the most dangerous talent you can possess" and "Discover not the knowledge of things it is not expected thou shouldst understand," were encouraged to study within the circumscribed area of suitable subjects; to be proficient but not outstanding in mastering them; and not to disclose a superior knowledge of them.

## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>"Extracts from a Phamphlet, entitled, The Whole Duty of a Woman," The Gentleman's Magazine, 23 (1753), p. 134. This London magazine was popular in the colonies. Philip Fithian once noted its arrival at Nomini Hall: "Mr. Carter received half a Dozen of the latest Gent. Magazines with several other new books." Hunter Dickinson Farish, ed., Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., 1957), p. 70-71.

<sup>2</sup>Mrs. Peddle, Countess Dowager of Carlisle, Rudiments of Taste (Philadelphia: William Spotswood, 1790), p. 31. Another Philadelphia edition of this book was published in 1797.

<sup>3</sup>As a measure of literacy, between forty-five and fifty percent of Virginia women who made wills signed their names (1760-1800). See Kenneth A. Lockridge, Literacy in Colonial New England (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1974), p. 92. In describing male literacy, Lockridge noted the striking correlation between literacy and wealth in Virginia. Ibid, p. 90, 94.

Benjamin Rush stressed speaking, spelling and writing the English language correctly in his "Thoughts Upon Female Education, Accomodated to the Present State of Society, Manners and Government in the United States of America," (Philadelphia: Prichard and Hall, 1787); reprint in Frederick Rudolph, ed., Essays on Education in the Early Republic (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1965), p. 28.

<sup>4</sup>Wright, First Gentlemen of Virginia, p. 80. Frances was married in 1707.

<sup>5</sup>Mary Newton Stanard, Colonial Virginia Its People and Customs (Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1970), p. 112-13.

<sup>6</sup>Mary Burwell Prescott to Eliza Whiting, 24 August 1794. Blair-Banister-Braxton-Horner-Whiting Papers, Swem Library, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.

<sup>7</sup>Farish, ed., Fithian Journal, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas Jefferson to Martha Jefferson, 28 November 1783, in Edwin Morris Betts and James Adam Bear, Jr., eds., The Family Letters of Thomas Jefferson (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1966), p. 20.

<sup>9</sup>"Letters are sweet remembrancers, and when I am gradually, and almost impreceptibly stealing from your remembrance, an unexpected Epistle, will revive your recollection of me, and by this means I never shall be forgotten." P. (Margaret) Davenport to Elizabeth Pelham, 24 February 1791, in "Letters Addressed to Miss Elizabeth Pelham, William Blagrove and William Pelham," William and Mary Quarterly, 2d Ser., 9 (1929), p. 265.

<sup>10</sup>Judith Randolph to Frances Tucker, 10 January 1792. Brown Coalter Tucker Papers, Swem Library, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.

<sup>11</sup>Betty Lewis to Mrs. Hannah Washington, 1777, in Jane Taylor Duke, Kenmore and the Lewises (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1949), p. 168.

<sup>12</sup>James Rind to Maria Rind, 1 June 1789. Brown Coalter Tucker Papers.

<sup>13</sup>George Washington to Eleanor Parke Custis, 16 January 1795, in John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 34 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1940), p. 91.

<sup>14</sup>Joseph Nourse to Maria Bull, 10 February 1784. Nourse Family Papers, Accession number 3490-a, University of Virginia Special Collections, Charlottesville, Virginia.

<sup>15</sup>Jack P. Greene, ed., The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall 1752-1788, vol. 2 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1965), p. 860. Carol Ruth Berkin and Mary Beth Norton in Women of America, A History note "the distress Abigail Adams constantly expressed about her inability to write and spell well." (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979), p. 45.

<sup>16</sup>Lucy Randolph to Robert Beverley, 29 March 1798. Beverley Papers, Swem Library, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.

<sup>17</sup>Margaret Davenport to F. Currie, 25 May 1794. Brown Coalter Tucker Papers.

<sup>18</sup>Thomas Jefferson to Martha Jefferson, 28 November 1783, Thomas Jefferson to Mary Jefferson, 20 September 1785, in Betts and Bear, eds., Family Letters of Jefferson, p. 19, 20, 29.

<sup>19</sup>Patrick Henry to Anne Henry Roane, September, 1786, in William Wirt Henry, ed., Patrick Henry, Life, Correspondence and Speeches, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), p. 308. Anne Henry married Spencer Roane 7 September, 1786.

Benjamin Rush, in his "Thoughts Upon Female Education," stated that "An acquaintance with geography and some instruction in chronology will enable a young lady to ready history, biography, and travels, with advantage, and thereby qualify her not only for a general intercourse with the world but to be an agreeable companion for a sensible man." See Rudolph, ed., Essays, p. 29.

<sup>20</sup>A reminiscing cousin of Eliza Whiting wrote before 1815 "in our day high learning was not so much in fashion as now for us poor females . . . we could put up with Rhyme if it did not altogether gingle so well but now in these bright days old Things are thrown aside as vulgar." Blair-Banister-Braxton Papers.

For an excellent discussion of the special requirements of female education, see Ann D. Gordon, "The Fair Sex in the Young Ladies Academy of Philadelphia," in Berkin and Norton, eds., Women of America, A History.

<sup>21</sup>Eliza Ashton Alexander to Eliza Whiting, ca. 1790. Blair-Banister-Braxton Papers. John Davis, tutor on Mr. Ball's plantation in Virginia, noted the addition of geography as a subject for his female students. See John Davis, "Travels of Four Years and A Half in the United States of America, 1798-1802," in Edgar W. Knight, ed., A Documentary History of Education in the South Before 1860, vol. 1 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), p. 632-37.

<sup>22</sup>Mary Walker Carter to St. George Tucker, 17 January 1802. Tucker-Coleman Collection, Swem Library, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.

<sup>23</sup>John Coalter, age 18, in his 1787 autobiography described his education: "I had acquired a tolerable knowledge of Latin and Greek. Something of Geography, astronomy, Logic . . . Mathematics as far as Euclid's elements, Navigation, surveying--and was beginning to Learn French, but never had time and opportunity to pursue it . . ." Brown Coalter Tucker Papers.

<sup>24</sup>William D. Hoyt, Jr., ed., "Self Portrait: Eliza Custis 1808," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 53 (1945), p. 97.

<sup>25</sup>Mrs. Hester Mulso Chapone, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind Addressed to a Young Lady (London: C. Whittingham, 1801), p. 156-57. It was first published in London in 1772, with American editions as follows: Boston, 1783; Worcester, 1783; Philadelphia, 1786; New York, 1793.

<sup>26</sup>Countess of Carlisle, Rudiments of Taste, p. 40. Benjamin Rush thought French was also not part of a useful education in America. See Rudolph, ed., Essays, p. 34-35.

<sup>27</sup>Eva C. Hartless, Sarah Winston Syme Henry (Boston: Brandon Press, 1977), p. 137.

<sup>28</sup>Linda Kerber, in her recent work Women of the Republic, noted "These attacks on fiction, it is clear, were in large part attacks on emotion, on passion, and on sexuality." (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), p. 241.

For an excellent background in novels and what may have been scandalous to an eighteenth-century audience, see Jean H. Hagstrum, Sex and Sensibility (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 160-85. Hagstrum outlined many works read in Virginia: Lucinda Lee Orr read Alexander Pope's Eloisa and Wilson Cary ordered Samuel Richardson's novels for a young female relative.

<sup>29</sup>Unknown writer to Mary (Polly) Farquharson, 17 January 1808. Galt Personal Papers, Swem Library, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.

<sup>30</sup>Anne Cary Randolph to St. George Tucker, 3 February 1804. Tucker-Coleman Collection.

<sup>31</sup>Hartless, Sarah Henry, p. 137. Benjamin Rush thought novels reflected European manners and society and were therefore inappropriate in America. See Rudolph, ed., Essays, p. 31.

<sup>32</sup>Thomas Jefferson to Nathaniel Burwell, 14 March 1818, in Thomas Woody, A History of Women's Education in the United States (New York: Octagon Books, 1980), p. 274.

<sup>33</sup>William Alexander, M.D., The History of Women (Philadelphia: J. H. Dobelbower, 1796; reprint ed., New York:

AMS Press, 1976), advertisement. The list of subscribers, including three Virginians, is at the back of vol. 2.

<sup>34</sup>Lucinda Lee Orr, Journal of a Young Lady of Virginia 1782 (Baltimore: John Murphy and Company, 1871), p. 25-26.

<sup>35</sup>Mary Walker Carter to St. George Tucker, 17 January 1802. Tucker-Coleman Collection.

<sup>36</sup>Edward Miles Riley, ed., The Journal of John Harrower (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1963), p. 54.

<sup>37</sup>Stanard, Colonial Virginia, p. 280-81.

<sup>38</sup>Farish, ed., Fithian Journal, p. 94.

<sup>39</sup>Alfred J. Morrison, ed. and trans., [Johann Schoepf] Travels in the Confederation 1783-84 (Philadelphia: William J. Campbell, 1911), p. 62.

<sup>40</sup>Anne Blair to Mrs. Mary Braxton, 21 August 1764. Blair-Banister-Braxton Papers.

<sup>41</sup>Marion Tinling, ed., The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover, Virginia (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), p. 682.

<sup>42</sup>Suzanne Dee Lebsock, "Women and Economics in Virginia: Petersburg 1784-1820," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1977, p. 34.

<sup>43</sup>Farish, ed., Fithian Journal, p. 49.

<sup>44</sup>Elizabeth Foote Washington Diary 1779-1796. Washington Family Collection, Box 2, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Extracts were kindly provided by Pat Gibbs. The pages in this diary are unnumbered.

<sup>45</sup>Sally Cary Fairfax, "Diary of a Little Colonial Girl," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 11 (1903), p. 211-14.

<sup>46</sup>Ben C. McCary, ed., [Ferdinand-Marie Bayard] Travels of a Frenchman in Maryland and Virginia, 1791 (Ann Arbor: Edward Brothers, Inc., 1950), p. 62.

<sup>47</sup>Dr. John Gregory, A Father's Legacy to His Daughters (Edinburgh: J. Robertson, 1793), p. 26. This book had nineteen American imprints between 1775 and 1798.

<sup>48</sup>Chapone, Letters, p. 157.

<sup>49</sup>Poem, in the handwriting of James F. Armstrong, to St. George Tucker, June, 1781. It was signed by the various members of the Tucker household, and each verse was about a member of that household. Tucker-Coleman Collection.

<sup>50</sup>Julia Cherry Spruill, Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1972), p. 222.

<sup>51</sup>"The Whole Duty of a Woman," p. 133.

<sup>52</sup>Alexander, History of Women, p. 66.

## CHAPTER II

### PROPER ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ATTITUDES

In the academic arena a young woman was not supposed to reveal her superior competence. However, certain non-academic areas of study, intended as subjects for serious study as well as personal amusement, provided a place where a young woman's hard work could be acknowledged and widely admired. These accomplishments did not threaten or infringe upon areas where men alone were supposed to excel. Unlike academic study (but like personal beauty), these skills were shown off to best advantage in social situations. Cultivation of these highly visible skills was universally encouraged. Thomas Jefferson wrote to his daughter in 1786, "I rest the happiness of my life on seeing you beloved by all the world, which you will be sure to be if to a good heart you join those accomplishments so particularly pleasing in your sex."<sup>1</sup> A description of Eleanor Parke Custis echoed the ideal. A Polish visitor, J. U. Niemcewicz, wrote in 1798 that "Her sweetness equals her beauty, and that is perfect. She has many accomplishments. She plays on the piano, she sings and designs better than the usual woman of America or even Europe."<sup>2</sup>

Musical training was a mandatory and an extremely showy adornment of a young woman's education. Young women

provided the entertainment for all but the most formal, state gatherings. The parent's wealth was reflected in the novelty, quality and cost of the instruments, and in the quality of musical instruction they provided their daughters. Thus displayed, young women were pushed into the musical spotlight. Eliza Parke Custis was encouraged to perform at an unusually early age. She recalled that in the early 1780s a guest at her father's house near Alexandria

. . . took delight in making me sing - I soon attain'd excellence in this science, & was always lifted on the Dinner table to sing for my father's guests - I had a good memory, & learned many songs - my father and Dr. R taught me many very improper ones, and I can now remember standing on the table when not more than 3 or 4 years old, singing songs which I did not understand - while my father and other gentlemen were often rolling in their chairs with laughter - and I was animated to exert myself to give him delight . . . And I holding my head erect, would strut about the table, to receive the praises of the company, my mother remonstrated in vain - and her husband always said his little Bet could not be injured by what she did not understand that he had no Boy and she must make fun for him, untill he had . . .<sup>3</sup>

While older girls were not called upon to discuss politics in the evenings, they were frequently called to entertain guests by singing or playing keyboard instruments. While in Petersburg in 1782, the Marquis de Chastellux received a full evening of music:

After dinner Miss Bolling played on the harpsichord and sang like an adept in music, although her voice was not agreeable. The descendant of Pocahontas (Mrs. Bolling) touched her guitar and sang like a person unskilled in music, but with a charming voice. At length I returned home, where I had still another concert,

Miss Saunders having consented to sing me some airs, accompanying herself, now on the harpsichord, now on the guitar.<sup>4</sup>

Tutor Philip Fithian gave a favorable review of seventeen-year-old Jenny Washington's musical proficiency in 1774 by writing, "She plays well on the harpsichord and spinet, understands the principles of music and therefore performs her tunes in perfect time, a Neglect of which always makes music intolerable, but it is a fault almost universal among young Ladies in the practice."<sup>5</sup>

Friends of the after-dinner performers urged music students to practice diligently. "My Dear Polly," Mary Prescott wrote to her granddaughter in 1794, "I am truly concern'd in your not going on with your Musick. Time will not wait for you, and loosing it will not do."<sup>6</sup>

Another female friend wrote fourteen-year-old Maria Nourse (daughter of Joseph and the proficient letter-writer Maria) that

I hope you apply assiduously to your Music give but application and attention, to it and you will be the Conqueror Maria - I long to hear what improvements you make in every branch of your accomplishments . . . you must know that I have pictured to myself that you will make an accomplished Charming girl by the time you are sixteen and what is still better and without which all other requirements are vain you will be good and virtuous which will give double lustre to all your charms . . . .<sup>7</sup>

The Jefferson girls were urged to set aside time for music practice in their daily routines. The daughters of Robert Carter were likewise encouraged to give application and attention to their music. "The two eldest," wrote Fithian,

"are now learning music, one to play the Harpsichord; the other the guitar, in the practice of which they spend three days in the Week."<sup>8</sup> Robert Carter frequently assigned keyboard pieces to his daughters himself.

A good deal of musical lesson-taking depended upon the availability of instructors. "Poor Fan has lost her music master," St. George Tucker lamented in 1787, "after receiving a single lesson from him."<sup>9</sup> Wishing to take lessons, Maria Carter wrote her uncle Landon Carter in 1765 that "I flattered my self I could await on you and my Brother Carter to let me Learn half a Year to play on the Harpsichord. Mr. Stadlers price in twelve Pistoles a Year."<sup>10</sup> Lelia Skipwith Carter Tucker arranged lessons for her daughter, Mary Walker Carter. In a dutiful letter to her stepfather, St. George Tucker, Mary reported "I expect Mr. Basscrere here every moment to give me a music lesson. Mama thinks he has been the means of improving all the girls, and has engaged him to give me a lesson occasionally. I shall endeavour not to let my young friends become greater proficients than myself."<sup>11</sup>

As Chastellux noted in the report of his evening musical marathon, singing often accompanied instrumental music. Fithian's description of Jenny Washington indicated "she sings likewise to her instrument, has a strong, full voice, & a well-judging Ear; but most of the Virginia-girls think it a labour quite sufficient to thump the Keys of a Harpsichord into the air of a tune mechanically, & think

it would be slavery to submit to the Drudgery of acquiring Vocal Music."<sup>12</sup> Margaret (Polly) Davenport wrote her friend Elizabeth Pelham in 1791 "I have commenced Singer, and attend a singing Master with great pleasure every other afternoon - he has already a large school, and will I hope continue here sometime."<sup>13</sup> Margaret was pleased to share the results of her lessons with Elizabeth about two weeks later when she reported that James Rind "is enchanted with 'Maria' - and when I have once sung it, begs me in the most expressive manner, 'to sing it again for him, just as I did before!'"<sup>14</sup> Perhaps Mr. Rind's interest in the selection was partially due to the fact that his sister's name was "Maria!"

The importance of dancing as an accomplishment was highlighted by the prominence it was given in formal and informal gatherings. Like music, dancing was a highly visible accomplishment; ineptness was immediately noticed by the company. Virginians directed young pupils of both sexes to the dance floor at an early age. "I suppose she will tell you to morrow is Dancing day," wrote Anne Blair regarding her ten-year-old niece's dancing enthusiasm, "for it is her thoughts by Day and her dreams by Night. Mr. Fearson was surprised to find she know so much of the Minuet step, and could not help asking if Miss had never been taught, so you find she is likely to make some progress that way . . . ."<sup>15</sup> Eliza Parke Custis treasured her time at dance class, recalling that "we had one pleasure going two days a week to the dancing school . . . I kept to

first place at the dancing school - I not only danced well, but conducted myself properly, never interfered with others & treated my Master with respect (as) he was a genteel Man . . . ."16 Dancing instruction was taken seriously. "I observe in the course of the lessons, that Mr. Christian is punctual, and rigid in his discipline," noted Fithian in 1773, "so strict indeed that he struck two of the young Misses for a fault in the course of their performance, even in the presence of the Mother of one of them!"17 Charles Carter of Cleve thought dancing was so important that he directed in his 1762 will that his sons be sent to England for their education and his daughters be "brought up frugally and taught to dance."18 Amazed at the dedication to dancing, George Grieve, the eighteenth-century translator of Chastellux's Travels, marvelled that even in the Shenandoah Valley some young women went regularly three times a week a distance of seven miles to take lessons from a French dancing master.19

Practiced and polished, young people took to the dance floor for entertainment and to further acquaintance with members of the opposite sex. In a giddy report of a recent dance at Miss Hornsby's (which lasted until four in the morning), Margaret Davenport informed her friend Eliza that

Mr. Griffin too hon'd me with the offer of his hand, but tho' I cou'd not have the pleasure of dancing sett dances with him, yet we figur'd together in many reels, several Cotillons and Minuets too, I assure you, we had many entertaining conversations, at least they were so

to me, which I make no doubt he guess'd, for their (sic) is a certain something inherent in me that irresistibly impels me to appear pleas'd, when I am so . . . .<sup>20</sup>

Despite the confines of the dancing steps, there was a freedom in dancing which accounted for part of its popularity.

"The reels, cotillions, etc., you dance with anybody you please," Robert Hunter, a visitor twenty years of age remarked, "by which means you have an opportunity of making love to any lady you please."<sup>21</sup>

Though not as socially visible or as vital to a young woman's education as music or dancing, proficiency and productivity in other areas was desirable as well. The Marquis de Chastellux remarked during his 1783 visit to Virginia that "A young lady, in her long moments of idleness, amuses herself by drawing; once a wife and mother, she still draws, that she may instruct her children."<sup>22</sup> Martha and Mary Jefferson studied drawing in more time than their "idle moments" but without great success. Their father regretted this situation. "I am sorry Mr. Clemitiere cannot attend you," he told them, "because it is probable that you will never have another opportunity of learning to draw, and it is a pretty and pleasing accomplishment."<sup>23</sup> A would-be drawing student, Mary Walker Carter, informed her parents "Mrs. Cooke expects very shortly a drawing master, and I wish to know, whether you, and Mama, would wish me to be taught. I should be very much pleased to go three months in the spring . . . ."<sup>24</sup> Eleanor Parke Custis was proficient in the subject because she presented

Niemcewicz with a "cipher composed of flowers prepared very well by herself."<sup>25</sup>

Frances Baylor Hill was continually sewing clothing, knitting, or creating pieces of fancy work. Her constant application to the needle fulfilled the dictates of the Rudiments of Taste, which proclaimed that needlework took first place "Amongst the accomplishments necessary to female character" because it had "so close a connection with neatness, which is indisputably requisite to render you comfortable to yourselves or amiable in the esteem of others."<sup>26</sup> Frances attacked her needlework and other projects with an industrious attitude much admired in Virginia society. Her 1797 diary recorded that during the year she made coats, gowns, aprons, caps, stockings and quilts. She wound cotton, wove cloth, tape, and broad binding in addition to regularly cooking special tarts and biscuits and cutting her neighbor's hair. Again this fulfilled an ideal specified by the Countess of Carlisle in the Rudiments of Taste, that is, to "pass a youth of diligence and application."<sup>27</sup> In some cases, industrious application to work was enforced. "Patty and I were kept very strictly," Eliza Parke Custis recalled, "when released from Tracy (the tutor) we were obliged to do a certain portion of needle work, & often compelled to practice Lessons of Music . . . ."<sup>28</sup> Eighteen-year-old Sarah Trebell Galt, with a little envy and no doubt greater disgust, reported "Sister has two sore fingers, which are very troublesome,

and prevent her working. I never had a sore finger in my life. I think they must be very agreeable, for are you then a lady, no work nary a thing to do 'But eat, and drink, and sleep: and what then sleep, and eat, and drink again."<sup>29</sup>

Thomas Jefferson tried to prod his daughters to industrious activity by querying them on their use of time. "How are you occupied? . . . Tell me whether you see the sun rise every day?" he wrote Mary in 1790, "How many pages a day do you read in Don Quixot? How far are you advanced in Him? Whether you repeat a Grammar lesson every day? What else you read? How many hours a day you sew? Whether you have an opportunity of continuing your music? Whether you know how to make a pudding yet, to cut out a beaf stake, to sow spinach or set a hen?" He urged Martha to similar activity by explaining that "Music, drawing, books, invention and exercises will be so many resources to you against ennui. But there are others which to this add that of utility. These are the needle and domestic oeconomy."<sup>30</sup>

Tutor John Harrower, perhaps reacting to feminine indolence he witnessed in Virginia, admonished his wife in Europe to accustom their daughter to useful activity. He directed his wife to "pray keep her tight to her seam & stockin, and any other Household affairs that her years are capable of and do not bring her up to Idleness or going about from house to house which is the first inlet in any of the sex to laziness and vice."<sup>31</sup> These suggestions all favored industry over idleness, an attitude reflected in "The

Whole Duty of a Woman." "Idleness" slept all day while  
 "Industry's"

Appetite is keen; her blood is pure and temperate,  
 and her pulse beareth even. Her house is elegant,  
 her handmaids are the daughters of neatness, and  
 plenty smileth at her table. She saunters not;  
 neither stretches herself out on the couch of  
 indolence. She crieth not, What have I to do?  
 but the work of her hands is the thought of a  
 moment. She listeth not to the gossip's tale,  
 she sippeth her tea not in scandal; but employ-  
 ment is the matter of her discourse.<sup>32</sup>

"The young ladies," wrote Ferdinand-Marie Bayard of  
 the industrious Virginia women, "love to be praised for their  
 useful talents which will make them good mothers and diligent  
 wives. They disdain anything said about the beauty of their  
 features; desirous of more flattering praises. They have  
 the noble ambition to conquer with arms what chance does  
 not give."<sup>33</sup> While beauty was not, and indeed could not  
 be, required of every young woman, the Countess of Carlisle  
 commented that "It is no inconsiderable trait in the charac-  
 ter of an amiable young lady, that she knows how to support  
 a genteel appearance."<sup>34</sup> Alice Lee Shippen, who grew up  
 at Stratford Hall in Virginia before her marriage to Thomas  
 Shippen of Philadelphia, inquired into her fourteen-year-  
 old daughter's progress in 1777. Her questions probably  
 reflect values learned during her Virginia upbringing.  
 Nancy Shippen was away at school when her mother wished  
 to know "how you have improved in holding your head and  
 shoulders, in making a curtsy, in going out or coming into  
 a room, in giving and receiving, holding your knife and  
 fork, walking and seting. These things contribute so much

to a good appearance that they are of great consequence."<sup>35</sup> Thomas Jefferson encouraged both his daughters, at tender ages, to pay attention to their potentially-genteel appearance. One comment to seven-year-old Mary commanded bluntly: "Remember too as a constant charge not to go out without your bonnet because it will make you very ugly and then we should not love you so much." Eleven-year-old Martha received more complicated instructions. In 1783, Jefferson wrote

. . . to advise you on the subject of dress, which I know you are a little apt to neglect. I do not wish you to be gayly clothed at this time of life, but that what you wear should be fine of its kind; but above all things and at all times let your clothes be clean, whole, and properly put on. Do not fancy you must wear them till the dirt is visible to the eye. You will be the last who will be sensible to this. Some ladies think they may under the privileges of dishabille be loose and negligent of their dress in the morning. But be you from the moment you rise till you go to bed as cleanly and properly dressed as at the hours of dinner or tea. A lady who has been seen as a sloven or slut in the morning will never efface the impression she then made with all the dress and pageantry she can afterwards involve herself in. Nothing is so disgusting to our sex as a want of cleanliness and delicacy in yours. I hope therefore the moment you rise from your bed, your first work will be to dress yourself in such a stile as that you may be seen by any gentleman without his being able to discover a pin amiss, or another circumstances of neatness wanting.<sup>36</sup>

Jefferson's comments sounded strikingly like Dr. Gregory's advice on the same subject: "Accustom yourselves to an habitual neatness," he wrote in A Father's Legacy to his Daughters, "You will not easily believe how much we consider your dress as expressive of your characters. Vanity,

levity, slovenliness, folly, appear through it."<sup>37</sup>

Despite the "unprofitable condition of Virginia estates" in 1798, Jefferson advised his recently married daughter Mary that "The article of dress is perhaps that in which economy is the least to be recommended. It is so important to continue to please the other . . . ." <sup>38</sup> Dr. Gregory rationalized this expense by writing that "The love of dress is natural to you, and therefore it is proper and reasonable . . . ." <sup>39</sup> Perhaps the Marquis de Chastellux stated the imperative to maintain a genteel appearance most eloquently: "But, you will say, is by dress and by exterior charms that they (young women) must establish their empire?" he asked in 1783, "Yes, sir, every women should seek to please; this is the weapon confurred on her by Nature to compensate for the weakness of her sex. Without this she is a slave, and can a slave have virtues? Remember the word decus, from which we have derived decency; its original meaning is ornament. A dirty and negligent woman is not decent, she cannot inspire respect."<sup>40</sup>

Displeasing personal habits could be remarked upon in a number of ways. Jefferson's comments expressed concern that bad habits not develop. John Coalter, tutor in the St. George Tucker household, sent personal articles - a tooth pick and a tooth brush - to his future wife Maria Rind in 1790. Flowery poems such as "On Sending Her a Tooth Pick" accompanied and commemorated the gifts.<sup>41</sup> This method of correction or suggestion was combined with

compliments. Occasionally lack of propriety in personal habits made a young woman the unfortunate center of conversation. In 1780, Martha Dangerfield Bland made several comments about the follies of current fashion and excessive makeup. St. George Tucker may well have enjoyed receiving her tea-table farce:

"Land Ma'ma did you see Miss V-g today? she had an unusual quantity of white and red" "Tis a pity Ma'ma that people dont consult the natural display of health and then perhaps they would not be so liable to discovery" "Oh! Ma'ma Miss V-g is the most Generous creature alive. she encourages every art . . ."

"Good Sirs! is it possible, that Miss V- is beholden to art for all those attractions she seems to possess? For in my life, I never saw finer hair, finer teeth, nor a more lovely complexion." "Land! Ma'ma I am utterly astonished at you, why she is a miserable plasterer. her hair looks for all the world, as if twas stuck on with birdlime, her teeth are ready to fall out, the wine is quick boon, & Miss V-s pocket (you know Ma'ma) is not loaded with Continental Bond."

Land! what a world we live in! This common place chat the sum total of a tea . . . I leave you to Judge how agreeably I can fill a letter . . . 42

Later comments indicated that the unfortunate Miss V-g had strong British sympathies, which added, no doubt, to her discredit in other areas. A contrasting description of Miss Betsy Lee, given by Fithian in 1774, indicated that she met the standards of a genteel appearance for "she sits very erect, places her feet with great propriety, her hands She lays carelessly in her lap, and never moves them but when she has occasion to adjust some article of her dress or to perform some exercise of the Fan . . . When She has a Bonnet on & Walks, She is truly elegant; her

carriage is neat & graceful, & her presence soft and beautiful . . . ."43

"The Whole Duty of a Woman" explained in 1753 that "As the elegance of dress adds grace to beauty itself, so delicacy in behavior is the ornament of the most beautiful mind."<sup>44</sup> Young women, following prescriptive patterns of education, scholarly modesty, industry and correct appearance, were also required to adopt an unassuming, affable and conciliatory behavior. Representing most eighteenth-century attitudes, Dr. Gregory wrote that "there arises a certain propriety of conduct peculiar to your sex."<sup>45</sup> The outline of proper female behavior was usually prefaced by the rationalization behind the differences in ideal male and female conduct. Lord Halifax, in his popular book The Lady's New Year's Gift, or, Advice to a Daughter, explained that

You must first lay it down for a Foundation in general, That there is Inequality in the Sexes, and that for the better Oeconomy of the World, the Men, who were to be the Law Givers, had the better share of Reason bestow'd upon them; by which means your Sex is the better prepar'd for the Compliance that is necessary for the better performance of those Duties which seem to be most properly assigned to it.<sup>46</sup>

"Nature appears to have formed the faculties of your sex," echoed James Fordyce in Sermons to Young Women, "for the most part, with less vigor than those of ours, observing the same distinction here, as in the more delicate frame of your bodies . . . ." He elaborated

. . . you yourselves, I think, will allow that war, commerce, politics, exercises of strength and dexterity, abstract philosophy, and all the abstruser sciences, are most properly the province of men . . . those masculine women that would plead for your sharing any part of this province equally with us, do not understand your true interests. There is an influence, there is an empire which belongs to you, and which I wish you ever to possess; I mean that which the heart has for its object and is secured by meekness, by soft attraction, and virtuous love.<sup>47</sup>

Virginians took these charges seriously. After listing the expenses of a trip to Baltimore, Mary Ambler wrote in 1770

From Mr. Fordyce's Sermons to Young Woman. This Paragraph is transcribed for the use of the Copiest & she begs her Daug<sup>r</sup> to observe it well all her life - If to your natural softness you join that christian meekness, which I now preach; both together will not fail, with the assistance of proper reflection and friendly advice, to accomplish you in the best and truest kind of breeding. You will not be in danger of putting your-selves forward in company, of contradicting bluntly, of asserting positively, or debating obstinately, or affecting a superiority to any present, of engrossing the discourse, of listening to yourselves with apparent satisfaction, of neglecting what is advanced by others, or of interrupting them without necessity.<sup>48</sup>

The result of this behavior implied that "all the world will love you," as Thomas Jefferson advised upon the news of Mary's engagement, "If you continue good humored, prudent and attentive to everybody, as I am sure you will do from temper as well as reflection."<sup>49</sup> Nelly Custis Lewis was described in glowing terms by Eliza Ambler Carrington, who commented "Though she has only been ten months a wife, lovely as nature could form her, improved in every female accomplishment and what is still more interesting, charming and obliging in every department that makes a woman most

charming, particularly in her conduct . . . ."50 Alice Lee Shippen passed several suggestions about proper behavior to her daughter. She urged fourteen-year-old Nancy "do remember my dear how much of the beauty and usefulness of life depends on a proper conduct in the several relations in life, and the sweet peace that flows from the consideration of doing our duty to all with whom we are connected."51

Two months later, Alice Lee Shippen requested a report of her daughter's progress. After inquiring about writing, drawing and the "graces," she remarked "These are absolutely necessary to make you shine, but above all let me know how you improve in humility, patience and love, these will make my dear Girl shine to all eternity. These are the inheritance that fadeth not away."52 Few prescriptive sources from Virginia incorporate piety or religious reverence as desirable facets of a polite young woman's personality.53 Written for a daughter's instruction, Elizabeth Foote Washington's journal is unusual for its devotional writings. Regarding her young daughter Lucinda in 1788, she wrote

. . . should I heave my dear child before she arrives to the years of discretion (sic)  
 - I hope she will read this manuscript more than once . . . & let me tell my dear child - that there is no real happiness without religion,  
 - a religion that effectually touches the heart and I sincerely hope my Child - should she live, will make it her study to walk well pleasing in the eyes of her Saviour - never be ashamed of being religious . . . .54

Upon eighteen-year-old Elizabeth Prentis's death in 1770, the Virginia Gazette eulogy stressed her exceptional piety:

Providence, whose blessings are sparingly, but wisely distributed, lent her to the world as a pattern for imitation. At a time of life when few pay more attention to religion than by conforming to its fashion, she well knew and practised its principles . . . The pious care of her amiable parents had formed her for every pleasing social intercourse of life; and whilst she held in its utmost purity and mild and pleasing conduct of a virgin, she possessed a superiority of soul which would have adorned or dignified either sex, or any station.<sup>55</sup>

Eliza's untimely death may have heightened the public impression of her religious nature.

The "mild and pleasing conduct of a virgin" implied that a woman's inherent secondary and dependent position called for yielding, pleasant, unabrasive, and, most importantly, unassertive behavior. Margaret Davenport relayed a compliment to a friend who possessed these qualities by writing that Mr. Calloway "says your countenance is the most interesting and the sweetest picture of artless innocence he ever beheld . . . ." <sup>56</sup> Jenny Washington's "easy winning Behavior" was complimented by Fithian, who wrote "She is not forward to begin a conversation, yet when spoken to She is extremely affable, without assuming any Girlish affectation, or pretending to be overcharg'd with Wit." <sup>57</sup> "One of the chief beauties in a female character, is modest reserve, that retiring delicacy, which avoids the public eye, and is disconcerted even at the gaze of admiration . . . ." wrote Dr. Gregory, "This modesty, which I think so essential to your sex, will naturally dispose you to be rather silent in company, especially a

large one."<sup>58</sup> Reasoning from these assumptions, Richard Henry Lee replied to his sister Hannah Lee Corbin's demand as to why widows and spinsters could not vote on property matters by saying "Perhaps 'twas thought rather out of character for women to press into those tumultuous assemblages of men where the business of choosing representatives is conducted."<sup>59</sup>

A modest female character not only avoided the public eye, she also needed to avoid boisterous behavior and any discussion of indelicate subjects. Even excessive laughter was frowned upon. Emma Claiborne wrote a scalding letter "to the Young Ladies of Williamsburg" in 1809. While observing the young women at a party, Emma noted their pleasing appearance and behavior until "a loud noise rous'd me from my Reverie, and on turning to the Group before me what was my Supprize and consternation on beholding those angelic faces and Forms, which I have just described, agitated by the most boisterous and violent bursts of Laughter, writ(h)ing on their seats and distorting their countenances in the most frightful manner . . . ." After her livid description she explained the reasons for her disgust:

. . . so boisterous an Expression of Mirth, is a departure from that feminine grace and dignity of which they ought never to lose sight; that tho a smile constitutes one of their principal charms, a loud laugh should be avoided as unbecoming and disfiguring. It is delightful to see the ruby lips expanding so as parcially to discover the Rows of Pearl, which they enclose; but widely extend'd Jaws and distorting Features excite the most disagreeable Ideas . . . Gold-

smith says, that the loud laugh bespeaks the vacant mind; and I would recommend the Ladies to avoid it, for fear of incurring such an imputation.<sup>60</sup>

Besides this example of obvious rudeness in company, Dr. Gregory outlined other types of behavior guaranteed to produce disgust. "We so naturally associate the idea of female softness and delicacy with a correspondent delicacy of constitution, that when a woman speaks of her great strength, her extraordinary appetite, her ability to bear excessive fatigues, we recoil at the description in a way she is little aware of."<sup>61</sup> A young woman should therefore "Assume no masculine airs. To support necessary fatigue is meritorious; but real robustness, and superior force, is denied you by nature - its semblance, denied you by the laws of decency."<sup>62</sup> According to this logic, laws of nature translated into prescribed laws of decency. Physical differences were thus responsible for differences in behavior.

When subdued behavior was the prescriptive ideal, innocence and natural reserve could degenerate into hypocritical affectation. Dr. Gregory prohibited yet another topic of discussion: "Consider every species of indelicacy in conversation as shameful in itself and as highly disgusting to us."<sup>63</sup> Such prohibitions could produce a situation similar to the one witnessed by Ferdinand-Marie Bayard in 1791. While in Frederick, Virginia, he observed

An American woman would blush if she were surprised mending the trousers of her brother, or

those of her husband. Even the name of this part of the clothing is not pronounced, and all the women use a circumlocution to refer to it. The words shirt, foot, thigh, and belly are likewise erased from the dictionary of the ladies . . . with all this reserve, somewhat affected, They are very unrestrained, among themselves . . . I was assured that in the ladies' parties, the English language was spoken . . . .<sup>64</sup>

Mrs. Chapone, while supporting subdued behavior in her Letters, warned "Let a vain young woman be told that tenderness and softness is the peculiar charm of the sex - that even their weakness is lovely and their fears becoming - and you will presently observe her grow so tender as to be ready to weep for a fly . . . ." <sup>65</sup> James Rind was glad that a young woman of his acquaintance had retained an unaffected behavior. Although Eliza Fairfax was employed in the Tucker household, Rind confessed to his sister Maria "I feel happy at her seclusion from what is called the polite part of the world hither to, because, possibly, it might have destroyed that natural gentleness of temper and of manners which is far more pleasing to your brother than the affected softness and effemacy of the young women of the present times." <sup>66</sup> With such limitations placed on a young woman's proper behavior, she could be reproached for adopting improper conduct, just as she could be reproached for carrying proper conduct to the extreme.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Jefferson to Martha Jefferson, 6 March 1786, in Betts and Bear, eds., Family Letters of Jefferson, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>J. U. Niemcewicz, A Visit to Mount Vernon in 1798 (Mount Vernon: The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, 1940), p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>Hoyt, ed., "Self Portrait: Eliza Custis," p. 93-94.

<sup>4</sup>Howard C. Rice, ed. and trans. [François Jean, Marquis de Chastellux], Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781, and 1782, vol. 2 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), p. 426.

<sup>5</sup>Farish, ed., Fithian Journal, p. 123-24. Benjamin Rush thought vocal music and dancing should not be neglected parts of a young woman's education. "I have said nothing in favor of instrumental music as a branch of female education because I conceive it is by no means accomodated to the present state of society and manners in America." His objections were due to the expense of instruments and teachers. See Rudolph, ed., Essays, p. 30, 33.

<sup>6</sup>Mary Prescott to Eliza Whiting, 24 August 1794. Blair-Banister-Braxton Papers.

<sup>7</sup>Unknown writer to Maria Nourse, 22 November 1796. Nourse Family Papers.

<sup>8</sup>Farish, ed., Fithian Journal, p. 36. Nancy Carter did not always enjoy performing. "Call in Nancy to her Guitar, says the Colonel. In She minces slow & silent from her supper - She scratches her Instrument, after a long preparation, into the Air of 'Water parted from the Sea.'" Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>9</sup>St. George Tucker to Theodorick and John Randolph, 12 June 1787. Tucker-Coleman Collection.

- <sup>10</sup>Maria Carter to Landon Carter, 2 June 1765. Carter Family Papers, Swem Library, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.
- <sup>11</sup>Mary Walker Carter to St. George Tucker, 1 November 1804. Tucker-Coleman Collection.
- <sup>12</sup>Farish, ed., Fithian Journal, p. 124.
- <sup>13</sup>P. Davenport to E. Pelham, 31 May 1791, in "Letters Addressed to Miss Elizabeth Pelham, William Blagrove, and William Pelham," p. 267.
- <sup>14</sup>P. Davenport to E. Pelham, 14 June 1791. Ibid., p. 269. Like other young Virginia women, Frances Baylor Hill frequently sang at the request of company in 1797. "The Frances Baylor Hill Diary of 'Hillsborough,' King and Queen County, Virginia, 1797," Early American Literature Newsletter, 2 (1967), p. 8, 12, 13.
- <sup>15</sup>Anne Blair to Mary Braxton, 21 August 1769. Blair-Banister-Braxton Papers.
- <sup>16</sup>Hoyt, ed., "Self Portrait: Eliza Custis," p. 98.
- <sup>17</sup>Farish, ed., Fithian Journal, p. 33-34.
- <sup>18</sup>Stanard, Colonial Virginia, p. 141.
- <sup>19</sup>Rice, ed., Chastellux Travels, p. 589.
- <sup>20</sup>P. Davenport to Miss Eliza Pelham, 24 February 1797, in "Letters Addressed to Miss Elizabeth Pelham, William Blagrove and William Pelham," p. 265.
- <sup>21</sup>Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., Quebec to Carolina in 1785-86 Being the Travel Diary and Observations of Robert Hunter, Jr., A Young Merchant of London (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1943), p. 208.
- <sup>22</sup>Rice, ed., Chastellux Travels, p. 543.
- <sup>23</sup>Thomas Jefferson to Martha Jefferson, 18 February 1784, in Betts and Bear, eds., Family Letters of Jefferson, p. 24.

<sup>24</sup>Mary Walker Carter to St. George Tucker, 28 January 1802. Tucker-Coleman Collection.

<sup>25</sup>Niemcewicz, Visit to Mount Vernon, p. 18.

<sup>26</sup>Countess of Carlisle, Rudiments of Taste, p. 30. Alice Lee Shippen wrote her daughter Nancy "Tell me how you improve in your work. Needlework is a most important branch of a female education . . . ." Alice Lee Shippen grew up at Stratford Hall, Virginia. Her comments to her daughter reflect her Virginia upbringing and current standards of the day. Alice Lee Shippen to Nancy Shippen, 22 September 1777, in Ethel Armes, ed., Nancy Shippen Her Journal Book (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1935), p. 41.

<sup>27</sup>Countess of Carlisle, Rudiments of Taste, p. 43. Alice Lee Shippen was glad her daughter "inform'd me your good Mrs. Rogers has found out a way of encouraging you in your work and pays great attention to your improvement and by way of joining her in encouraging you to be industrious, which makes so great a part of a female character." Alice Lee Shippen to Nancy Shippen, 8 November 1777, in Armes, ed., Nancy Shippen Journal Book, p. 42.

<sup>28</sup>Hoyt, ed., "Self-Portrait: Eliza Custis," p. 98.

<sup>29</sup>Sarah Trebell Galt to M. (Polly) Farquharson, 26 February 1800. Galt Personal Papers.

<sup>30</sup>Thomas Jefferson to Mary Jefferson, 11 April 1790, Thomas Jefferson to Martha Jefferson, 28 March 1787, in Betts and Bear, eds., Family Letters of Jefferson, p. 52, 35.

<sup>31</sup>Riley, ed., Journal of John Harrower, p. 76.

<sup>32</sup>"The Whole Duty of a Woman," p. 133.

<sup>33</sup>McCary, ed., Bayard Travels, p. 55.

<sup>34</sup>Countess of Carlisle, Rudiments of Taste, p. 57.

<sup>35</sup>Armes, ed., Nancy Shippen Journal Book, p. 41.

<sup>36</sup>Thomas Jefferson to Mary Jefferson, 20 September 1785, Thomas Jefferson to Martha Jefferson, 22 December 1783, in Betts and Bear, eds., Family Letters of Jefferson, p. 30, 22.

<sup>37</sup>Gregory, Father's Legacy, p. 42.

<sup>38</sup>Thomas Jefferson to Mary Jefferson Eppes, 7 January 1798, in Betts and Bear, eds., Family Letters of Jefferson, p. 152.

<sup>39</sup>Gregory, Father's Legacy, p. 42.

<sup>40</sup>Rice, ed., Chastellux Travels, p. 541.

<sup>41</sup>John Coalter to Maria Rind, 20 February 1790. Brown Coalter Tucker Papers. On March 25, 1790, John Coalter sent Maria "On Buying her a Tooth Brush."

<sup>42</sup>Martha Dangerfield Bland to St. George Tucker, 8 October 1780. Tucker-Coleman Collection.

<sup>43</sup>Farish, ed., Fithian Journal, p. 130. In a similar vein, Frances Bland Tucker received the following poem on her birthday:

"A lovelier girl I never knew,  
Than Fannie, now at sweet sixteen.

Her features classic, Greek-like, fair,  
A sculptor might be found to trace,  
And intellect is beaming there,  
Like light within a beauteous vase.

The poetry of motion makes,  
A soft-eye music, when moves;  
And from her very feet she shakes,  
A thousand nameless, little loves.

Her voice, so musical and clear,  
As touched with that old Syren tone,  
Which if a mortal did but hear,  
It drew him ever, ever on.

She is the first, I ever loved;  
My heart is not what it hath been,  
The heart which Fannie once hath moved,  
Can never be so moved again."

<sup>44</sup>"The Whole Duty of a Woman," p. 133.

<sup>45</sup>Gregory, Father's Legacy, p. 11.

<sup>46</sup>Spruill, Women's Life and Work, p. 216.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 221. Sermons to Young Women was published as follows: Boston--1767, Philadelphia--1787, New York--1789 and Boston--1794.

<sup>48</sup> "Diary of M. Ambler, 1770," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 45 (1937), p. 170.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Mary Jefferson, 14 June 1797, in Betts and Bear, eds., Family Letters of Jefferson, p. 149.

<sup>50</sup> "A Visit to Mount Vernon - A Letter of Mrs. Edward Carrington to her Sister, Mrs. George Fisher," William and Mary Quarterly, 2d Ser., 18 (1938), p. 199.

<sup>51</sup> Armes, ed., Nancy Shippen Journal Book, p. 40.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 41-42.

<sup>53</sup> Twenty-year-old Nancy Shippen Livingston listed Christian education in her 24 May 1783 "SOME DIRECTIONS CONCERNING A DAUGHTER'S EDUCATION." Ibid., p. 148-49, nos. 15, 20-24. (See Appendix III.) Benjamin Rush thought "The female breast is the natural soil of Christianity," and included "regular instruction in the Christian religion" in his suggested branches of female education. See Rudolph, ed., Essays, p. 31-32. These are both Philadelphia sources.

<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth Foote Washington, Diary, 1788.

<sup>55</sup> Virginia Gazette (Rind), 11 October 1770.

<sup>56</sup> Margaret Davenport to F. Currie, 25 May 1794. Brown Coalter Tucker Papers.

<sup>57</sup> Farish, ed., Fithian Journal, p. 123.

<sup>58</sup> Gregory, Father's Legacy, p. 23-24.

<sup>59</sup> Richard Henry Lee to Hannah Lee Corbin, 1778, in James C. Ballagh, ed., Letters of Richard Henry Lee (New York: De Capo Press, 1970), p. 392. Alice Lee Shippen was a sibling of Richard Henry Lee and Hannah Lee Corbin.

<sup>60</sup> Emma Claiborne to the Young Ladies of Williamsburg, 8 September 1809. Galt Personal Papers.

<sup>61</sup> Gregory, Father's Legacy, p. 220.

<sup>62</sup>Countess of Carlisle, Rudiments of Taste, p. 103-04.

<sup>63</sup>Gregory, Father's Legacy, p. 28.

<sup>64</sup>McCary, ed., Bayard Travels, p. 19.

<sup>65</sup>Chapone, Letters, p. 59.

<sup>66</sup>James Rind to Maria Rind, 1 June 1789. Brown Coalter Tucker Papers.

CHAPTER III  
ADVICE UPON MARRIAGE

By continually reinforcing subdued behavior while decrying affectation, Virginians raised daughters who were supposed to approach courtship with an obedient and dutiful attitude. "Lucy Gordon is a truly good girl," Lucinda Lee Orr remarked, "but nothing of the romance in her. So much the better, say I; she is much happier without."<sup>1</sup> Subdued behavior, natural reserve, and modesty required that all romantic initiative come from men. A Virginian urged Dr. Philip Mazzei, an Italian agricultural advisor to Thomas Jefferson, that he should marry Madame Martin for "by their living with me, the daughter (of Madame Martin) could never marry in this country, where the slightest suspicion of living together without being married was an abominable thing, dishonoring the man more than the woman, since he was supposed to be the seducer."<sup>2</sup> Dr. Gregory clarified this position by writing, "It is a maxim laid down among you, and a very prudent one it is, That Love is not to begin on your part, but is entirely to be the consequence of our attachment to you."<sup>3</sup> This restraint was probably difficult for some young women. Margaret Davenport felt the constraints of such suggestions as she was informed

that a "Beau" of hers "shou'd leave Town in a few days, but whether he means to return, or not, I cou'd not learn as I did not ask, tho' I wished very much to know."<sup>4</sup> Other Virginians noted and urged this retiring courtship behavior. George Washington may have suspected that seventeen-year-old Eleanor Parke Custis would fall in love with a gentleman who did not return her affection. To further inform her, and to protect her from hopeless one-sided longings, he asked her to closely examine her feelings about a particular gentleman:

Have I sufficient ground to conclude that his affections are engaged by me? Without this the heart of sensibility will struggle against a passion that is not reciprocated; delicacy, custom, or call it by what epithet you will, having precluded all advances on your part. The declaration, without the most indirect invitation of yours, must proceed from the man, to render it permanent and valuable, and nothing short of good sense and an easy unaffected conduct can draw the line between prudery and coquetry.<sup>5</sup>

According to Chastellux, the Taliaferro sisters successfully occupied this middle ground between prudery and coquetry. He commented in 1782 "These pretty nymphs are more timid and gentle than those of Diana, though they did not lead the chase, inspired a taste for it; they knew how to defend themselves from the hunters, but did not crush with their arrows those who dared look at them."<sup>6</sup>

Young women, if not leading the chase, were certainly not supposed to discourage it. In a society where most adults married at some time, relatives often nudged young women to consider marriage. "Not to be serious my Lady Ann

Frances - are you not by this time fatigued with the name of Tucker?" Mrs. Lucy Randolph wrote Anne Frances Tucker in 1798, "you had better look around you . . . ." <sup>7</sup> "My sister, has she had any more Admirers, and has she yet found one with whom she is pleased?" inquired Charles Carter, writing from medical school in Paris in 1806, "If she has not, I am afraid she has let all the good opportunities escape." <sup>8</sup>

Besides these good-humored comments encouraging marriage in general, relatives and friends offered many comments approving or disapproving possible husbands. Of course, these varied according to the individuals involved, although most comments seemed to reflect the economic promise or the personality traits of the man under scrutiny. Joseph Nourse received a favorable review by the aunt of the bride-to-be in 1784. "Mr. N. I believe firmly; from the little acquaintance I have of him, is endow'd with mental qualifications esteemable in a Husband, and in becoming a husband his good sense will ever make him worthy of your friendship, a friend in whose bosom you may repose your sole confidence, with just reliance of its never being abus'd." <sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Landon Carter's vehement statements about his son-in-law, Reuben Beale, were disfavorable. <sup>10</sup> Expressing his reluctance to give marital advice, George Washington wrote in 1783:

For my own part, I never did, nor do I believe I ever shall give advice to a woman who is setting out on a matrimonial voyage, first, because I never could advise one to marry without her own consent;

and secondly, because I know it is to no purpose to advise her to refrain, once she has obtained it. A woman very rarely asks an opinion or requires advice on such an occasion, 'til her resolution is formed; and then it is with the hope and expectation of obtaining a sanction, not that she means to be governed by your disapprobation, that she applies. In a word, the plain english of the application may be summed up in these words; "I wish you to think as I do; but if unhappily you differ from me in opinion, my heart, I must confess, is fixed, and I have gone too far now to retract."<sup>11</sup>

Letters and verbal suggestions from parents were supplemented by handbooks and articles on the subject of marriage. Many handbooks, incidentally, were written in the form of letters to children. The tenets expounded in these books were consistent with the opinions expressed by Virginia parents. Frances Baylor Hill, like many other young women, relied upon these handbooks. In 1797, Frances "read the remaining part of the day a great many entertaining letters, one describ'd a Matrimonial State very justly and explain'd it in a most beautiful stile . . . ." <sup>12</sup> Ruth Henshaw borrowed the Ladies Library by Richard Steele from the Norfolk library in 1802. In her diary, she recorded "Read 2. vol. 'Ladies Library' containing the duty of daughters, wives, mothers, Mistresses, widows, and etc."<sup>13</sup> Braced with these earnest suggestions from handbooks, relatives and friends, young women prepared for marriage.

In the broad spectrum of prescriptive writings guiding the behavior of young Virginia women, Virginians themselves were most articulate about the correct standards of wifely behavior. Most parents were concerned that the first years

of their daughter's marriages be happy and free of turmoil. Many of the suggestions about a proper wife's behavior came from fathers and mothers who were, of course, husbands and wives in their own right. Parents knew that marriage was more complicated than the following verse, copied for Ann Frances Tucker, suggested:

Oh! heavenly maid, supremely bright,  
 You are fairer than the stars of night;  
 You are the brightest of your sex:  
 To you, I would my name annex.<sup>14</sup>

With their wisdom and experience, parents cautioned young women to scale down blissful ideals to more realistic expectations. "Do not then in your contemplation of the marriage state look for perfect felicity before you consent to wed," George Washington wrote eighteen-year-old Elizabeth Parke Custis in 1794, disregarding his previous aversion to giving advice about marriage.

Nor conceive, from the fine tales the Poets and lovers of old have told us, of the transports of mutual love, that heaven has taken its abode on earth: Nor do not deceive yourself in supposing, that the only means by which these are to be obtained, is to drink deep of the cup, and revel in an ocean of love.

Love is a mighty pretty thing; but like all other delicious things, it is cloying; and when the first transports of the passion begins to subside, which it assuredly will do, and yield, oftentimes too late, to more sober reflections, it serves to evince, that love is too dainty a food to live upon alone, and ought not to be considered rather than as a necessary ingredient for that matrimonial happiness which results from a combination of causes; none of which are of greater importance, than that the object on which it is placed, should possess good sense, good dispositions, and the means of supporting you in the way you have been brought up.

Such qualifications cannot fail to attract (after marriage) your esteem and regard, into wch. or into disgust, sooner or later, love naturally resolves itself; and who at the same time has a claim to the respect, and esteem of the circle he moves in. Without these, whatever may be your first impressions of the man, they will end in disappointment; for be assured, and experience will convince you, that there is no truth more certain than that all of our enjoyments fall short of our expectations; and to none does it apply with more force, than to the gratification of the passions.<sup>15</sup>

Anne Randolph also expressed reservations about her daughter Judith's marriage to Richard Randolph. She explained to St. George Tucker, Richard's stepfather, "for at sixteen and nineteen we think every body perfect that we take a fancy to, the Lady expects nothing but condescension, and the Gentleman thinks his Mistress an Angel . . . ." She strongly felt that both Judith and Richard

. . . are apt to be sour when the delirium of love is over, and Reason is allowed to reascend her Throne, and if they are not so happy, as to find in each other, a similarity of temper, and good qualities enough to excite esteem and Friendship, they must be wretched, without a remedy. If the young People, who have been the cause of my giving you my sentiments thus freely, should ever be united, I hope they will never repent of the choice they have made.

If Anne Randolph's sentiments were expressed so clearly to the stepfather of the future groom, Judith probably heard numerous variations of these ideas during her courtship. Anne Randolph's reasoning was based on her "wish to keep my Daughters single 'till they were old enough to form a proper judgment of mankind; well knowing that a Woman's happiness depends intirely on the Husband she is united to; it is a step that requires more deliberation than Girls generally

take; or even Mothers seem to think necessary . . . ."16

Once married, the young woman was supposed to conform to the standards of wifely behavior. Joseph Nourse mused in 1782 that "the young Lady appears with additional grace in the wife."<sup>17</sup> Patrick Henry reminded his newly-married daughter Anne in 1786 that "matrimonial happiness does not depend on wealth; no, it is not to be found in wealth, but in minds properly tempered and united to our respective situations. Competency is necessary. All beyond that point is ideal." He added that a husband, "When he marries her, if he be a good man, he expects from her smiles, not frowns . . . ." Pleasing the husband involved more than smiles, it required cultivated a meek, unargumentative spirit. Henry continued, "The first maxim which you should impress upon your mind is never to attempt to control your husband, by opposition, by displeasure, or any other mark of anger."<sup>18</sup> The husband was to assume the uncontestedly dominant role in the marriage because unfortunate situations were sure to result if the wife tried to control her husband. Discussing the visit of Governor Tryon and his family from North Carolina to Williamsburg in 1769, Anne Blair speculated that "they say she rules the Roost." Lady Tryon was clearly the cause of this problem, according to Anne Blair, who continued, "it is a pity, I like her husband vastly . . . ."19

A wife was responsible for domestic tranquility in the marriage, and she could accomplish it by acting in a way calculated not to upset her husband.<sup>20</sup> "The love of a husband

can be retained only by the high opinion which he entertains of his wife's goodness of heart," wrote Patrick Henry to Anne, adding that the husband's opinion "should augment every day; he should have much more reason to admire her for those excellent qualities which will cast a lustre over a virtuous woman, whose personal attractions are no more."<sup>21</sup> The Countess of Carlisle suggested that a young wife "Make choice of such amusements, as will attach him to your company, study such occupations, as will render you of consequence to him - such as the management of his fortune and the conduct of his house; yet, without assuming a superiority unbecoming your sex."<sup>22</sup> "Harmony in the marriage state is the very first object to be aimed at," wrote Thomas Jefferson to his recently-married daughter Mary, "Nothing can preserve affections uninterrupted but a firm resolution never to differ in will and a determination to consider the love of the other as of more value than any object whatever . . . ."<sup>23</sup>

Patrick Henry advised that "Mutual politeness between the most intimate friends, is essential to that harmony which should never be broken or interrupted. How important, then, is it between man and wife?"<sup>24</sup> Mutual politeness usually called for the wife to be more polite than her husband. If marriages were beset with quarreling the wives were to blame. According to Elizabeth Foote Washington,

. . . one of my first resolutions I made after marriage, - was never to hold disputes with my husband, - never to contend with him in my opinions of things, - but if ever we differ'd in opinions not to insist on mine being right,

& his wrong, - which is too much the custom of my sex. - they cannot bear to be thought in the wrong, - which is the cause why there is so much contention in the married state, - & the Lordly Sex - they can never be in the wrong in their own opinion - therefore cannot give up to a woman but I blame my sex most - it is their business to give up to their husband . . . I think a woman may keep up the dignity of a wife and mistress of a family - without ever disputing with her husband . . . .<sup>25</sup>

"Little things, that in reality, are mere trifles in themselves, often produce bickering and even quarrels," Patrick Henry explained, "Never permit them to be a subject of dispute; yield them with pleasure, with a smile of affection."<sup>26</sup>

Thomas Jefferson echoed these conciliatory sentiments in a letter to newly-married Martha. "Your new condition," he advised, "will call for (an) abundance of little sacrifices, but they will be greatly overpaid by the measures of affection they will secure you. The happiness of your life depends now on the continuing to please a single person. To this all other objects must be secondary . . . ."<sup>27</sup>

"Besides," argued Patrick Henry bluntly, "What can a woman gain by her opposition or her indifference? Nothing. But she loses everything; she loses her husband's respect for her virtues, she loses his love, and with that, all prospect of future happiness."<sup>28</sup> Quite simply, if the marriage failed or was unhappy, it was the wife's fault.

Occasionally wives recorded suggestions about how they wished their husbands to behave. Though these comments are directed towards men, they revealed a great deal about the wife's perceived role and behavior in marriage. Elizabeth

Foote Washington wrote in 1784

. . . it is my wish that my husband should court my company - not avoid it if he can as must be the case with those men who has those teasing kind of wives, - or what else can by the meaning of men being so find of going abroad - if it was not that they are sometimes tired of their wives company, ---mine I thank God has hitherto appeared always pleas'd with being with me and I hope I shall never disgust him by any conduct of mine . . . .<sup>29</sup>

Margaret Davenport Coalter wrote a detailed outline of her expectations to her husband of four months in 1795. (See Appendix V.) By asking her husband to gently correct her and to be decisive in his actions, Margaret defined her own secondary position. Unlike Elizabeth Foote Washington's relief at merely pleasing her husband, Margaret added important qualifiers to the relationship. At the end of the lengthy, serious, and carefully composed letter she wrote "I was in a scribbling mood and scarce knew what to write, or I should not have fallen upon this subject. However I beg you will keep my documents that ~~if~~ when you transgress I may remind you of them."<sup>30</sup> Even Margaret thought her bold requests needed to be softened to make them palatable for her husband, lest they incur his displeasure.

Martha Jefferson Randolph reported to her father in 1790 that "I have made it my study to please him in every thing and to consider all other objects as secondary to that . . . ."<sup>31</sup> In 1779, shortly before her marriage, Elizabeth Foote Washington prayed "may gracious God direct and influence my heart and its affections that I may make it my study to please my husband in everything that is not

against the divine Laws . . . ."32 Elizabeth Byrd wrote her straying husband William Byrd III that "If I should ever be bless'd with seeing you, you allways may depend that I will do everything in my power, conducive to your satisfaction."<sup>33</sup> Repeated comments on these themes indicated that Virginia women took very seriously the charge "to please" their husbands.

By the time a young woman mastered the lessons of appropriate female behavior in marriage, she had passed through rigorous training preparing her for her adult feminine role. By being taught what to study, when to reveal or not to reveal the extent of their accomplishments, how to behave, and how to dress, young women were provided with a pattern of conduct reinforced by parental and social admonitions. They were encouraged to apply themselves to highly visible accomplishments where their diligence reaped its highest praise. They were encouraged to act within a narrow range of acceptable behavior which was calculated to produce young women who were "the admiration of the world and ornaments of their family."<sup>34</sup> They were groomed to please others. If young women earnestly believed these admonitions, they had to assume that any deviance from the accepted range of behavior would result in a drastic reduction of the affection and love of the people who were most important in their lives, namely parents and husbands. To dismay rather than to please implied rejection and failure.

With a deeper understanding of these educational and

behavioral imperatives, casual comments about upper-class Virginia young women take on significance: "Four of her eight children are daughters." the Marquis de Chastellux wrote of Mrs. Maria Byrd in 1782, "two of them are nearly twenty, and all are amiable and accomplished."<sup>35</sup> Appropriate behavior and appropriate achievements were the keys to becoming loved and admired young women. Ideally, parents could beam their approval; husbands nod with satisfaction. As products of their social training and education, young women were fitted for their adult role in upper-class Virginia society.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup>Orr, Journal, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Philip Mazzei, "Memoirs of the Life and Voyage of Doctor Philip Mazzei," trans. Dr. E. C. Branchi, William and Mary Quarterly, 2d Ser., 9 (1929), pp. 165-66.

<sup>3</sup>Gregory, Father's Legacy, p. 57.

<sup>4</sup>P. Davenport to E. Pelham, 17 May 1791, in "Letters Addressed to Miss Elizabeth Pelham, William Blagrove and William Pelham," p. 266.

<sup>5</sup>George Washington to Eleanor Parke Custis, 16 January 1795, in Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of George Washington, p. 93. Earlier in the letter he wrote "A hint here; men and women feel the same inclinations to each other now that they always have done, and which they will continue to do until there is a new order of things, and you, as others have done, may find, perhaps, that the passions of your sex are easier raised than allayed."

<sup>6</sup>Rice, ed., Chastellux Travels, p. 384.

<sup>7</sup>Mrs. Lucy Randolph to Ann Frances Tucker, 2 December 1798. Brown Coalter Tucker Papers. As a postscript to the letter, Lucy commented "(Wh)at a compound of curiosity is Man, surely the Holy-W(ritings do) our sex great injustice by supposing it was the original cause of all evil, for I begin to be of opinion that we are much superior. Take my advice Fanny and never be concerned with the Hes for you will find them at best a troublesome set of Beings."

<sup>8</sup>Charles Carter to Mrs. Lelia Skipwith Carter Tucker, 25 December 1806. Tucker-Coleman Collection. Charles added "My advice to her is not to marry any one who has been long in Europe, and particularly in France, Tell her I have the most utter aversion to her uniting herself to what we call, in America, an accomplished man."

<sup>9</sup>Aunt C. Y. to Maria Bull, 18 May 1784. Nourse Family Papers.

<sup>10</sup>Greene, ed., Diary of Landon Carter, pp. 56, 720, and 799-800. Landon Carter referred to Reuben Beale as a "Monster" and to his daughter Judith Carter Beale as a "deluded child."

<sup>11</sup>George Washington to Lund Washington, 20 September 1783, in Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of George Washington, p. 157.

<sup>12</sup>"The Frances Baylor Hill Diary," p. 12.

<sup>13</sup>A. G. Roeber, ed., "A New England Woman's Perspective on Norfolk, Virginia, 1801-1802: Exerpts from the Diary of Ruth Henshaw Bascom," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 88 (1978), p. 293.

Eighteenth-century writers sometimes used satire to expose the foibles of the ideal matrimonial state. The Virginia Gazette (Purdie-Dixon), 22 October 1767, printed SOCRATISSA'S comments about marriage and the education of a fine lady. (See Appendix IV.)

<sup>14</sup>B. W. Leigh to Frances Tucker, 28 May 1802. Brown Coalter Tucker Papers. Frances was married 5 June 1802.

<sup>15</sup>George Washington to Elizabeth Parke Custis, September, 1794, in Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of George Washington, p. 501. P. (Margaret) Davenport reflected this more realistic view of marriage in a report of a wedding she had recently attended: "They are an exact match, and will I doubt not jog on soberly, and serenly, till the grim tyrant Death, extends his cold arms, to receive one, or both of them - such pair's cannot I think, be said to be happy - yet they are as happy as they know how to be - & that I suppose is happiness to them," in "Letters Addressed to Miss Elizabeth Pelham, William Blagrove and William Pelham," p. 271.

<sup>16</sup>Anne Randolph to St. George Tucker, 23 September 1788. Tucker-Coleman Collection.

<sup>17</sup>Joseph Nourse to Maria Bull, 23 December 1783. Nourse Family Papers.

<sup>18</sup>Hartless, Sarah Henry, pp. 137, 135.

<sup>19</sup>Anne Blair to Mary Braxton, 21 August 1769. Blair-Banister-Braxton Papers.

<sup>20</sup>Jan Lewis, in her article "Domestic Tranquility and the Management of Emotion Among the Gentry of Pre-Revolutionary Virginia," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Ser., 39 (1982), p. 136, wrote "The private writings of the pre-Revolutionary Virginia gentry, men and women alike, disclose, however, that for them neither affection or self-expression was yet an unqualified value; both were managed and restrained in the service of a higher good, domestic tranquility."

<sup>21</sup>Hartless, Sarah Henry, p. 136.

<sup>22</sup>Countess of Carlisle, Rudiments of Taste, p. 87.

<sup>23</sup>Thomas Jefferson to Mary Jefferson Eppes, 7 January 1798, in Betts and Bear, eds., Family Letters of Jefferson, p. 151.

<sup>24</sup>Hartless, Sarah Henry, p. 137.

<sup>25</sup>Elizabeth Foote Washington, Diary, 1789. Nancy Shippen Livingston copied similar sentiments in her May 1783 journal. "This morning I read Madame de Maintenons advice to the D-de B-g. I will transcribe so much of it as it relates to the woman, because it corresponds so much with my Ideas on that subject . . . 'Do not hope for perfect happiness; there is no such thing in this sublunary state. Your sex is the more exposed to suffer, because it is always in dependence. Beg of God to guard your heart from jealousy: do not hope to bring back a husband by complaints, ill humor, or reproaches. The only means which promise success, are patience and softness: impatience sours and alienats (sic) hearts: softness leads them back to their duty. In sacrificing your own will, pretend to have no right over that of a husband: men are more attach'd to theirs than women, because educated with less constraint.'" Armes, ed., Nancy Shippen Journal Book, pp. 143-44.

<sup>26</sup>Hartless, Sarah Henry, pp. 135-36.

<sup>27</sup>Thomas Jefferson to Martha Jefferson Randolph, 4 April 1790, in Betts and Bear, eds., Family Letters of Jefferson, p. 51.

<sup>28</sup>Hartless, Sarah Henry, p. 136.

<sup>29</sup>Elizabeth Foote Washington, Diary, 1784.

<sup>30</sup>Margaret Davenport Coalter to John Coalter, 10 May 1795. Brown Coalter Tucker Papers. (See Appendix V.)

<sup>31</sup>Martha Jefferson Randolph to Thomas Jefferson, 25 April 1790, in Betts and Bear, eds., Family Letters of Jefferson, pp. 52-53.

<sup>32</sup>Elizabeth Foote Washington, Diary, November, 1779.

<sup>33</sup>Tinling, ed., Byrd Correspondence, p. 695.

<sup>34</sup>Farish, ed., Fithian Journal, p. 111.

<sup>35</sup>Rice, ed., Chastellux Travels, p. 430.

APPENDIX I

SAMPLE LETTER OF MARIA RIND

Maria Rind to John Coalter, 14 July, ca. 1790. Brown Coalter Tucker Papers. See following page.

July 17th

This moment was made happy by  
your kind letters I received yours by Billy M...  
on Saturday last. I am  
much obliged to you for  
your Father ~~my~~ leave Mr Stewart is now going

so I do not know what I would like  
you must ask will forgive me for this short one

I am well the boys are here  
and behave well as yet may heaven bless you  
I will do better next time and make you happy

Mr Stewart is going. M.B.

## APPENDIX II

### JEFFERSON'S SUGGESTED WORKS FOR A YOUNG WOMAN'S EDUCATION

Thomas Jefferson to Nathaniel Burwell, 14 March 1818.  
Woody, A History of Women's Education in the United States,  
p. 275. Starred titles indicate these works were recommended,  
or read by young women themselves in Virginia.

Les Voyages d'Anacharis  
Gillies' history of Greece  
Gillies' history of the World  
Livy in English  
Sallust, English by Gordon  
Gibbon's Decline of Rome  
Tacitus, English by Murphy  
Suteonius, English by Thompson  
Plutarch's Lives  
Lempière's universal Biography  
Histoire ancienne de Milot  
Histoire de France de Milot  
Russell's Modern Europe  
Robertson's Charles V  
Memoires de Sully  
Vie de Henri IV par Perifixe  
Louis XIV et XV de Voltaire  
Baxter's History of England  
Robertson's History of Scotland  
Robertson's History of America  
Botta's history of American Independence  
Burke's & Girardin's history of Virginia  
Joyce's Scientific Dialogues  
Histoire Naturel de Buffon  
Tully- Offices, English  
Senèque par Lagrange  
Morale et bonheur  
Stanhope's Charron on Wisdom  
\* Economy of human life  
Sterne's Sherlock & Allison's sermons  
Sermons de Masillon et Bourdaloue  
\* The Spectator, Tatler, Guardian  
Pike's Arithmetic  
Pinkerton's Geography  
Whateley on pleasure gardening  
Pope's Illiad & Odyssey  
Dryden's Virgil

- Milton's Paradise Lost  
 Telemaque
- \* Shakespeare's plays
  - Dryden's tragedies
  - Moliere, Racine, Corneille, Don Quichotte, French
  - Gil Blas
  - Contes Nouveaus de Marnontel
  - Voyages de Campe
  - The Pleasing preceptor from the German of Vieth
  - \* Pope's works
  - Thomson's seasons
  - Lowth's English grammar
  - Walker's pronouncinc dictionary
  - Dufief, French & English dictionary
  - Dufief, Nature displayed
  - Novels: Evenings at home by Mrs. Barbould
  - Miss Edgeworth's works
  - Lettres sur l'education
  - \* Vaillees du Chateau, Theatre d'education,  
 and Theatre de societe by Mme. Genlis
  - Godwin's Caleb Williams

APPENDIX III

NANCY SHIPPEN LIVINGSTON'S  
DIRECTIONS CONCERNING A DAUGHTER'S EDUCATION

Nancy Shippen Livingston, age 20, 24 May 1783. Livingston, Nancy Shippen Her Journal Book, pp. 148-49.

- 1 st. Study well her constitution and genius.
- 2 d. Follow nature and proceed patiently.
- 3 d. Suffer not Servants to terrify her with stories of Ghosts and Goblins.
- 4 th. Give her a fine pleasing idea of Good, and an ugly frightful one of Evil.
- 5 th. Keep her to a good and natural regimen of diet.
- 6 th. Observe strictly the little seeds of reason in her, and cultivate the first appearance of it diligently.
- 7 th. Watch over her childish Passions and prejudices, and labour sweetly to cure her of them.
- 8 th. Never use any little dissembling arts, either to pacify her or to persuade her to anything.
- 9 th. Win her to be in love with openness, in all her acts and words.
- 10th. Fail not to instill into her an abhorance of all "serpentine" wit.
- 11th. If she be a brisk, witty child, do not applaud her too much.
- 12th. If she be a dull heavy child, do not discourage her at all.
- 13th. Seem not to admire her wit, but rather study to rectify her judgment.
- 14th. Use her to put little questions, and give her ready and short answers.

- 15th. Insinuate into her the principles of politeness and true modesty, and christian humility.
- 16th. Inculcate upon her that most honorable duty and virtue SINCERITY.
- 17th. Be sure to possess her with the baseness of telling a Lye on any account.
- 18th. Shew her the deformity of Rage and anger.
- 19th. Never let her converse with servants.
- 20th. Acquaint her in the most pleasant and insinuating manner, with the sacred History, nor let it seem her lesson, but her recreation.
- 21st. Sett before her the gospel in its simplicity and purity, and the great Examples of Antiquity unsophisticated.
- 22 d. Explain to her the nature of the baptismal sanction.
- 23 d. Prepare her in the best manner for confirmation.
- 24th. Animate, and instruct her for the holy communion.
- 25th. Particularly inform her in the duties of a single and married state.
- 26th. Let her be prepared for the duties and employment of a city life, if her lot should be among citizens.
- 27th. See she be inform'd in all that belongs to a country life.
- 28th. Discreetly check her desires after things pleasant, and use \* her to frequent disappointments.  
\*Ro(u)sseau
- 29th. Let her be instructed to do every thing seasonably and in order, and what ever she is set to do let her study to it well, and peacably.
- 30th. Teach her to improve everything that nothing may be lost or wasted, nor let her hurry herself about any thing.
- 31st. Let her always be employ'd about what is profitable or necessary.
- 32 d. Let nothing of what is committed to her care be spoil'd by her neglect.

- 33 d. Let her eat deliberately, chew well, and drink in moderate proportions.
- 34th. Let her use exercise in the morning.
- 35th. Use her to rise betimes in the morning, and set before her in the most winning manner an order for the whole day.

When wisdom enters into her heart, and knowledge is made pleasant to her sould, "discretion shall preserve her, and understanding shall keep her."

APPENDIX IV

SOCRATISSA'S REPORT IN THE VIRGINIA GAZETTE

Virginia Gazette, Purdie Dixon, eds., 22 October 1767.

From a late ENGLISH PAPER  
to the Printer

Sir,

Dining at Lady Ramble's the other day, it was proposed, after dinner, by her Ladyship's sister, to hear Miss, who is about 11 years of age, concerning some fine points she had been instructed in relative to her duty in life; which being agreed to, her Ladyship desired Miss to stand up, and then asked the questions, and received the answers, following; and as they may be of service to other young Ladies of Quality, I have transmitted them to you.

SOCRATISSA

L.R. - My dear! pray tell me what you was brought into the world for?

Miss. - A husband.

L.R. - O, my dear! you should say to be admired.

Aunt. - Well, I vow I think my niece has given a better answer, as she came to the point directly, and brought the matter home at once.

L.R. - What is the duty of a husband?

Miss. - To please his wife.

L.R. - What is the duty of a wife?

Miss. - To please herself.

L.R. - What are the principal objects on which a fine Lady should fix her attention?

Miss. - Dress and admiration.

L.R. - What is the chief use of a fine Lady's eyes?

Miss. - To stare and ogle at the men.

L.R. - What is the business of a fine Lady?

Miss. - To play at cards, go to routs, balls, plays, operas, etc. and carry on intrigues.

L.R. - What is the religion of a fine Lady?

Miss. - To pay her devotions at Court, and make her Curtsies in the Drawing Room.

L.R. - May a fine Lady ever go to Church?

Miss. - Very seldom, and then she must be sure to sleep there, or to talk very loud, and to slander some of her acquaintance.

L.R. - What is the best book in the world?

Miss. - Hoyle on Quadrille.

L.R. - From whence come the politest fashions and the best silks?

Miss. - From France.

L.R. - Who make the best servants?

Miss. - The French.

L.R. - Very well, my dear! you don't forget I find.

Aunt. - I vow my niece is very perfect in her education, and will make a fine accomplished woman.

APPENDIX V

LETTER FROM MARGARET DAVENPORT COALTER  
TO JOHN COALTER

Margaret Davenport Coalter to John Coalter, 10 May  
1795. Brown Coalter Tucker Papers.

You know what to expect from me, as you have seen my character of a good wife. Suppose I tell you now, what I, in my turn, expect, and how you may best please me and make me happy. - Thus then I begin -

Let me ever have the sweet consciousness of knowing myself the best beloved of your heart - I do not always require a lover's attention - that wou'd be impossible, but let it never appear by your conduct that I am indifferent to you. That I may never suspect a dimunition of your affection, the following things are necessary-

You must never, when I say or do anything you do not entirely approve, brood over it in silent dissatisfaction; but always tell me candidly of it. These little reproofs must be delivered in the gentlest terms and softened with all the tenderness you are master of. Any little weaknesses incident to the sex, and to me, who am the weakest of the weaker sex, must be smoothed with the tenderest indulgence and when I make a request not proper, or not in your power, to be granted, let the denial be gentle tho' decisive - Never praise too much in another woman any quality that you know I am particularly deficient in. This would hurt me more than you can easily imagine. Love my friends as you would your own, do not be too fond of company at home or abroad, in sickness redouble your soothing attention, and never speak harshly (unless she proves a vixen) to the wife of your bosom. If all this is observed by you, I can never suspect you of want of affection, but if any one article is grossly and continually violated, I should fear myself not as much beloved as I could wish.

And now for some other articles which regard not to your affection for me, but point more generally to your conduct as a husband. When I wish to consult with you on any matter I think of importance, or ever put a serious question to you, if you should not be in a humour to give me y<sup>r</sup> attention, tell me immediately, and I will defer it until some other time, but never answer carelessly as if what I asked was a matter of no consequence. Give me a

decisive reply if in your power, if not, "tell me the reason why." Pray, I beseech you fester me not with unnecessary delays, and tell me not of two or three days, weeks, or months, when the present moment could be better - be decisive in all your words and deeds of any consequence, and ever preserve that energy which is necessary to keep in action those good qualities which were not given to us to lie useless and unimproved. In trifles, be trifling, to trifle agreeably is sometimes very pleasing, but in everything of moment be ardent, firm and decisive. All this I think you now are, continue but so, and I shall love you almost too much . . . .

I was in a scribbling mood and scarce knew what to write, or I should not have fallen upon this subject. However, I beg you will keep my documents that ~~if~~ when you transgress I may remind you of them . . . .

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