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THOMAS RODERICK DEW:
DEFENDER OF THE SOUTHERN FAITH

By

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PREFACE

When an historical figure is identified with a particular cause, the passage of time usually removes the garden of that man's life, leaving only the dried stalk of a single great effort. To gain an understanding of that stalk, it is necessary to recreate the garden. Thomas Roderick Dew was the first of the comprehensive defenders of slavery in nineteenth century America, but his defense was an early effort from a pen which continued to be productive. During his twenty-year career as professor and president of the College of William and Mary, he wrote numerous essays and articles on economic issues of state and national concern. As the South responded to Northern criticism of its institutions, a cult emphasizing Southern values was developed, to which Dew contributed several justifications. A study of his life thus reveals a scholarly, well-rounded individual, neither restricted nor dominated by his early slavery essay.

Such a complete picture of Dew has never previously been attempted, largely because of the paucity of source material. No direct family line has survived to preserve Dew's papers, less than two hundred of which are now collected at the College of William and Mary. In addition, a Williamsburg newspaper was published during only two of the

years which Dew spent in that community. Further investigation, however, has reduced this formidable barrier. One source of information is Dew's published writings. He wrote in an age of anonymous contributions to newspapers and magazines, and although one can never be certain that the list of Dew's works is complete, references in private letters have made it possible to identify positively several articles which have not previously been attributed to him. An issue-by-issue perusal of Richmond and other Virginia newspapers for a thirty-year period has provided some record of Dew's public activities. Manuscript collections of correspondents or persons connected with the College of William and Mary have yielded occasional letters by Dew and references to him. And a diary covering six months of Dew's first European visit has proved to be of great value.

The lack of readily available materials also increases my indebtedness to a number of individuals and institutions. The staffs of Alderman Library of the University of Virginia, Earl Gregg Swem Library of the College of William and Mary, and the Virginia State Library have been very gracious in providing items which were invariably in the most remote locations. Mr. J. Franklin Dew of Richmond, a collateral descendant, not only made available manuscripts still in the possession of the Dew family, but also enthusiastically introduced

me to people and places in King and Queen County. Mr. Robert T. Hawkes, Jr., Mr. Herbert L. Ganter, Dr. Tipton R. Snavely, and Dr. Bernard Mayo have offered many welcome suggestions and source leads during the last three years. Dr. Joseph Kett kindly consented to serve as second reader of the paper. The heaviest burden, that of transforming my blind alleys, chuck holes, and winding lanes into a servicable avenue, has been cheerfully borne by my advisor, Dr. Paul M. Gaston. My sincere appreciation goes to each of these persons; I have only myself to thank for whatever errors the study contains.

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CHAPTER I

EDUCATION AT HOME AND ABROAD

Very few foreigners traveled on foot along the country roads of the northern Italian states in the spring of 1826, and consequently the two young Americans attracted many curious stares as they made their way past farms and through villages. Their knapsacks, broad-brimmed white hats, umbrellas and walking sticks convinced the natives that the two must be "tailors, painters, or poor poets."[1] Before they spoke, they were often taken for Englishmen or Germans; and afterward, for Frenchmen. But Thomas Roderick Dew came from King and Queen County, Virginia, and his fellow American, a Mr. Post, from New York State. They had met first in Paris and then again, by accident, as each was about to leave Marsailles for Italy, anxious for a traveling companion.

The identity of Mr. Post remains a mystery; after several months with Dew, the two resumed their separate itineraries. For Dew, the tour of Italy marked the end of two years in Europe, and he would soon return to Virginia.

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[1]An unpublished diary of Thomas Roderick Dew, recorded during a portion of his visit to Europe, 1824-1826, and now in the possession of J. Franklyn Dew, Richmond, Virginia. Hereinafter cited as Dew Diary.

He had embarked for Europe in 1824 after receiving a master's degree from the College of William and Mary, partially in the hope of strengthening his weak respiratory system. But the experience was also an educational one, akin to the Grand Tour of previous generations. His observations of European society and culture vivified some of the textbook accounts which he had studied at William and Mary. The cultural confrontation also provided the opportunity for a contrast with American institutions, and in describing the latter for inquisitive foreigners, he revealed the depth and completeness of his education.

That education began in King and Queen County, where Thomas R. Dew was born on December 5, 1802. Seven generations of the Dew family had resided in Virginia, beginning with Thomas Dew, a native of England, who represented Nansemond County in the House of Burgesses and served on the Governor's Council from 1642 to 1660.[2] One branch of the family had moved to Maryland by 1763, where Thomas Roderick Dew's father, also named Thomas, was born. Within a few years the Dews returned to the Old Dominion and, in 1780, seventeen year old Thomas enlisted in the army in time to see action at "Gates Defeat" and at Guilford Court House, in North Carolina.[3] A decade later, established as a King

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[2]Ernestine Dew White, Genealogy of Some of the Descendants of Thomas Dew (Privately printed, Greenville, South Carolina, 1937), 32.

[3]Ibid., 88-89.

and Queen County planter, Dew married Lucy Gatewood, daughter of Chaney Gatewood, also a planter in the county.[4]

"Dewsville," the plantation to which Thomas Dew brought his bride in 1793, lay in the northwestern end of elongated King and Queen County, between the village of Newtown and the Mattaponi River. The house, which stood on a rise of ground, was a brick and frame structure, with hand-hewn solid beams and weatherboard, solid panel shutters, large chimneys and recessed windows. Box walks, gardens, orchards, slave quarters and stables surrounded the house.[5] By 1806, when Thomas Dew paid taxes on 623 1/3 acres of land, from the estate of his father, he also was taxed for eleven slaves over the age of twelve, a number which increased to twenty-four by 1818.[6]

The childhood of Thomas Roderick and his brothers and sisters was thus spent in an atmosphere of increasing comfort. In other ways, too, it was a fairly typical life for a prosperous Virginia family of the early nineteenth century. There were visits to the mountain watering spots and such

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[4]Lenora Higginbotham Sweeney, "The Ancestry of Lucy Gatewood, Mother of Thomas Roderick Dew, Thirteenth President of William and Mary College," William and Mary Quarterly, 2nd. ser., XXII (April, 1942), 190.

[5]Hattie Belle Gresham, "Dewsville and Providence," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XLVI (April, 1938), 112.

[6]White, Genealogy, 76; King and Queen County Tax Records, 1806, 1818, Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia.

attractions as the Natural Bridge during the summer months.[7] Thomas Dew served as a deacon of Upper King and Queen Baptist Church, which claimed about five hundred members, half of them slaves, and Thomas Roderick wrote three decades later of the "great pleasure" with which he had listened to the "pulpit discourses" of the Reverend Andrew Broaddus.[8] In an ecumenical spirit, Thomas Dew named two of his sons John Wesley and Luther Calvin.

Formal education was emphasized at Dewsville. Large bookcases were built into the wall on either side of the parlor fireplace, and evidence suggests that they were filled.[9] William Boulware, a friend and neighbor of the Dew boys, later recalled that Thomas Roderick was very fond of literature at an early age, and that in the country school which they attended, he was regarded with intense interest and a certain degree of awe, for he was "so often spoken of as a youth of great promise, a child of higher destiny."[10] In 1814, Thomas Dew, who had interrupted his

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[7]Dew Diary, 13, 47.

[8]The Bulletin of the King and Queen County Historical Society of Virginia, Number 13, July, 1962; Dew to Rev. Andrew Broaddus, October 7, 1844, in J.B. Jeter, The Sermons and other Writings of the Reverend Andrew Broaddus, with a Memoir of His Life (New York: Lewis Colby, 1852), 60-61.

[9]Gresham, "Dewsville and Providence," 112; Dew to Franklin Dew, December 3, 1841, Dew Family Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary.

[10]Richmond Enquirer, October 23, 1846. The country school mentioned was probably the one conducted at "Spring Farm," the home of Col. Reuben M. Garnett near Newtown. In 1819 Boulware, as well as John Wesley and Philip Dew,

agricultural pursuits to serve as a captain in the war against England, sent his oldest son, William, to the College of William and Mary. So pleased was the father with his son's performance that Thomas Roderick once observed, had his father "begotten as many sons as old Priam," he would have sent them all to William and Mary.[11] Eventually all six of the Dew brothers attended the College; Thomas, the second to do so, traveled to Williamsburg to matriculate in October, 1818, two months prior to his sixteenth birthday.

Located midway on the peninsula between the James and York rivers, Williamsburg was a town of about 1500 persons. When the community was laid out at the end of the seventeenth century to serve as Virginia's colonial capital, the recently chartered college was made an integral part of the design.[12] Williamsburg had been much more peaceful since the removal of the capital to Richmond at the end of the colonial period, but the presence of the college saved the community from becoming a sleepy county seat. Standing at the western end of Duke of Gloucester Street, the campus,

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were among the students there. Russell B. Gill, "Secondary Education in King and Queen County, Virginia, 1691-1938." (Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Virginia, 1938).

[11]Undated [1845] manuscript copy of a speech, Dew Family Papers. William Dew graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School and returned to practice his profession in his home county.

[12]The College was chartered in 1693 by King William III and Queen Mary of England.

which was to be so familiar to Dew for the remainder of his life, consisted of three main buildings. The "College" was a three story, dormered structure after the style of Sir Christopher Wren, containing classrooms and dormitories in the main section and a chapel and dining hall in two rear wings. Facing each other at either side of the front lawn were similar Georgian buildings, the President's House, built in 1732, and the Brafferton, constructed a decade earlier and used as a residence for students and faculty.[13] In the center of the yard stood a marble statue of Norborne Berkeley, Baron de Botetourt, a colonial governor of Virginia and benefactor of the College.

Dew and most of the forty-nine other students enrolled in 1818 were striving for the bachelor of arts degree, awarded after three years of study, which would, according to the College catalogue, result in the student's having "a complete knowledge of Mathmatics, including Algebra, Fluxions, and the Projections of the Sphere," as well as "a knowledge of Mechanical and Chemical Philosophy, Optics and Astronomy, . . . Logic, Belles-Lettres, Rhetoric, Law of Nature and Nations, Metaphysics, and Political Economy."[14]

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[13]The Brafferton was named after the English country estate of the scientist Sir Robert Boyle, who willed funds to William and Mary and Harvard for the establishment of schools to educate Indians.

[14]_The Officers, Statutes, and Charter of the College of William and Mary_ (Philadelphia: William Fry, 1817), 59-60.

Such a course of study represented a considerable shift of emphasis from the classical, religiously oriented curriculum which had characterized the William and Mary of the eighteenth century and still existed in many of the country's colleges.

The prescribed courses were encompassed in the faculty chairs of Mathematics, Natural and Chemical Philosophy, and Moral and Political Philosophy, in addition to the professional chair of law. Because of close and frequent contact with their teachers, the students were quite familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of the faculty members. Ferdinand S. Campbell, the popular professor of mathematics, was characterized in rhyme by his students:

> Here comes old Ferdy,
> With rectilinear walk,
> His head full of diagrams,
> His pockets full of chalk.[15]

Dr. Patrick K. Rogers, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, arrived in Williamsburg in 1819 with his family to assume the professorship of natural and chemical philosophy and to take up residence at the Brafferton. One of Dr. Rogers' sons, William Barton Rogers, a classmate of Dew, compared the third member of the faculty, Professor of Moral and Political Philosophy John Augustine Smith, to "cold, changeful,

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[15]William B. Rogers, Life and Letters of William B. Rogers, edited by his wife (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1896), I, 19.

blustering weather."[16] Smith, a British-trained medical doctor who also served as president of the College, incurred the displeasure of another student for leaving his senior class "in the lurch" and going to Richmond for a month, and a third student complained that Smith fulfilled his academic duties impatiently during the hunt season so that he could, almost daily, ride from town booted and spurred, with dogs barking and horn sounding.[17] To the latter charge, a Smith supporter countered with the affirmation that the professor equally enjoyed hunting down a point of casuistry, or a question of metaphysical science.[18]

It was this colorful and controversial John Augustine Smith who became Thomas R. Dew's mentor at William and Mary. Many of the texts assigned by Smith, including Emmerich de Vattel's Law of Nature and Nations, Dugald Stewart's Philosophy of the Human Mind, and Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations, would be used by Dew when he succeeded Smith on the faculty within a few years, and the latter's influence on the boy from King and Queen County must have been great. In a syllabus of lectures published in 1817, Smith had asserted, "From the only political chair in the

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[16]William B. Rogers, to Patrick K. Rogers, January 20, 1827, Ibid., 39.

[17]Alexander H.H. Stuart to his father, January 31, 1825, Alexander H.H. Stuart Papers, Alderman Library, University of Virginia; "Alumnus," Richmond Enquirer, July 27, 1824.

[18]"Honestus," Richmond Enquirer, August 3, 1824.

Union, the purest principles of republicanism should undoubtedly be promulgated," and he urged caution lest either extreme of consolidation or dismemberment should endanger the Union, though the latter would be the more desirable if any disruption should occur.[19] He stressed the need for balance among the three branches of the federal government, to assure the survival of the Constitution, a compact whose framers were "the best practical politicians this world has ever seen."[20] Smith's students could hardly miss the emphasis on constitutional balance, which was to become a mainstay of Southern political writers during the next four decades.

The small number of students, most of whom lived in the "College," assured that a closeness would prevail among them. Dew roomed for a time with Thomas Hawes of King William County, and according to tradition, during a schoolboy quarrel one day, "Tom Dew declared somewhat grandiloquently that he 'always believed in giving the devil his due,' whereupon Tom Hawes disgustedly replied, 'as far as I care the devil can take you as soon as he pleases.'"[21] It was not the last time that Dew endured a play on his name.

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[19]John Augustine Smith, Lectures on Government (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson and Son, 1817), 7, 15-16.

[20]Ibid., 32.

[21]Elizabeth Hawes Ryland, "A Nineteenth Century Schoolboy's Plaint," William and Mary Quarterly, 2nd Series, XXII (October, 1942), 416.

William B. Rogers wrote of his fellow students in 1819, "with the exception of about eight, there was perhaps never an assemblage of young men so totally destitute of genius and so miserably deficient in understanding."[22] In justice to Dew's peers, it can be said that some, perhaps among the eight singled out by Rogers, were to have notable careers. Rogers himself would later teach at William and Mary and at the University of Virginia before founding the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Wyndham Robertson would serve as governor of Virginia, John A. Davis would become professor of law at the University of Virginia, and Richard K. Crallé would become a widely read editor.

Dew was listed among the few students "best in their respective classes" at the conclusion of both semesters in 1818-1819, and again in the spring of 1820.[23] By then it seemed possible that he could become the first student to complete the A.B. requirements after only two years of study.[24] There remained the obstacle of final examinations in June, which were conducted privately in class and then publicly. The latter were understandably more popular with the public than with the students, one of whom feared that

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[22]William B. Rogers to James Rogers, December 22, 1819, Rogers, Life and Letters, I, 17.

[23]William and Mary Faculty Minutes, 1817-1830, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary, 30, 36, 43.

[24]Richmond Enquirer, October 17, 1846. The source of the "first" reference is Robert Saunders, a faculty colleague of Dew.

a number of strangers in town for Chancery Court proceedings would "take it into their heads, by way of amusement, to honor the Examination by their presense."[25] Whether because of poor performances at those examinations or for other reasons, the successful candidates for graduation were narrowed to two.

On the morning of July 4, 1820, the Visitors, faculty, and students of the College, accompanied by the Williamsburg Volunteer Troop of Cavalry, marched in procession from the College down Duke of Gloucester Street to Bruton Parish Church for the annual commencement exercises. By tradition each candidate for the baccalaureate degree delivered an oration on this occasion, and the first student speaker, Benjamin F. Stewart of Westmoreland County, discoursed on "The Advantages of the Study of Languages, and more Especially of the Latin and Greek Classics."

The only other graduate in 1820 was Thomas R. Dew, whose oration topic, "On Science and the Tendency of Philosophical Knowledge to Enlarge the Views and Improve the Condition of Man," suggested a scanning of the whole liberal arts field. He began with a brief account of the influence of science on the "useful arts," and then related it to politics and morals, with appeals to history and

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[25]Wyndham Robertson to William Robertson, June 18, 1820, Wyndham Robertson Papers, Microfilm edition, Virginia State Library.

natural law. Having traced the downfall of the ancient republics to the ignorance of the rights of man and the principles of genuine liberty, he concluded with a eulogium on the American Constitution, and the durable and glorious prospects for the government, arising from the effects of the diffusion of science. Following these displays of "impressive elocution" and "graceful gestures," the two candidates received their diplomas from President Smith, and Dew's undergraduate days came to an end.[26]

He did not remain away from the College for long, however, for on the fourth anniversary of his first commencement he was awarded a master of arts degree from William and Mary. The requirements for that degree were "an intimate acquaintance" with the liberal arts in general or research in a particular field.[27] This meant in practice that for the required two years of residence, the student engaged in private reading and study with an advisor, who in the case of Dew was Professor Smith.

The exact nature of the preparation which led to Dew's second degree is not recorded, but it is known that the College was in a state of depression during his graduate years. The enrollment had dropped to about twenty students, and only one student qualified for a baccalaureate degree in 1824.[28] Other schools were feeling the effects of the panic

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[26]Norfolk American Beacon, July 21, 1820.

[27]Officers, Statutes, and Charter of the College, 60.

[28]William and Mary Faculty Minutes, 1817-1830, 162.

of 1819 and the anticipated competition of the University of Virginia, to which could be added, in Williamsburg, an unhealthful climate and a remote location. Early in July, 1824, a meeting of Richmond citizens pledged assistance to the College should it move to that city, and the Richmond site was recommended to the Board of Visitors by President Smith.[29] Out of the ensuing confusion a compromise was salvaged, combining another effort to revive the College at Williamsburg with two changes of administrative policy. The rule requiring a student to give information against his fellows would be repealed, and the supervisory authority of the president over the other professors would be abolished.[30] Such changes suggest that internal as well as external factors may have been weakening the College, and that President Smith was not without some responsibility.

The distress of his alma mater surely concerned Dew who, a decade later, was still in sympathy with suggestions for the removal of the College to Richmond.[31] In the summer of 1824, however, his thoughts turned elsewhere. A pulmonary disease, which was to threaten Dew in its latent form for the remainder of his life, was detected, and his worried parents arranged for him to visit Europe in the

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[29]Norfolk American Beacon, July 6, 12, 1824.

[30]Richmond Enquirer, July 9, 1824.

[31]Dew to William B. Rogers, April 23, 1834, Rogers, Life and Letters, I, 110.

hope that travel would restore his health.[32] The passport which arrived at Dewsville from the Secretary of State's office described a young man 6' 2½" tall, with light hair, a high forehead, and an oval face.[33]

Where Dew visited is less certain than why he went to Europe. There is no evidence that he studied in a German university, contrary to the often repeated claim, and although he may have traveled in that country, he seems not to have learned the German language.[34] He did visit England and France, where he attended the theater and toured museums. He was also just twenty-three years old, and he became entranced by a young girl from Marsailles who lived at the Paris boarding house in which he resided. When the time came for his departure to Geneva, the leave-taking was a difficult one, and nine days later she followed him to Switzerland. Away from the eyes and ears of the other boarding house residents, they enjoyed each other's company, making their way to Lyon and then to Marsailles.[35]

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[32]Richmond Enquirer, October 23, 1846.

[33]National Archives, Passport Division, Washington, D.C. The passport is dated September 29, 1824.

[34]Thomas R. Dew, A Digest of the Laws, Customs, Manners, and Institutions of the Ancient and Modern Nations (New York: D. Appleton & Co.), 208, 457; Dew to John Millington, September 21, 1837, A Letter from President Thomas R. Dew to Professor John Millington (Williamsburg: King & Queen Press, 1964).

[35]Dew Diary, 97-99.

From that French coastal city Dew planned to embark for Leghorn, in Italy. The prospect of traveling alone was a dismal one, and he was overjoyed when one morning he received a caller in the person of a fellow American, Mr. Post of New York. They had met in Paris and made tentative plans to go on to Pisa together. To Dew, Post was prudent, economical, intelligent and agreeable, "just such a character as I wished for a companion."[36] After a delay, the ship sailed rather suddenly, and a disconsolate Dew was deprived of a final good-bye from the young lady in Marsailles.

Once the vessel had arrived in Leghorn, there were too many distractions for Dew to long mourn his loss. In fact, he rhapsodized so frequently on the beauties of the Tuscan women that when he happened to ask Post jokingly where the latter would send him as American minister when he became President, Post assured him it would not be any place where there were ladies.[37]

Travel was in itself a real adventure, and not the least problem was finding adequate lodging each night. Often a village would have only one inn, and that by a broad interpretation of the word. Late one afternoon in April, 1826, while en route from Rome to Florence, Post and Dew found themselves in such a village. Too tired to

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[36] Ibid., 96.

[37] Ibid., 4, 15.

walk the five mountainous miles to the next town, they reluctantly climbed the steps of the only inn, over the stable which occupied the first story. The sight of six or eight beggardly natives (the kind Dew described as willing to stab one for a few coins), seated at the door of the "miserable affair," did not add to the travelers' peace of mind. They were shown their room, which contained four beds, and decided that they would put one of the extra beds in front of the door during the night as a security measure. They were about to carry out this plan after a very poor dinner when there was a knock at their door, and the elderly proprietress inquired if they would permit two oxen drivers who had just arrived to spend the night with them. When they refused, she took away one of the beds, the one with which they were planning to barricade the door. Although the old lady eventually brought a stick to bar the door, the young Americans slept very fitfully and departed in the morning "thankful that our throats had not been cut" during the night.[38]

Disadvantages of a different nature confronted Dew and his companion on the nights which they spent in monastaries. The religious orders of Italy perpetuated the centuries-old custom of accomodating travelers, but as Dew observed after one meagre monastary meal, "when we are with Romans I suppose we must do as Romans do."[39] While in Assisi, he and Post

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[38] Ibid., 48-50.

[39] Ibid., 68.

were guests of the Franciscan monks, and after a day of sightseeing, returned to their rooms in the monastary. Describing the scene, Dew wrote:

> of all the gloomy places I have ever visited, this was the most so. The very atmosphere seemed impregnated with melancholy. The monastary is vast. A dreary silence reigns throughout, You are thrown into deep contemplation. The walls are hung around with paintings - the Virgin, crucifixion & the extacies [sic] of St Francisform the principal subjects. The intolerable silence which here prevails is sometimes interrupted by the slow pace of the Monk who walks forth from his cell clad in his loose gown of the coursest [sic] brown cloth with a hood attached to it & serving for hat, no shirt nor stockings & looks more like the spirit who walks forth from among the tombs than [a] human being. Such was the character who came to our door & brought us the welcome news that supper was ready.[40]

Later that same evening the somberness again overwhelmed Dew, and had he not fallen asleep from sheer exhaustion, he would likely have been kept awake by the numerous paintings of the bleeding, crucified Christ, and of decapitated saints. The night's experience had value, however, for "it has confirmed me in what I have always believed, that I should never be happy banished from the intercourse and sweets of society. Solitude is a remedy which increases the evil or cures by substituting another so I will have none of it."[41]

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., 70.

Although Dew appreciated the role of the Roman Catholic Church in preserving works of art and literature, he came to have a very low opinion of the Church's influence on the people. The monks themselves seemed idle most of the time, and the monastaries were clearly an impediment to the national prosperity - Gibbon had attributed to them one of the causes of the fall of the Roman Empire, Dew noted.[42] The people in the Roman states appeared more unhealthy and oppressed than anywhere else in Europe, and he assigned the responsibility to the "mongrel monster of church & state combined," which assessed very heavy taxes and provided the worst government in Italy. Dew, good Baptist that he was, found it difficult to believe that people could accept the many "gross absurdities" of the Roman Catholic faith. He apparently saw the Pope in person while in Rome, for he described him as venerable-looking and reputedly pious, but now near death from the piles, in his paleness resembling old Mrs. Martin of King William County. For many reasons, then, Dew could "say with pleasure farewell to the Popish dominions."[43]

Dew not only responded to what he found unique in Europe; he also talked about what he had temporarily left behind in America. One afternoon in Pisa he and Post

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[42] Ibid., 69.

[43] Ibid., 82-84. Old Mrs. Martin was the grandmother of Dew's former roommate, Thomas Hawes.

called on the "black princesses of St. Domingo." For several hours the future pro-slavery advocate chatted with the inn-keeper's daughter who had married the Negro Christophe and become Empress of St. Domingo, fleeing to Europe with her two daughters after the 1820 insurrection during which the emperor had taken his own life.[44] Nor was this the first visit with the princesses, for the conversation began with a reference to the Countess Guidi of Florence, to whom the Empress had given Dew and Post a letter of introduction. The Countess in turn had obtained for the Americans an invitation to a ball at the palace of Prince Borghese, a former brother-in-law of Napoleon. The daughter who was present that day asked how the United States regarded Napoleon, and Post replied that of the two political parties there, the one which styled itself republican and was the more numerous, was the decided Napoleonist. Asked which party he adhered to, Dew answered that he was for Napoleon, that he was from one of the most republican states of the union, and that candor forced him to confess that he favoured "the new order of things in Europe." That order had placed Napoleon on the throne, and although as despotic as any monarch of Europe, he was so largely by the will of his subjects.[45]

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[44]The Empress, Marie-Louise, and her daughters, Amethiste and Athenaire, are buried in a Capuchin convent in Pisa, Charles Moran, Black Triumvirate (New York: Exposition Press, 1957), 140-148.

[45]Dew Diary, 18-19.

When the princess learned that Post was from New York, she said she had been informed that the most moderate and reasonable patriots were to be found around New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Describing the conversation later, Dew wrote:

> Here I felt my state pride rising within me and told [her] I doubted very much if any state in the Universe in this respect could be ranked higher than Virginia. In fact I now saw she was aware that with Virginia & Maryland commenced the slave holding section of our country. I saw that great opprobrium of our country, that great cause of regret with the Philanthropist, slavery, weighed heavily on her mind. All her conversation now manifested a determined tendency towards this subject. I saw it would come upon the carpet and prepared myself to justify as well as I could my country. It is a subject most sore and galling to the American and with reluctance does he touch it. But when it is brought forth unsought for, perhaps it is the duty of the American to offer his antagonist those paliatives, those apologies which his country can certainly lay claim to, for after all she is not without her defense.[46]

The princess explained that she would like very much to visit the United States, but that the existence of slavery and probable race prejudice there would prevent her from ever making such a trip. In fact, when she, her mother and sister were about to flee St. Domingo, they had preferred any other country over the United States. She said what a pity it was that a country which had gained its independence by so glorious a revolution should allow within itself an evil which disgraced humanity.

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[46] Ibid., 19-20.

Dew agreed that it was indeed a calamity, the greatest of the country, and bitterly was it lamented. Everything in the country's power was being done to improve the situation, he continued; the northern states, where few Negroes resided, had liberated their slaves, and the slave trade had been legally declared piracy. In the southern states, however, the number of slaves was so great that sudden emancipation would prove ruinous to both races. There were colonization societies, he acknowledged, but Dew placed little hope in them, for there were nearly two million slaves in the United States, far too many to "disgorge" on any part of the world. To the suggestion by the Empress that St. Domingo could accomodate that number and more, Dew responded that emancipation and exportation could not be effected all at once, partially because of the Negro's rapid birth rate. He hoped, however, that his country would do all in its power to ameliorate the condition of the slaves, noting finally that, after all, the sin of introduction lay not with the Americans but with the English. The English pronouncements on behalf of freedom, he and the princesses agreed, were hypocritical when compared with English sanction of slavery in the West Indies. The afternoon's conversation concluded with praise of the lack of corruption in the United States and the frequency of it in Europe, often revealed at the customs stations.[47]

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[47] Ibid., 21-24.

The responsibility for arguing with customs officers and innkeepers fell entirely on Dew after he and Post parted company at Bologna in May, 1826. Dew traveled on to Venice and Milan in June, but his date of embarkation for the United States was fast approaching, and he sailed for home during the summer. He had benefited physically from his travels, for although the disease was not conquered, its spread had been arrested. And the entire European experience had been an instructive one; from it Dew would often draw illustrations during the teaching career which lay before him.

CHAPTER II

THE EMERGENCE OF A POLITICAL ECONOMIST

Writing three years after his return from Europe in the summer of 1826, Dew observed "I know too well the pangs which even a temporary absence from our homes, friends, and relatives, may occasion, not to be impressed fully with the extent of the sorrow and affliction of those who part forever from the scenes of their youth."[1] By the time these sentiments were recorded, Dew's life had fallen into a pattern which preserved, to a large degree, the scenes of his own youth. Home would always be Dewsville, and his career would be centered in Williamsburg and his alma mater.

John Augustine Smith had announced to the Board of Visitors at the conclusion of the 1825-1826 academic session that he was resigning from the William and Mary faculty to accept a position at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York. During the summer there was speculation that the Visitors would divide the chair of moral philosophy, which Smith had held, and such proved to be the case.[2] In

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[1]Thomas R. Dew, Lectures on the Restrictive System, Delivered to the Senior Political Class of William and Mary College (Richmond: Samuel Shepherd & Co., 1829), 44.

[2]Richmond Enquirer, September 15, 1826

October the Board met and selected the Reverend William Wilmer of Alexandria as president and professor of moral philosophy. The subjects of politics, history, the philosophy of the human mind, and political economy were removed from Wilmer's chair, however, and included in a new professorship of political law. Upon the recommendation of Dr. Smith, the Board appointed Thomas R. Dew to the newly created position. Dew, still a youthful twenty-three years of age, produced a certificate of his qualifications and took his seat on the faculty the following day.[3]

On the first of the next month, the new political law professor gave his introductory lecture, an address by custom delivered to the college community and such visitors as wished to be present. One of the latter, who signed himself "A Radical" in describing the event for the Richmond Enquirer, explained that he had known Dew as a student, and expected an able performance from "this promising young Virginian." "Radical's" expectations were far surpassed, even though Dew had read his address as a result of the short preparation time allotted him. Speaking in general terms on the subjects of metaphysics and political economy, Dew

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[3]William and Mary Faculty Minutes, 1817-1830, 242. An obituary notice in the Southern Literary Messenger, XII (November, 1846), 704, states that Dew had begun the practice of law after studying under commonwealth's attorney Thomas Gresham (1784-1838) of Tappahannock. Gresham had married Dew's sister Mary Ellen in 1817. There is no additional evidence to support the claim that Dew had legal training.

convinced his auditor that philosophy could be interesting and that Dew had mastered the field of economics. "I think that William and Mary need never despair," "Radical" concluded, "so long as she can select from among her children such a professor as Mr. Dew. I should consider him a great acquisition to any college."[4] It was ironic that a "radical" should provide the first public acclaim for a man whose career was to be so orthodox. But the high praise would prove to have been well placed.

The method of teaching which Dew developed was dictated somewhat by the large number of subjects which he had to include in one course. At each of the three weekly class meetings, he reviewed the previous lesson, discussed the assigned texts, and asked questions based on that material. Original lectures prepared by the professor were as yet a novelty in most colleges, although Dew expanded that practice during his career as he came to have more time with which to work. His classroom presentation appealed to his students, one of whom recalled that Dew was "engaging without being eloquent, clear in demonstration, and pleasing in illustration. The Professor's chair was his appropriate sphere. It suited him and he adorned it."[5] Another student, who attended the University

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[4]Richmond Enquirer, November 7, 1826.

[5]"Death of Professor Dew," Southern Literary Messenger, XII (November, 1846), 704. The writer was probably Benjamin Blake Minor, Messenger editor and former Dew student.

of Pennsylvania medical school after graduating from William and Mary, observed that he had had many distinguished lecturers but that Dew surpassed them all, and could arouse and sustain interest "even in dry-as-dust dissertations of bygone centuries."[6] Governor John Tyler, in his capacity as Rector of the College, complimented Dew indirectly at the end of the latter's first year on the faculty by predicting that the session just completed marked the commencement of a new career of usefulness for the college, which had for several years been in such a depressed state.[7] Within the South the field of political economy was also reaching a high point with such figures as George Tucker of the University of Virginia and Thomas Cooper of South Carolina College. Dew's name could soon be added to that list.

The first change in Dew's course organization came as

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[6]Robert H. Land, "Thomas Roderick Dew," The Alumni Gazette of the College of William and Mary, VI (May, 1939), 10. The student quoted is Samuel G. Fauntleroy. Dr. Fauntleroy's granddaughter recalls: "I have heard my grandfather . . . speak of how interesting Prof. Dew was in general conversation and in the classroom. A question would be asked pertinent to the day's lesson, and Prof. Dew would unwind his long legs, with his hand plaster down his curly red hair, and rising, exclaim, 'An intelligent question, young gentlemen. I am glad you are thinking.' Then the delightful answer was forthcoming. Prof. Dew's chief attraction as teacher and lecturer was his bracing, invigorating manner of thought and speech. The boys would forget to take notes lest they miss his elusive facial expressions or the fascinating flow of words." Miss Mary Sue Dew to the author, February 11, 1967.

[7]Richmond Enquirer, July 17, 1827.

the faculty met at the end of the session in July, 1827. The political law professor requested permission to offer, apart from his regular course, a once-a-week lecture on history during the session beginning in September. In granting Dew's request, a reluctant faculty placed certain limitations on the proposed history course. It must not interfere with any of the regular classes, and attendance was not to be a requisite for graduation.[8] As Dew was to learn later, his colleagues feared that an additional course might prolong a student's college program.

The Reverend Mr. Wilmer, who had arrived in Williamsburg the previous December to assume the presidency of the College, and who voted with Dr. Rogers against Dew's request for a separate history course, contracted "bilbous fever" within days after that last faculty meeting, and died on July 24.[9] Wilmer's successor, the Reverend Adam Empie of Wilmington, North Carolina, might be expected to be more sympathetic to Dew's position, for he had previously served as chaplain at West Point, where he also taught history, geography, and ethics.[10]

Having devoted his first year to the preparation of his course outline, Dew began to look, during his second year on the faculty, to the needs of his state. As a

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[8]William and Mary Faculty Minutes, 1817-1830, 277.

[9]Richmond Enquirer, July 31, 1827.

[10]Ibid., September 27, 1827.

political economist, he would be challenged by those needs for the rest of his life. The depressed condition in which Virginia found herself during the 1820's reflected not only the severe panic of 1819 but also factors dating from the late eighteenth century. By that period, the soil of much of the state revealed the ravages of tobacco culture when unaccompanied by any program of soil restoration. Early in 1828, Thomas Ritchie of the Enquirer editorialized on the woes of the Old Dominion:

> poverty seems to have stricken our land, and the spirit of improvement has fled to more enterprising states. Whether it be the tariff; whether it be the stoppage of the West India trade; whether it be the curse of slavery; the unskillful state of our agriculture; the want of manufactures to clothe our citizens and our laborers; the improvident expenditure of our Fund for Internal Improvements, the want of skill with which it has too frequently been conducted, and the torpor and depression which have been generated by our ill success; whether it be our yielding up almost the whole of our foreign commerce, and most of our carrying trade, into the hands of the capitalists of the north; whether it be that our citizens are wont to live beyond their means - or whether it be owing to other and all these circumstances combined, . . . the melancholy result presses upon us with irresistable force. Something must be done to retrieve our misfortunes. . . . truth is like medicine - nauseous to the taste, but most salutary in its operations.[11]

As groups of citizens gathered at court houses across the state to discuss the best medicine for their economic ills, the scheme most frequently prescribed was that of internal improvements. The Fund which Ritchie mantioned

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[11]Richmond Enquirer, March 1, 1828.

had been established by the legislature in 1816 as a means of financing projects beneficial to the entire state. The spirit of cooperation which had existed in 1816 gradually faded away, however, after the state took over the ownership of the James River Company four years later, and improvements on that river system had come to a standstill.[12]

When a number of Williamsburg residents assembled in June to select delegates to an internal improvements convention convening the following month in Charlottesville, Dew was appointed chairman of a committee to prepare a report and resolutions voicing the sentiments of the meeting.[13] The report, later printed as a twenty-three page pamphlet, invoked the authority of economists such as Say, Ricardo, Smith and Tracy, as well as the example of historical experiments in transportation development. In answer to the fears of Tidewater residents that they would suffer economically as western regions of the state were developed, the committee argued at length that the Tidewater area would become a major commercial center for handling western products.

Denying by implication that Virginia was irrevocably an agricultural state, the Williamsburg report reasoned

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[12]Philip M. Rice, "Internal Improvements in Virginia, 1775-1860," (Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1948), 1, 145, 155-159.

[13]Richmond Enquirer, June 20, 1828.

that a revived internal improvements program would attract additional population and investment capital into the state. These, combined with the natural advantages of raw materials and unlimited steam and water power, assured Virginia's future status as a manufacturing state. Slave labor would pose no obstacle to the growth of manufacturing, Dew's committee predicted. As white men were attracted to the state, the percentage of Negroes in Virginia would decline, especially since additional slaves were prohibited by an 1806 statute from being admitted into the state. But regardless of racial balance, so long as slaves could be closely supervised within a factory, their physical energies would prove equal, and their endurance superior, to that of white labor.

Resolutions accompanying the report voiced support for further efforts on behalf of internal improvements, and urged home manufacture of articles so as to mitigate the "pernicious effects" of the recently enacted tariff of 1828. Dew and Judge James Semple were elected to represent the meeting at the Charlottesville convention.[14]

Before Dew could journey across the state to Charlottesville, he was obliged to conduct final examinations and participate in the annual commencement exercises of the college. One of the student speakers on the latter occasion

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[14]The report of the Williamsburg committee is printed in the Richmond Enquirer, July 4, 8, 11, 1828. Judge Semple served as part-time professor of law at William and Mary.

was Philip Dew, the third of the brothers to attend William and Mary, who delivered an essay "On Human Happiness."[15] As soon as his college duties were executed, Dew hurried from Williamsburg and arrived in Charlottesville in time to attend the first session of the Internal Improvements convention on July 14. Former President James Madison presided over the gathering, and his White House successor, James Monroe, was named to chair a committee of thirteen to draft the convention report and memorial to the legislature. Other appointees to the committee included Chief Justice John Marshall, from Richmond, and twenty-five year old Thomas R. Dew,[16] whose contribution to the Williamsburg report was undoubtedly recognized by the Charlottesville convention.

The memorial which emerged after a week of debate contained a brief discussion of the transportation needs of Virginia, concluding with resolutions urging a continuation of the James River canal system, and improvement of the Shenandoah, Kanawa, and Roanoke rivers. A resolution urging state subscription to Chesapeake and Ohio Canal stock was defeated, but one favoring extension and improvement of certain roads was passed.[17] These and other proposals were considered by the legislature during succeeding sessions,

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[15]Richmond Enquirer, July 16, 1828.

[16]Williamsburg Phoenix Ploughboy, July 23, 1828.

[17]Richmond Enquirer, July 25, 1828.

but no simple or immediate solution was to be forthcoming. For Dew, the exposure to statewide attention was both a compliment to one so young and an incentive to further discussion of Virginia's problems.

A faculty change of some importance to Dew marked the opening of the next college session. Chemistry professor Rogers had died during the summer, and the Visitors elected his second son, William Barton Rogers, as his successor. Dew and his former classmate became close friends, probably occupying adjacent bachelor quarters in the Brafferton, and sharing the horseback rides which Dew considered necessary for his health.[18] The political law professor was now giving original lectures on the subjects of government, history, and economics.[19] It was the latter which allowed Dew to expose his views once again to public scrutiny, this time on a national level.

The writing out of his economics lectures was completed by September, 1829, and they were published in Richmond under the title Lectures on the Restrictive System, Delivered to the Senior Political Class of William and Mary College. Dedicated to John Augustine Smith, in testimony of Dew's "high respect and affectionate regard"

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[18]Rogers, Life and Letters, I, 73. Rent therefore claimed little if any of the $1,000 salary plus $20 per student in fees which each man received.

[19]Williamsburg Phoenix Ploughboy, Ocotober 15, 1828.

for his former teacher, the volume is a discussion of the restrictive, or protective, tariff system which had become a contentious subject for many Americans, and especially for Southerners.

The first American tariff, passed by Congress in 1789, was intended to provide the new country with revenue, a purpose which Dew and most other economists regarded in 1829 as still legitimate. Beginning with the measure advocated by Alexander Hamilton in 1792, however, American tariffs had embodied the concept of restriction, or the levying of a duty against imported goods as a means of protecting young American industry from foreign competition. By the 1820's, the citizens of the predominantly agricultural southern states were convinced that the protective policy raised the price of goods which they purchased, without providing them any compensating benefits. The tariff had become a sectional issue, and John Taylor of Caroline County, Virginia, concluded his 1822 anti-tariff attack, Tyranny Unmasked, with the plea, "Let us no longer 'sow our seed for the fowls to devour.'"[20]

To many Southerners, particularly South Carolinians, the highly protective 1828 "tariff of abominations" symbolized a devouring which could not be tolerated, and John C. Calhoun had detailed the ominous concept of nullification

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[20]John Taylor, Tyranny Unmasked (Washington City: Davis & Force, 1822), 349.

in his anonymous "South Carolina Exposition and Protest." Writing the following year, Dew explained in the preface to his book that he felt a "calm and dispassionate" view, combining theoretical and practical arguments, might be of value. He also had a more pragmatic purpose in publishing his lectures - they had become too long for inclusion in his crowded senior syllabus.[21]

Although he presented the arguments of both sides in the tariff controversy, Dew early acknowledged his own free-trade sentiment. It was a position in harmony with the classical school of economics. That school had been founded by Adam Smith, whose Wealth of Nations had been studied by Dew and was now being read by his own students. Classical economic theory stresses the importance of natural laws as opposed to artificial, man-made restrictions, and Dew began by stating that if left to themselves, men and nations will develop that type of economy best suited to their talents and resources.[22] He contended that the United States was an agricultural nation, and should not move too rapidly away from that position. The North was becoming a manufacturing area, and it was inevitable that it should grow more in that direction. The danger of a tariff system was that it forced the process of industrialization to move too rapidly, with disruptive economic

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[21]Dew, Lectures on Restrictive System, preface.

[22]Ibid., 19-20.

consequences such as disproportionate numbers in a single industry, and with bad effects on the mental and physical well-being of laborers. How much more logical it was to purchase the English-made commodities which could be manufactured more economically there because of lower British wage and profit rates, while concentrating in America on a few manufactures in which her superior natural resources could be used to advantage. "Manufactures will arise," Dew wrote, "when our country is filled with a denser population, and capital has been more extensively accumulated: they are necessary then to keep in lucrative employ the redundant capital and population, and they will arise without the guardian protection of the legislature."[23] This was a much more cautious stance than Dew had taken in the Williamsburg report three years earlier, predicting increased manufacturing in Virginia as a result of more extensive internal improvements.

It seemed to many Northerners and Westerners, Dew noted, that the bulk of England's trade was with the South, and this was true, but he pointed out that as long as this trade made the production of cotton, rice, and tobacco lucrative, the South would devote all its efforts to those crops and would need to rely on some Northern manufactures and Western grains. The whole country would thus benefit.

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[23] Ibid., 156.

However, if a tariff against British-made cloth forced Southerners to purchase New England goods, the resulting decreased British sales would reduce the amount of American cotton which that country could buy. England would turn to unprotected Brazilian and Indian cotton, and New England mills would require only a fourth of what England had previously purchased from the South.[24]

Examining historical cases, Dew denied that the restrictive system of Napoleonic France was an acceptable case study, because it was a political, not a politico-economic, experiment. Similarly, the wealth of Great Britain was due not to the tariff but to advantages of government, raw materials, and such factors as the immigration to England of ousted continental craftsmen.[25] These and other cases from history led Dew to offer several reasons why a restrictive system had been adopted in so many countries. In the first place, rulers and governors were greatly inclined to meddle in trade and industrial concerns. And not only could manufacturers combine more easily than other classes, but also those latter classes acquiesced in the wishes of the former. The interests which were most dependent on the support of the government were precisely those which were apt to be most influential with governments; one by one such interests riveted themselves on

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[24] Ibid., 83-89.

[25] Ibid., 134-137.

the country until a majority of the nation was secured in favor of restriction.[26]

Against this background, Dew looked with some concern at events in the United States. He contended that a danger arises from the fact that the majority always rules, and he "boldly denied" that the majority had the right to make laws which might benefit one class exclusively, at the expense of another, without having in mind the general welfare. A system of state internal improvements, therefore, might be justified on the ground that such a system would diffuse prosperity throughout the commonwealth. Reminding his students and readers of the sectional split over passage of recent tariff measures, Dew borrowed from the "South Carolina Exposition and Protest" the statement that irresponsible power was inconsistent with liberty, and must corrupt those who exercised it.[27] Yet Dew cautioned against disunion, picturing the impoverishment and ruin which would follow for both the union and any section separated from it.[28]

In the last few pages of his work, Dew defended the political economist against the charge that he deals in theory and abstractions alone. As he had indicated before, he reminded his students, all true science must be grounded

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[26] Ibid., 170-176.

[27] Ibid., 182.

[28] Ibid., 185-186.

in fact, and the speculations of the political scientist were valuable only in so far as they met that requirement. He considered it to be of some significance that since the days of Adam Smith, when political economy first took form and substance, almost no philosophers of repute, unless committed to a political party, had written in favor of the restrictive system.[29]

Although Dew's work was readable and thorough, it was less impassioned than such treatises as that of John Taylor, or the tariff section of Thomas Cooper's 1826 Lectures on Political Economy.[30] Partly for this reason, reaction to Dew's first published work was limited primarily to his colleagues among the economics profession. Beginning a practice he was to continue in the future, he mailed copies of his work to numerous individuals, to elicit their criticism and publicize his writing. One of the recipients of the Lectures was Condy Raguet, editor of the Free Trade Advocate and Journal of Political Economy, a weekly paper printed in Philadelphia since January of 1829, and dedicated to the advocacy of free trade. In his first mention of Dew's work, Raguet commented on the Virginian's familiarity

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[29] Ibid., 195.

[30] Dew acknowledged his debt to this earlier work of the "very learned and able" Cooper; Ibid., 56. Cooper's biographer suggests that, although the South Carolinian's work came earlier than Dew's, the latter may have had more influence on Southern economic thought. Dumas Malone, The Public Life of Thomas Cooper, 1783-1839 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), 304.

with both European and American economic writers, and predicted that the Lectures "will be hailed by the friends of liberal principles in this country, as a valuable production," especially since it came from an institution of such high repute.[31] Raguet also made a vague reference to supposed pro-tariff views at the University of Virginia, and this provoked a response from George Tucker who, under a psuedonym, explained that he, like Raguet, Dew and others, was opposed to restriction but merely advocated extensive internal improvements in order to develop the state. The Advocate urged Tucker to read Dew's review and benefit from it.[32]

This exchange may explain why Tucker, writing as "Cuspis" in his own recently established Virginia Literary Museum, was somewhat critical of Dew who, Tucker claimed, had paid a high price for the praise he received from the Advocate. Just as he had thought ten years before that Adam Smith comprehended all that was valuable on the subject of free trade, now Dew was making that mistake.[33] However, Raguet had more praise for Dew when he reprinted a section from the Lectures in a subsequent issue of the Advocate.[34]

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[31] Free Trade Advocate, October 10, 1829, 239.

[32] Ibid., November 7, 1829, 300-304.

[33] "Cuspis," "Political Economy," Virginia Literary Museum, I (December 2, 1829), 397-398.

[34] Free Trade Advocate, November 21, 1829, 336.

And over a decade later, Tucker was referring in his lectures at the University of Virginia to Dew's "excellent" tariff study.[35]

Such a reception assured that Dew's first work would become a standard free-trade exposition, and at the same time it was recognized as sufficiently balanced to justify Dew's use of it as a textbook during the remainder of his teaching career. Its publication also brought the twenty-seven year old professor wide recognition beyond the bounds of his native state.

The attention of many Virginians during the latter part of 1829 was directed to the state constitutional convention meeting in Richmond. Dew, however, after laboring to prepare his tariff lectures for the printer, concentrated on his classes and an expansion of his teaching load. In addition to his senior political and history courses, each of which extended through the full session, he offered, beginning in February, 1830, a one-semester junior metaphysical course. But there was an undercurrent of dissatisfaction among the faculty over Dew's course structure, and that tension came to the surface as the professors gathered on commencement day in July to prepare their annual report to the Board of Visitors. Dew's colleagues explained to the Visitors in considerable detail how Dew's one senior course

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[35]Robert Lewis Dabney Notebook of George Tucker's 1840-1841 Lectures on Political Economy, Lecture 17. Robert Lewis Dabney Papers, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

had been divided to provide a separate junior course. The one-year approval which the faculty had granted for Dew's history course had expired at the beginning of the just-concluded session, and during the previous year Dew had been offering that course at no charge to the students, until the situation could be presented to the Visitors. If that body did not now act, the faculty would do so, out of reluctance to extend the graduation requirements beyond two year's work. The addition of even one more course presumably might add a third year, which was more than students would accept.[36]

Dew had already prepared a long statement of his position for the Visitors, and he received some moral support at the commencement exercises, during which one of the graduates delivered an oration "On the Advantages Arising from the Study of History."[37] In his letter to the Visitors, Dew reminded that body that when he began teaching, "the number of matriculates did but just equal the number of profrs, and the most sanguine almost dispaired [sic] of success." Now the prospects were much brighter, and he was hopeful that an agreeable solution to the issue under consideration could be reached. To the implication that he was prolonging a student's tenure at the College and profiting financially himself by dividing his course, he answered that

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[36]William and Mary Faculty Minutes, 1830-1836, 45-49.

[37]Richmond Enquirer, July 16, 1830.

the addition of history and metaphysics to the senior course syllabus as it stood at the time of his candidacy for the faculty appointment had made a separation necessary. Most of the other faculty members taught two full courses, whereas he was teaching only the full senior course, the one-semester junior class, and a once-a-week history course for which he had lately received no compensation. To eliminate the separate history course would mean that he could not utilize the lectures which he had expended much effort in preparing, and would lower somewhat his standing in the College, since "Students do not have the same respect and attachment for professors whom they do not attend, as for those from whom they derive daily instruction." Since Dew believed in the virtues of both a two-year baccalaureate degree and the historical discipline, he proposed a compromise to the Visitors. Instead of considering ancient history the first semester, and modern history (Europe since the middle ages) the second semester, as he had been doing, he would alternate ancient and modern history the first semester of each session, always devoting the second semester to the history of the United States. Students who were taking the full number of required courses would not be obligated to take a final examination in history.[38]

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[38]Dew to the Board of Visitors, July 3, 1830, William and Mary College Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

Prompted by the debate over Dew's courses, the Board of Visitors undertook a major revision of the laws and regulations of the College. The Board resolved that each professor could teach two full courses, but no professor could receive more than $20 in fees from any one student during a given year. Students would be enabled to take the baccalaureate degree after two years of study, which could be extended to three years by the addition of electives. Other rulings by the Visitors stipulated that students were required to study at least seven out of every twenty-four hours, exclusive of time spent in class, and to be off the streets of Williamsburg when the College bell rang at 10:00 p.m. The library was to be open to students each Saturday from noon to two o'clock, and chapel services would be held each morning before classes began, with attendance voluntary.[39]

As October once again brought with it the commencement of a new academic session, Dew's classes reflected the compromise which the Visitors had reached. His junior class was expanded to a full session course, including metaphysics and history. The history was that of Europe, presumably considered the more important, although a semester of United States history such as Dew had proposed would have given the College the opportunity for a unique claim among American

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[39]Laws and Regulations of the College of William and Mary (Richmond: Thomas W. White, 1830).

institutions. Dew's senior course continued to cover the subjects of natural and national law, government, and political economy. One observer noted that Dew ocaasionally gave lectures independent of the text books, a fair specimen of which was published the year before. The great merit of those lectures on the tariff system, the observer continued, elevated them to "a rank among the most orthodox and enlightened production of the present day." Presumably the influence of teachers such as Dew would be heightened, the same observer concluded, by the fact that the science and principles of government were less respected in the middle and northern states than in the South; since "mind must ultimately rule over bare numbers," the South, where politics was taught as a science, must necessarily bear most heavily upon the nation's policy.[40]

A more direct means of influencing national policy presented itself in the spring of 1831, when Dew was urged by several King and Queen County residents to become a candidate for Congress. In declining, he expressed his gratitude at being considered, but explained that he was engaged in a profession suited to his "limited capability," and was under too great an obligation to William and Mary to desert her in her present prosperous condition. His health was also offered as a reason for declining to be a candidate; he hoped that it was reestablished but feared

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[40]Richmond Enquirer, October 26, 1830, reprinted from the Banner of the Constitution.

the effect which the rigors of political life might have upon it. Therefore, he preferred to continue on "the tranquil and noiseless course" which he had hitherto pursued.[41]

The ensuing months, far from being "tranquil and noiseless," were to be perhaps the fullest of Dew's career. The first subject to demand his attention was the tariff, with which his name was already linked in an important manner. It appeared probable that major tariff legislation would be considered by Congress in 1832, and a call had gone out for a national free-trade convention to assemble in Philadelphia in September, 1831. Shortly after the college session was concluded in July, James City County residents became the first in Virginia to assemble and select delegates, including Dew, to represent their views in Philadelphia. The same meeting resolved that the 1828 tariff was "unjust, impolitic, and highly oppressive to a large portion of the people," and that it should be replaced by levies for revenue only.[42] Gathering a few weeks later, Williamsburg free-traders adopted similar resolutions and the same slate of delegates.[43]

The attention of Virginians and the nation was suddenly

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[41] Richmond Enquirer, June 3, 1831. Dew's letter, lacking an addressee in its published version, was dated May 15, 1831.

[42] Ibid., July 19, 1831.

[43] Ibid., August 2, 1831.

distracted from the tariff battle and everything else at the end of August when word spread out from Southampton County, in southeastern Virginia, that a self-ordained slave preacher, Nat Turner, had led a band of fellow slaves in revolt. Although the uprising was quickly put down, sixty-one white persons had been massacred, and as late as November the Governor's office was receiving requests for militia protection from nervous Virginians.[44] Before then, however, the spectre of tariff protection had resumed its hold on many.

Among the fifty-one Virginians who braved stormy weather to reach Philadelphia in late September was at least one former student of Dew - his brother Philip, a delegate from King and Queen County. The William and Mary professor also had the opportunity of visiting with his mentor, John Augustine Smith, a New York delegate, and of meeting Condy Raguet. Other men of prominence among the 201 delegates included James Barbour and Abel P. Upshur of Virginia, Albert Gallatin of New York, Theodore Sedgwick of Massachusetts, Hugh Lagare, William Harper, Langdon Cheves, and William C. Preston of South Carolina, and John M. Berrien of Georgia.[45]

Former Senator Barbour, in his opening address as

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[44] Governor John Floyd Letterbook, Virginia State Library, September-November, 1831.

[45] Nile's Weekly Register, October 23, 29, 1831.

president of the convention, placed the meeting in perspective by praising the right of peaceful assembly in the United States, a means of redressing grievances not found in most other countries.[46] As the delegates exercised that privilege during the first week of October, it became clear that although anti-tariff sentiment was common to all those assembled, a north-south division had emerged on the question of the constitutionality of the protectice tariff.[47] The convention finally agreed to the unconstitutionality of protection, although it was a position unpopular with many of the eastern and middle-state delegates.[48] The question was raised again, in somewhat different form, when it was proposed that the assemblage send representatives to confer with the pro-tariff convention about to convene in New York. Responding to that proposal, Chancellor William Harper of South Carolina spoke for many of his fellow Southerners when he stated that the two conventions differed in principle, one believing protection of manufactured goods to be constitutional, the other denying that fact. There was no room for compromise, he asserted, and therefore no value to be gained by sending representatives.[49] The convention upheld Harper's view.

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[46]Alexandria Gazette, October 6, 1831.

[47]Richmond Enquirer, October 11, 1831.

[48]Alexandria Gazette, October 11, 1831.

[49]Nile's Weekly Register, October 22, 1831.

The most positive step taken by the assembled free-traders was the naming of a committee to draft a memorial to Congress, urging a tariff reduction. The committee consisted of one member from each of the fifteen states represented. Albert Gallatin was appointed chairman, and Dew was selected from the large Virginia delegation to represent his state. The favorable reception which Dew's anti-tariff lectures had received among free-traders undoubtedly was a factor not only in his appointment to the committee but also in his assignment within the committee. Each member was to consider one aspect of the problem, and Dew was to undertake the theory of free trade, which one commentator suggested he was very capable of handling, since his book had revealed "how perfectly" he had grasped the subject.[50]

On his journey home, even before reaching Virginia, Dew wrote to Gallatin regarding the timetable for submitting his contribution, and it was well that he planned ahead, for his days continued to be full.[51] Toward the end of October he stopped in Richmond to discuss national politics with Governor John Floyd.[52] He was to seek Floyd's advice and assistance frequently in the near future, and years later

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[50]Richmond Enquirer, October 28, 1831.

[51]Dew to Albert Gallatin, October 10, 1831, Albert Gallatin Papers, New York Historical Society.

[52]Charles H. Ambler, The Life and Diary of John Floyd (Richmond: Richmond Press, Inc., 1918), 167.

would say of the Governor that he admired him more than almost any other man, that Floyd had taken him by the hand at a time when he needed the patronage of friends such as the Governor.[53]

Dew was late in reaching Williamsburg for the start of the college session, but he wasted no time in writing out his views on both the theory and application of the protective system. By the end of November he had mailed Gallatin eighty-three manuscript pages.[54] After reading the report of the New York tariff convention, he sent yet another letter to Gallatin, noting that at one point the restrictionists had used Smith's Wealth of Nations, a favorite free-trade authority, to sustain their argument. Dew felt obliged to state that, in this instance, "the passages quoted from Doctor Smith, we all admit, are not orthodox." Another source relied upon by the tariff proponents was Alexander Hamilton's 1791 Report on Manufactures and Dew shared with Gallatin the belief that Hamilton never envisioned tariff rates as high as those of 1828. "I think it perfectly fair to conclude," Dew wrote, "that were he alive now, . . . he would be amongst the ablest and most decisive of the friends of Free Trade; and this I infer from

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[53]Dew to George F. Holmes, May 1, 1846, George F. Holmes Letterbook, Holmes Manuscripts, Duke University Library.

[54]Dew to Albert Gallatin, November 10, 13, 1831, Gallatin Papers.

the Report itself."[55]

Both the national Congress and the Virginia legislature convened early in December, with serious issues awaiting their consideration. The two schools of thought on the tariff were prepared to do battle in Washington, and in Richmond the question of the status of Negro slavery threatened to overshadow the issue of internal improvements. Dew looked upon the impending legislative sessions with the "deepest solicitude"; prophetically he wrote, "I fear we are on the eve of a most dangerous crisis in our country, & I can only join with the honest patriot in the prayer, that our confederacy may be preserved by a firm administration of justice & an equal protection to the rights of all."[56]

Those words came at the end of a letter to John Floyd in which Dew thanked the Governor for information regarding internal improvements. The year before, Floyd had asked the legislature for a major change in the system of financing public works, and early in 1831 Dew had approached the editor of the Enquirer about the possibility of publishing an essay he was then writing in defense of internal improvements.[57] The events of the intervening months had so altered Dew's schedule that he had decided now to submit his work to the

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[55]Dew to Albert Gallatin, November 22, 1831, Gallatin Papers.

[56]Dew to John Floyd, December 5, 1831, John Floyd Papers, Library of Congress.

[57]Rice, "Internal Improvements in Virginia," 180; Richmond Enquirer, May 27, 1831.

newspaper in installments, rather than wait for a phamphlet version, in order to influence the thinking of the legislature before it acted on the internal improvements issue.[58]

Consequently, Dew turned quickly from the tariff, and by the end of December had submitted to the Richmond Enquirer the first chapter of an essay on internal improvements. In an accompanying cover letter he reiterated the explanation he had given Floyd for resorting to serialized publication, adding that he particularly hoped to win over the residents of the tidewater area and signing himself "A Citizen" of that same area.[59]

In the six installments printed in the Enquirer between December 30 and January 19, Dew, always writing anonymously, repeated many of the arguments which had formed the 1828 Williamsburg memorial. Noting Virginia's relative economic decline among the states of the Union, he blamed lack of an enlightened state attitude toward internal improvements. The Erie Canal, while an ambitious undertaking, was proving so profitable that the state of New York, Dew predicted, would soon be able to dispense with all other forms of revenue. He utilized survey reports to anticipate similar success for Virginia if her citizens would agree to a greater expenditure of funds. Realistically confronting the objections

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[58]Dew to John Floyd, December 5, 1831, Floyd Papers, Library of Congress.

[59]"A Citizen of Tide-Water" to the Editors, Richmond Enquirer, December 30, 1831.

of tidewater residents, he acknowledged that "genuine and enduring patriotism can never be the result of anything else but interest." Patriotism was not necessary; the Norfolk area, instead of financing its own competition, would in fact reap the greatest gains from a state-wide effort to improve its transportation routes.[60]

Aside from an editorial comment that the series was attracting the great attention to which it was entitled,[61] there was no public attention to Dew's exhaustive work, the most comprehensive essay on internal improvements to appear in the Virginia press. The explanation for that fact lay partially in the newspaper columns of legislative coverage running parallel to Dew's essay throughout January. Those columns contained accounts of the unique slave debates being carried on in the white Roman capitol in Richmond. Not only attention but also votes were diverted from state transportation, as eastern representatives expressed hostility toward the western, anti-slavery section of Virginia. Although an act was passed incorporating the James River and Kanawha Company with authorization to issue five million dollars worth of stock, a general loan fund to support the state's railroads was defeated in the legislature.[62]

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[60]Richmond Enquirer, December 30, 1831, January 3, 7, 12, 14, 19, 1832.

[61]Ibid., January 7, 1832.

[62]Rice, "Internal Improvements in Virginia," 191; Richmond Enquirer, March 17, April 13, 1832.

Even before the final installments of his internal improvements essay had appeared in the Enquirer, Dew traveled to Washington to examine the free-trade memorial which Albert Gallatin was to assemble from the reports of the other committee members. By the time it arrived in the capital, Dew had been waiting for three weeks, and only he and Chancellor Harper of the committee were on hand to discuss Gallatin's work. The Southerners approved the memorial, although Dew was slightly disappointed that Gallatin had reversed an earlier intention to include Dew's extensive exposition in full. That exposition, he informed Gallatin, had spoken for the particular interests of Southern free-traders, and before he and Harper left Washington they addressed to Congress a separate ten-page supplement to the committee memorial.[63]

The communication "on behalf of the particular sections of the country in which we reside," was signed "William Harper, for himself and Thomas R. Dew," and although Harper may have been the actual author, the views are equally Dew's; the communication contains paragraphs taken verbatim from his Lectures.[64] Stressing that they were adding to, not differing with, the full committee report, Harper and Dew

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[63]Dew to Albert Gallatin, February 2, 1832, Gallatin Papers.

[64]"Communication of William Harper and Thomas R. Dew in Relation to the Memorial of the Committee of the Free Trade Convention Against the Tariff," February 13, 1832, Executive Documents, House of Representatives, Doc. No. 82, 22nd Congress, 1st Session, 1, 11.

argued that the committee had over-looked a number of factors which would have the effect of increasing federal revenue in the near future. Proceeds from land sales was one such factor, and another was the increased customs receipts expected to accrue from a greater quantity of imports, following a reduction of tariff rates. There was, consequently, the danger of a large surplus revenue, and rather than see that potentially dangerous development materialize, Harper and Dew called for a lower tariff ceiling than the twenty-five percent mentioned in Gallatin's report.[65]

The second area of concern to Harper and Dew was the constitutionality of the tariff. It was an aspect of the subject which Dew had intentionally omitted from his lectures, believing it to be better suited to the law department of the College. Now, however, the South Carolinian and the Virginian affirmed that in the states south of the Potomac, there was as near unanimity of thought on the unconstitutionality of the tariff as there could ever be on a political issue. They were concerned with the treatment of the Southern sectional minority by a manufacturing majority which allowed protection to cover a wide range of items, so as to gain support from western as well as New England states.[66] On a note of firmness, but without a hint

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[65] Ibid., 1-5.

[66] Ibid., 6-10.

of the nullification which was to become policy in Harper's home state later that year, the memorial concluded:

> The sentiment of passive obedience has been thought to degrade the subjects of a monarch; it is still less becoming an American freeman, and would be ill addressed to an American Congress. We agree that such opposition should be made by the most peaceful and constitutional means, and we hope and believe that the forms of a free and popular constitution will always afford a remedy when there is just cause to complain of abuse or usurpation of power.[67]

In spite of their efforts, the cause appeared hopeless. "It seems to be the prevalent opinion in Washington," Dew warned Gallatin, "that Clay's Compromise will prevail."[68] Dew's prediction proved correct, but before Congress passed the clearly protective 1832 tariff in July, the William and Mary professor fired a final shot on behalf of the free-trade activists. It took the form of an anonymous article published in the American Quarterly Review, and was identified only as having come from "a source of much authority." Repeating many of the arguments he had advanced in his earlier writings, Dew also criticized the proceedings of the New York tariff convention and the statements being presented in Congress by Clay and others on behalf of protection.[69]

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[67] Ibid., 11.

[68] Dew to Gallatin, February 2, 1832, Gallatin Papers.

[69] "The Tariff Question," American Quarterly Review, XI (June, 1832), can be positively identified as written by Dew from a letter to Senator Littleton W. Tazewell, May 9, 1832; Tazewell Papers, Virginia State Library. The reference to

The following month, however, Clay and his position triumphed, convincing a majority of South Carolinians that Calhoun's nullification scheme was their last resort.

By the spring of 1832, Dew had exerted himself on behalf of economic causes as exhaustively as he or anyone else had a right to expect from a twenty-nine year old academician in only moderately good health. He had won the respect and attention of national figures and assured that any essay bearing his signature would receive serious consideration. It was orthodox theory which he applied so effectively to the immediate needs of his state and his section. Now, as he read accounts of the debates taking place in the Virginia legislature over the future of Negro slavery, he determined to evaluate those proceedings in light of historical development and economic feasibility. Allowing no time for a breathing spell, he had already begun this newest project by the time his final sentiments on the tariff reached public print.

"source of much authority" is in a preface, n.p., to volume XI of the Review. The Register of Debates of Congress (Washington, 1832), VIII, reveals no mention of Dew's name in the course of debate on the proposed tariff during the early months of 1832. The Free Trade Memorial to which Dew contributed was cited, as were the works of European economists such as Say and Ricardo.

CHAPTER III

REFUTING THE VIRGINIA ABOLITIONISTS

When Thomas R. Dew informed John Floyd, in the spring of 1832, that he had decided to write an essay defending slavery, the governor was pleased that one who felt as he did on the subject should be undertaking such a project. It would require great delicacy and caution, Floyd wrote, "and I am sure none can do so with more skill than yourself."[1]

For all of his twenty-nine years, from his earliest memories of Dewsville up to 1832 when he first purchased a slave of his own,[2] Dew had known slavery as a regular facet of life. His father had farmed successfully with slave labor, prospering perhaps partly because of crop diversification. But many of Thomas Dew's fellow Virginia planters had suffered from the effects of soil depletion since the post-revolutionary decades. So serious had the problem become that white men began to migrate in large numbers from the eastern section of Virginia. This fact,

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[1]John Floyd to [Dew], April 14, 1832, John Floyd Papers.

[2]Williamsburg Tax Records, 1832, Virginia State Library.

which was frequently noted by Dew and other advocates of internal improvements during the 1820's, had contributed to a population imbalance in the tidewater section.[3] The ratio of Negroes to whites increased at the same time as the amount of land suitable for tobacco culture by slave labor decreased.

This economic picture, coupled with the natural rights philosophy subscribed to by some and familiar to many in the late eighteenth century, produced an atmosphere in which men began to question the future of slavery. A proposal made by Thomas Jefferson in 1779 for the gradual emancipation and colonization of Negroes received little serious consideration at that time, but was revived in 1796 by St. George Tucker. Tucker, professor of law at William and Mary, advocated gradual emancipation, during which young Negroes would work as servants until reaching maturity. Unlike Jefferson, however, Tucker favored removal to some western region of the United States rather than foreign colonization.[4]

It was colonization, in spite of Tucker's prestigious writing, which won support in the Virginia legislature.

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[3]The 1830 census revealed that James City County, which surrounds Williamsburg, had 1284 white, 1983 slave, and 571 free colored residents. Richmond Enquirer, May 2, 1831.

[4]St. George Tucker, A Dissertation on Slavery: With a Proposal For the Gradual Abolition of It, in the State of Virginia (Philadelphia: Printed for Mathew Carey, 1796), 89-92.

Procolonization resolutions were adopted in 1800, 1802, 1805, and 1816. The following year the American Colonization Society, a national organization, was formed for the purpose of raising funds to establish free and manumitted American slaves in Africa. Southerners such as James Madison and John Marshall of Virginia and House Speaker Henry Clay, a Kentucky slaveholder, dominated the leadership of the Society. Although Dew indicated to the Negro princesses in 1826 that he had little faith in any colonization scheme, his tone of apology for slavery, the "greatest calamity" of the United States, was equally positive. That apologetic attitude was shared by most of the colonizationists, and yet the fact that many of them remained slaveholders suggested the difficulties of suddenly, or even gradually, relinquishing one's labor supply and the basis of one's social system.[5]

Liberal sentiment such as that expressed by the slave apologists and colonizationists received publicity during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, although the weight of public opinion remained in favor of slavery.[6] Supporters of the institution rarely felt the need to defend

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[5]The thesis of Robert McColley, Slavery and Jeffersonian Virginia (Urbanna: University of Illinois Press, 1964), is that Virginia leaders did not take advantage of conditions to urge a form of abolition after 1800 because they lacked both support and a willingness to free their own slaves.

[6]William S. Jenkins, Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1935), 48.

slavery prior to 1820, but the Congressional debates over Missouri's petition for statehood in that year led to more open pro-slavery attitudes, especially in the states of the deep South. Governor Stephen Miller stated before the South Carolina legislature in 1829 that "Slavery is not a national evil; on the contrary, it is a national benefit."[7]

Such attitudes developed less rapidly in Virginia, partly because of continuing agricultural losses and a general white exodus from the older planting regions, and partly because of a lingering liberal sentiment within the state. In 1823 an anti-slavery society was founded in Virginia - four years later 106 of the 130 such societies in the country were in Southern states.[8] However, it was significant that the abolition strength lay in the western section of those Southern states. It was there that anti-eastern feeling welled up, revealing itself in Virginia as that state's long-awaited constitutional convention assembled in October, 1829.

The ninety-six delegates to the convention were as clearly divided in sentiment as they were geographically by the Blue Ridge. So long as the westerners were deprived of equal representation in the state legislature, their

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[7]Ibid., 33.

[8]William B. Hesseltine, "Some New Aspects of the Pro-slavery Argument," Journal of Negro History, XXI (January, 1936), 8.

chances of obtaining needed economic assistance such as internal improvements were bleak. To the conservative charge that the westerners were also attacking slavery, the latter answered that, in fact, the number of slaves in their section of the state was increasing.[9] The new constitution indicated that the westerners' attempts at fairer representation had been largely frustrated, and when the legislature began two weeks of debate over slavery in January, 1832, the sectional division was again obvious. There could be no question this time that slavery was the divisive factor.

In his annual address to the legislature in December, Governor Floyd had discussed the implications of the Nat Turner revolt and urged "revision of all the laws, intended to preserve in due subordination the slave population of our state."[10] It came as a surprise to many people, therefore, that the debates during January centered not upon proposals for tightening the institution of slavery but for gradually abolishing it. It was a unique experience; never again would a Southern state so openly and so seriously consider the possibility of ending slavery.

Many of those who led the debating were young and newly elected. Thomas Jefferson Randolph introduced what was

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[9]Merrill D. Peterson, ed., Democracy, Liberty, and Property: The State Constitutional Conventions of the 1820's (The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., Indianapolis, 1966), 271-277.

[10]Richmond, Enquirer, December 8, 1831.

essentially the plan of his grandfather, Thomas Jefferson; indeed, colonization was assumed to be a feature of every plan offered. As deliberation progressed and test votes began to indicate the sentiment of the delegates, it was clear that approximately sixty favored some immediate plan of abolition, another sixty, the slave faction, opposed any abolition scheme although some held slavery to be an evil, and a pivotal twelve, the compromisers, apparently favored eventual emancipation, but wished no more than an anti-slave declaration now.[11] At the end of the second week, that compromise attitude was reflected in a resolution which acknowledged the "great evils" arising from the state of slavery, while holding that "it is inexpedient for the present legislature to make any legislative enactment for the abolition of slavery."[12] The initiative which had been taken by the westerners was assumed by the slavery forces in March when the legislature complied with the governor's initial request by revising the Slave Code to silence Negro ministers, regulate religious assemblies, and in other respects restrict the slave's legal privileges.[13]

As the debates in the Assembly were just beginning, Dew had testified once again to his apologetic attitude

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[11]Joseph C. Robert, The Road from Monticello (Durham: Duke University Press, 1941), 29.

[12]Ibid., 32-33.

[13]Ibid., 35.

toward the institution of slavery. Buried in the second installment of his anonymous essay on internal improvements, in the January 3rd issue of the Enquirer, was a reference to the Negro. Dew was arguing that internal improvement had throughout history made nations strong and, conversely, the lack of it had kept nations uncivilized and barbaric, as in Africa. He continued:

> These nations or rather tribes - for they scarcely merit the dignified appellation of nation - have carried on the most deadly wars with each other; and slavery, that most dreadful curse of the fairest portion of our most happy land, attests the cruelty and barbarity which characterize their policy in war.
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> But it is said . . . this degradation of the species in Africa, is owing to the natural inferiority of the Negro tribes. I will not pretend in this essay to discuss the question, concerning the relative superiority of the different species of man. We know there are several distinct species; and, consequently, there may be differences in intellectual endowments; but, we have no reason to believe, from the specimen of the blacks in this country, that they are incapable of civilization; they have all the properties of our nature, and consequently are endowed with the capacity of improvement, under favorable circumstances.
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> But the early history of the world abundantly proves them capable of civilization; and judging from primeval ages, we should come to the conclusion, that they formed the most intelligent of the different species of men. We have already traced the civilization of Egypt back to the remotest periods, and pointed out the probable cause of her prosperity. The arts and sciences first flourished on the banks of the Nile. The Scriptures speak of the all engrossing wisdom of Egypt. Moses was learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, and Solomon, in a hyperbolical figure of speech, is described as surpassing all the wisdom of Egypt; and yet this boasted land of

primeval ages was inhabited by a black race with wooly heads.[14]

This note of cautious optimism in describing the Negro and his potential for improvement contrasts decisively with the theme of Dew's essay on slavery, written during that summer of 1832. Although he was writing anonymously in the internal improvements essay and therefore his name was not linked to the brief reference to slavery within it, there had to be another explanation for Dew's much harsher description of the Negro a few months later. Dew, like many of his fellow Virginians, did ponder over the legislative proceedings as the major speeches were printed in the press during and after the debates themselves. And he was especially impressed by an essay submitted to the Enquirer by a reader, criticizing the emancipationist members of the legislature. Following the custom of the day, the essayist had signed himself merely "Appomattox," but behind that pseudonym was the pen of Benjamin Watkins Leigh, a future Senator from Virginia who was already recognized as one of the leading conservative eastern Virginia politicians. Leigh had been a prominent participant in the recent state constitutional convention, and Dew praised him now as one "who has stood by and defended with so much zeal and

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[14]Richmond Enquirer, January 3, 1832. The word "slavery" is italicized in the original.

ability the interests of Lower Virginia."[15] Leigh had opposed internal improvements as disadvantageous to the planter class when Dew, with a broader outlook, was defending such public works.[16] On the subject of slavery, however, the two were to hold quite compatible views.

In his essay, Leigh expressed surprise that the Turner revolt should have led to a discussion of emancipation rather than a plan of stricter regulation of the Negro. He argued that the emancipationists had placed too much emphasis on the few petitions to the legislature seeking abolition, and attacked Randolph's plan for a public referendum on emancipation on the grounds that it might overturn the constitution of 1830 and establish a revolutionary government. The expense of raising young slaves, to be freed at maturity, would make the masters slaves of their slaves, and Leigh questioned the reasoning of westerners that ownership of an adult slave did not convey vested right of property to the offspring of that slave. He feared that the debate itself might prompt another insurrection and, convinced that Providence dictated the continued subjection of the Negro, urged greater security and the arming of masters, as well as the election of pro-slavery

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[15]William Harper, James Hammond, William G. Simms, and Thomas R. Dew, The Pro-Slavery Argument (Charleston: Walker, Richards, & Co., 1852), 382.

[16]Peterson, Democracy, Liberty, Property, 276-7.

candidates in the forthcoming legislative contest.[17]

Leigh's thoughts had been recorded in some haste, before the newspapers had completed coverage of the slave debates. Dew approached the issue with the thoroughness and lack of emotion which characterized all of his writings. He compiled a bibliography of over sixty titles on history, economics, geography, government and law, in addition to speeches and reports from legislative bodies and the Colonization Society. When he lacked statistics in a certain area, he wrote men such as Governor Floyd and Littleton W. Tazewell, who would succeed Floyd in 1834, to obtain cement for the pro-slavery wall he was constructing during the summer.[18] He intended to divide his essay into two parts, beginning with an historical explanation and justification of slavery, and then answering the emancipation proposals and arguments as presented to the legislature during January. However, the second and more timely section was to appear in the September American Quarterly Review, and therefore was completed first, followed almost immediately by the complete essay in pamphlet form.[19]

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[17]"Letter of Appomattox to the People of Virginia," Richmond Enquirer, February 4, 1832.

[18]John Floyd to Dew, April 14, 1832, Floyd Papers; Dew to Littleton W. Tazewell, May 9, 1832, Tazewell Papers, Virginia State Library.

[19][Thomas R. Dew], "Abolition of Negro Slavery," American Quarterly Review, XII (September, 1832), 189-265;

Both the article and the final version began with some general observations on the Negro in America. Where a question had existed in Dew's mind about the status of the Negro within the human family as recently as January, now there was a tone of certainty. "A race of people," he wrote, "differing from us in color and in habits, and vastly inferior in the scale of civilization," had been growing and spreading until it had become entwined in every fibre of society. This raised the question of whether the Negro could ever be sent back to Africa, or, if liberated, whether he could ever mount up the scale to equality with the white.[20] It was a dilemma which warranted the utmost care and circumspection, as France had learned too late in her handling of St. Domingo. It would have been much wiser for the Virginia legislature to have postponed debate on the issue until time had cooled the feelings aroused by the Southampton insurrection. Although he was not accusing the Virginia abolitionists of designing to overturn the fabric of society, Dew, like Leigh and others, cited the danger of further slave agitation as a result of such open discussion. However, the "seal had now been broken," and he was prepared to "boldly

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Thomas R. Dew, Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature of 1831-1832 (Richmond: Thomas White, 1832). The references to Dew's essay in this chapter are from the most accessible printing, Harper et al., The Pro-Slavery Argument.

[20]Ibid., 287.

grapple" with the abolitionists and "this great question."[21]

As a background for analysing specific abolitionist proposals, Dew first examined the origins of slavery and the effect of the institution on the progress of civilization. Man was inclined to judge events in relation to his own narrow sphere of experience, Dew stated, and to look upon any deviation from that experience as a departure from nature's system. Thus the man nurtured in freedom on first impulse condemns slavery as horrible and unnatural. He is therefore amazed when he looks further and discovers that not only was slavery sanctioned by divine authority, but personal servitude had been the lot of the greater portion of mankind. Abraham had owned hundreds of slaves and, in a later age, the Grecian and Roman worlds had more slaves than freemen. The same was true of Africa in 1832.[22]

To explain this widespread existence of slavery, Dew cited four principle causes, the first of which was the law of war. As Vattel and other authorities on the law of nations had contended, enslavement of men who might otherwise be put to death as prisoners of war was a just act.[23]

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[21] Ibid., 292-3. Throughout the essay, the term "abolitionist" is applied by Dew to Virginia critics of slavery. The Northern abolitionist movement had begun its most vocal period with the initial publication of William Lloyd Garrison's paper, The Liberator, in January, 1831, and although copies had appeared in the South, the movement was not yet seen by Southerners as a serious threat to their section.

[22] Ibid., 294-6.

[23] Ibid., 300-301.

A second source of slavery was the state of property, especially when coupled with weak governments. During the feudal ages, Dew explained, when government was weak, individuals looked for protection to large landholders, who claimed control over the individual's property in return. Since land was the only kind of property of major importance, the aristocratic landholders became the only freemen, and every other class of men virtually slaves to those who owned the land. Extending similar reasoning to his contemporary situation, Dew declared that the Negro, if freed, would soon fall back into a state of slavery because of his idleness. The William and Mary professor, here and elsewhere in his essay, aligned himself with such conservative defenders of property as his mentor, John Augustine Smith, and Benjamin Watkins Leigh, by adding, "It may be with truth affirmed, that the exclusive owners of the property ever have been, ever will, and perhaps ever ought to be, the virtual rulers of mankind."[24] The two final causes of slavery which Dew outlined were bargain and sale, and enslavement as a punishment for crime.

Expressing the hope that he had convinced his readers

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[24] Ibid., 302-315; "Letter of Appomattox," Richmond Enquirer, February 4, 1832; John A. Smith, Lectures on Government, 7-8, 62. The twentieth-century historian Kenneth Stampp goes so far as to say that Dew's essay is a valuable study in the "propaganda technique" used by slaveholders to protect their property. "An Analysis of Dew's Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature," Journal of Negro History, XXVII (October, 1942), 387.

of the inevitability of slavery in the progress of society and its presence as a necessary consequence of the principles of human nature and property, Dew turned to the advantages of slavery. He saw the institution as a taming, civilizing process which, while cruel, led to a much better condition for the Negro than savage independence. The American Indian, he believed, would have survived in greater numbers had he been enslaved, and Dew agreed with President Jackson that removal further west was the only means of delaying the inevitable extinction of the un-enslaved savages. Another advantage of Negro slavery was its role in elevating the white woman from a beast of burden to a creature of noble virtue.[25]

As a final phase of his historical discussion of slavery, Dew commented on its origin in the United States. The slave trade itself, by which the institution was first introduced into this country, Dew found distasteful. Although an apology could be made for the trade, Dew concluded that it had been disadvantageous to Africa, a violation of the principles of humanity, and the cause of much suffering and loss of human life. However, the United States' share of responsibility for the slave trade was negligible, for all of the American colonies, and especially Virginia, had urged the abolition of the trade, but to no

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[25]Dew, Pro-Slavery Argument, 324-341. Jackson was actually more concerned with the attitude of white persons, and much less with the well-being of the Indian.

avail in the face of a royal negative. "If ever," cried Dew, "a nation stood justified before Heaven, in regard to an evil, which has become interwoven with her social system, is not that country ours?"[26]

Although he had observed by way of introduction that he found every plan of emancipation introduced into the recent legislative debates to be "totally impracticable," Dew moved next to what he hoped was a fair analysis of the various plans, and the reasons for his own negative conclusions. His first consideration centered on emancipation with deportation. Taking for granted that the property rights of owners were to be respected and that emancipation must be accompanied by payment in full, Dew estimated the value of Virginia's 470,000 slaves at $100,000,000, or nearly one third of the state's total wealth. Since the presence of the slave laborer gave value to the soil, the total financial loss of emancipation and deportation would exceed the sale value of the slaves. Most proposals, however, favored a more gradual deportation, and Dew therefore examined figures for Virginia's annual natural increase of six thousand slaves. Purchase and transportation costs for even that small number would amount to $1, 380,000, an annual expense which Virginia could not bear.[27] The increased tax to support such a program would

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[26]Ibid., 354.

[27]That same figure of 6000 represented the number of slaves sold annually to states further south, and Dew,

be an additional burden to the white citizen, even greater numbers of whom would leave the state, and the expense would fall more heavily on those who remained, forcing them to breed their slaves. Thus, "the poverty stricken master would rejoice in the prolificness of his female slave, but pray Heaven in its kindness to strike with barrenness his own spouse . . ."[28] Under such circumstances, Dew modified his earlier belief that free white labor could be attracted to Virginia.

In a final argument against emancipation with deportation, Dew attacked the contention of westerners during the legislative debate that property was the creature of civil society, and as such subject to action, even to destruction, by the state. When such a doctrine was proposed, Dew declared, "it is time, indeed, for Achilles to rise from his inglorious repose and buckle on his armor, when the enemy are about to set fire to his fleet."[29] Just two years earlier, during the constitutional convention, westerners had denied any desire to interfere with slavery, but now the easterners were being asked to give up their slave property, merely because the westerners saw it as a

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stating that "Virginia is, in fact, a negro raising state for other States," argued that Virginia's purchase of that number for deportation would place her in competition with private purchasers for Virginia's annual surplus. ibid., 359-360.

[28] Ibid., 373.

[29] Ibid., 385.

"nuisance." Dew countered with the statement that such doctrines were the "nuisances." Assuming a Lockian attitude, he asserted that the protection of property, the original justification for government, must be assured by any government wishing to survive.[30]

Even if some acceptable plan of deportation could be devised, Dew was convinced that it would be impossible to colonize the Negroes successfully. He had long been critical of the efforts of the American Colonization Society, which had sent only hundreds to Liberia, not the thousands which would be necessary under a plan of widespread, or even gradual, emancipation. Furthermore, the Society's attempts had been plagued by a disease-ridden climate, lack of food, and laziness on the part of the Negro. Border tribes would attack and consign the Liberians to a worse slavery than they had known before. Any large-scale colonization effort, therefore, was doomed to failure, even if federal funds were made available. Dew cautioned Virginia against accepting this latter possibility. Hitherto she and her fellow southern states had relied upon their own resources, and retained their political integrity; the acceptance of federal aid for emancipation would add the emancipationists to those in the nation who had accepted similar aid in the form of tariffs and internal improvements, thereby increasing federal influence at the expense of the states.[31]

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[30] Ibid., 387-391.

[31] Ibid., 418-419.

Although emancipation without deportation received no serious consideration during the debates, Dew confessed that, owing to the utter impracticability of the deportation schemes, the real option would be either abolition without removal or the maintenance of the slavery system. Because he wished to show, in every aspect of the question, the South's "complete justification" of the continuance of slavery ("which has been originated by no fault of [the Southern states] and continued and increased contrary to their most earnest desires and petitions"), Dew decided to discuss this option also. He based his opposition to abolition without removal on the fact that the slaves were entirely unfit for freedom among the whites, from both economical and moral points of view; everyone knew that free Negro labor in Haiti and St. Domingo proved that slave labor was far superior to free Negro labor and that emancipation would bring an immediate general famine to the Southern states.[32] Prejudices were already formed, Dew observed, and the Negro must be prepared to accept that fact. Unfortunately, the emancipated Negro carries a mark which no time could erase; "he forever wears the indelible symbol of his inferior condition; the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the Leopard his spots."[33]

Having explained in detail the reasons for his

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[32] Ibid., 433.

[33] Ibid., 447.

opposition to any scheme of slave emancipation, Dew devoted the final forty pages of his essay to answering some of the criticisms which had been, and presumably would continue to be, levied against the slavery system. To the charge that the institution was wrong in the abstract and contrary to the spirit of Christianity, he answered that any question must be determined by circumstances, and if slavery could not be abolished without greater injury to slave and master alike, there was no law of God which could condemn man. Christ did not condemn slavery when it abounded around him, but preached obedience.[34] That the moral effects of slavery were of the most noxious kind, as Jefferson had contended in his Notes on the State of Virginia, Dew denied. He argued that, in fact, slavery humanized and softened the masters, while the slaves in turn were devoted to their masters, as illustrated by the fact that Virginia slaves took up arms to defend their masters during the Southampton insurrection.[35]

The whole history of the world refuted the third criticism of slavery, that it was unfavorable to a republican spirit, Dew wrote, and he cited Edmund Burke in support of his position. Southerners had always been strongly attached to liberty, Burke had stated, "'because

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[34] Ibid., 452.

[35] Ibid., 459.

freedom is to them not only an enjoyment, but a kind of rank and privilege.'"[36] In the South, Dew added, color was the only distinction - all whites were on an equal plane - whereas in the North, aristocrats would not even speak to white servants.

To a fourth criticism, that of insecurity engendered by fear of Negro uprisings, Dew answered that slaves in the United States were relatively civilized, and that another Nat Turner revolt was unlikely. One basis of this fear was the white emigration from slaveholding areas, which left a larger percentage of slaves than whites. Dew predicted that a combination of judicious internal improvements and the filling up of western lands would gradually check such emigration. He could not resist the opportunity of pointing out to the westerners that the cost of deporting slaves would impede the development of internal improvements, which he believed to be the real solution to Virginia's economic problems.[37]

Finally, Dew denied that slave labor was unproductive and therefore responsible for the South's economic woes.

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[36] Ibid., 461. Earlier in his essay (354-5), in concluding his historical analysis, Dew had also cited Burke to substantiate his belief that legislators can never legislate on the basis of principle independent of related circumstances. Thus Virginia abolitionists were wrong to base their attacks on such statements of principle as "all men are born equal" and "the slave has a natural right to regain his liberty." Dew never pursues this philosophical aspect of the slavery issue aside from this one brief passage.

[37] Ibid., 475-81.

Earlier he had noted that no one would own and manage slaves unless it proved equally or more profitable than other types of investment, and although he here stated without elaboration, that Virginia and Maryland were too far north for profitable slave labor, the other Southern states and such tropical lands as St. Domingo could be successfully cultivated only by slave labor, Dew believed.[38] The real causes for the admitted suffering of the South he believed to be the unhealthful climate, the loss of capital to other sections by emigration and travel, the high standard of consumption, and most importantly, "the operation of the Federal Government" or protective tariff. As he came to the end of his essay, Dew cautioned against too hasty action by the legislature. "Let us learn wisdom from experience," he pleaded, "and know that the relations of society, generated by the lapse of ages, cannot be altered in a day."[39]

The seventy-five page portion of Dew's essay which

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[38]Ibid., 388, 484. Neither Dew nor his contemporaries entered into the issue of slave profitability so extensively as twentieth-century economists such as Alfred H. Conrad and John R. Meyer, "The Economics of Slavery In The Ante Bellum South," The Journal of Political Economy, LXVI (April, 1958), 95-130. It can be inferred, however, that Dew considered slavery in Virginia to be first a social necessity, and secondly, perhaps, economically profitable because of the sale of surplus slaves. Thomas Cooper, whose Political Economy Dew had read, had written in 1826 that slave labor was unprofitable in Virginia and Maryland, while the lands of South Carolina and Georgia could probably not be cultivated without such labor (96).

[39]Dew, Pro-Slavery Argument, 489-490.

refuted emancipationist schemes and answered attacks on the institution appeared in the September, 1832, issue of the American Quarterly Review anonymously, but was soon being attributed to Dew.[40] Since he clearly desired to have the entire essay published as soon as possible, and considered the Review article to represent only half of his thinking on slavery, he let it be known that he preferred editors to wait until the entire essay appeared before publishing extracts or commenting upon it.[41] But even in incomplete form, Dew's views jarred some readers. The editor of the Charleston, Virginia Free Press, hitherto sympathetic toward the emancipationists, wrote:

> The writer [Dew] has exhibited so much depth of research, and such a mathematical train of reasoning, that he has shaken our former faith, and almost eradicated prejudices and feelings which had become 'bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.' We did not suppose it possible for human ingenuity to shake us upon this point - armed, as we thought we were, with an innate hatred of slavery in its mildest form; and yet, reader, the perusal of this fascinating - this truly powerful production - has 'almost persuaded' us that Negro slavery is not only tolerable, but that it is expedient - if not absolutely right! Of the method by which this writer insensibly leads the mind to this conclusion (heretofore so repugnant to our feelings) we have not now room to speak, and were it not for the fear of drawing others into a similar predicament with ourselves, we should recommend the perusal of this matchless effort to the admirers of high intellectual endowment.

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[40]Alexandria Gazette, November 12, 1832; Richmond Enquirer, November 23, 1832.

[41]Richmond Enquirer, November 23, 1832.

> Whatever effect it may have on others, it at least induces us to pause and ponder.[42]

Not all reaction to Dew's article was favorable, however, and among the loudest critics were supporters of colonization. Dew had devoted many pages to exposing the prohibitive cost and dismal African prospects of colonizing former slaves, and an officer of the American Colonization Society chapter in Philadelphia complained, "You may well call it an able article - it says more against our favorite scheme of colonization than I was aware could be urged against it.'"[43] A somewhat confused Mathew Carey, the high-tariff Philadelphia economist, offered to refute "Professor Dewey" at "Charlottesville College,"[44] but the man finally obtained to make a formal reply to Dew was twenty-seven year old Jesse Burton Harrison. A native of Virginia, Harrison had graduated from Harvard and become active in the Colonization Society before moving to Louisiana where he was now practicing law.[45] By rapid writing and liberal borrowing from a legislative

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[42]Charleston, Virginia Free Press, quoted in Richmond Enquirer, November 23, 1832. The Enquirer copied the article from the Baltimore Gazette.

[43]Gerald Ralston to Ralph R. Gurley, September 17, 1832, quoted in P. J. Staudenraus, The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 182.

[44]Mathew Carey to Ralph R. Gurley, September 19, 1832, ibid.

[45]Francis Burton Harrison, ed., The Harrisons of Skimino (Privately printed, 1910), 87, 100, 103.

speech delivered by Thomas Marshall, Harrison prepared an article for publication in the December American Quarterly Review. He acknowledged that a majority of Virginians was unwilling even to consider a plan for the abolition of slavery. The significant fact was that the question had been so openly considered by the legislature. He stated that slavery in Virginia was not harsh, and concentrated his attention on the injurious effect which the institution had upon her white citizens. In several ways slavery was detrimental to the economy of the state, he believed, and concluded that Virginia was intended by nature as the abode of "a homogeneous race of freemen," not to be "stained by the tread of a slave."[46]

Emancipation, Harrison asserted in his role as spokesman for the colonization movement, must be accompanied by deportation. Necessity gave the public the right to take private property, with compensation to the owner. However, and here he refuted Dew without referring to him by name, he believed that owners would willingly manumit as many slaves as could be deported annually; the state could afford $150,000 in transportation expenses. He also believed that Virginia could produce enough slaves to meet the demand of Southern purchasers, as well as the requirements of the colonizationists, and hence there would

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[46] [Jesse Burton Harrison], "Slavery Question in Virginia," American Quarterly Review, XII (December, 1832), 384-399.

be no competitive bidding.

For future wide-scale purchases of slaves, Harrison proposed relying on proceeds from public land sales, as Henry Clay had recommended before Congress. The state would not be in the position of asking for federal funds, because such funds belonged to the people, and Virginia, as the greatest economic sufferer, might expect more than her share at first.[47] To Dew's damaging criticism of Liberian conditions, Harrison answered that the Negroes were happy there, that only whites suffered from the climate, and that the Negroes were not lazy. Liberia could receive the necessary number of colonists from America. History and tradition indicated that civilization had its source in the heart of Africa, Harrison noted, and why should not the current be reversed? In the Negro's wake, an adequate supply of free white labor would enter the state.[48]

By the time Harrison's article appeared, Dew's essay had been published in pamphlet form and was for sale in all the Richmond bookstores. The pamphlet was being "cracked up as something great," a friend informed Harrison, and his article would provide a timely antidote to Dew's work.[49]

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[47] Ibid., 399-413.

[48] Ibid., 413-26.

[49] William W. Nowell to Jesse Burton Harrison, December 30, 1832, Jesse Burton Harrison Papers, Library of Congress.

Already, however, national events were robbing the slavery issue of some of its currency. In November a South Carolina convention had nullified the 1828 and 1832 tariff acts, and early in December President Jackson had issued his Proclamation to the People of South Carolina, asserting the supremacy of the federal government and pledging the execution of the federal laws. The new year saw hurried efforts being made within Congress in an attempt to reach a compromise on the tariff before the February 1st deadline originally set by South Carolina. The compromisers triumphed on March 2nd when President Jackson signed both the revised tariff and Force Act bills.

In the midst of the nullification dispute, the editor of the Richmond Whig acknowledged receipt of Dew's essay, but hoped to hear nothing on the subject of slavery for awhile, adding that "Solomon said there was a time for all things."[50] In a similar spirit, Thomas Ritchie of the Enquirer agreed to publish annotated excerpts from both Harrison's and Dew's essays, "and then we shall close our columns for the present to the subject."[51] Edmund Ruffin

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[50]Richmond Whig, December 20, 1832. The Pleasants family, proprietors of the Whig, had long been active in the cause of slave emancipation. In the January 3, 1833, issue of the Whig, the editor briefly alluded to Harrison's essay, expressing the wish that it could be as widely circulated as Dew's work had been, for it was far more worthy of public attention.

[51]Richmond Enquirer, February 26, 1833. Harrison's article was favorably reviewed by "Sharpe" in the Enquirer of February 26, and "A.B," in reviewing Dew's essay on March 12th, concluded that Harrison's effort to answer Dew had fallen far short of its mark.

also printed excerpts from both essays in the June, 1833, issue of his newly established Farmer's Register. By then the nullification debate had subsided, and Ruffin urged his readers to study both sides of the slavery question carefully, before coming to any conclusion. In his opinion, Harrison had proved beyond dispute that the existence of slavery in Virginia was a great evil, while Dew had established just as conclusively the "utter inefficiency and ruinous cost" of every proposed scheme of emancipation and deportation.[52]

Dew continued his practice of sending copies of his publications to individuals whose opinions he respected. One such person was James Madison, now in his eighty-second year but still mentally alert. The former President acknowledged Dew's gift and letter with a lengthy reply in which he credited Dew with establishing the difficulties involved in deportation. However, Madison, who was then serving as President of the American Colonization Society, stated that he remained an advocate of gradual emancipation and deportation. He was inclined to feel that Dew stressed too much the tariff laws, and too little the institution of slavery, in accounting for Virginia's depressed economic condition.[53]

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[52]Edmund Ruffin, "Agricultural Review: Slavery and Emancipation," Farmer's Register, I (June, 1833), 30.

[53]Dew to James Madison, January 15, 1833; Madison to Dew, February 23, 1833, James Madison Papers, Library of Congress.

Another former President, and long-time critic of slavery, John Quincy Adams, believed Dew's argument against colonization to be conclusive. Adams recorded in his diary, however, that the essay in general was "a monument of the intellectual perversion produced by the existence of slavery in a free community."[54] On the following day, having read further in the essay, Adams concluded that the pamphlet deserved "grave meditation," and that it contained "the seeds of much profitable instruction." Slavery would in all probability be the wedge which would ultimately split the Union, Adams wrote perceptively, and the disaffection which the institution had caused throughout the country he saw as deeply pervading Dew's essay.[55]

One catalytic agent in creating such widespread disaffection as Adams noted was the newly vocal northern abolition movement. Dew had made only one allusion, in his essay, to "Lundy and Garrison," concentrating his attack instead on abolitionists within Virginia.[56] Garrison took note of Dew's work by printing two brief excerpts in

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[54]John Quincy Adams, The Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848, ed. by Charles F. Adams (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1874-77), IX, 23. Entry for October 13, 1833.

[55]Ibid., entry for October 14, 1833.

[56]Dew, Pro-Slavery Argument, 448. Benjamin Lundy had established his antislavery journal, Genius of Universal Emancipation, in 1821. In 1829, Garrison became an associate editor of the Genius, and on January 1, 1831, established his own, more militant paper, The Liberator. In 1835 Garrison was the driving force behind the establishment of the American Anti-Slavery Society.

the Liberator, passages which the abolitionist found "detestable and alarming."[57] Within the colonization movement also, attacks on Dew continued. The national society's organ, The African Repository, observed in April, 1833, that Dew's Review "abounds in sentiments which might have been tolerated a century ago, but which are at war with the humane and liberal spirit which now animates the Christian world."[58] And when the Virginia legislature approved a bill in March providing the Colonization Society with a maximum of $18,000 annually for five years, John H. Cocke of Albemarle County saw the action as "signal proof that Professor Dew's elaborate efforts against our cause, have failed of their object."[59] On the other extreme, pro-Calhoun editor Duff Green devoted an entire issue of his Washington journal, the Political Register, to reprinting Dew's essay in its entirety. Green hoped that the availability of a cheap edition of the essay would rally the "slaveholding race" in a common effort to defend their personal and political rights.[60]

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[57]Truman Nelson, ed., Documents of Upheaval (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966), 104-105.

[58]African Repository and Colonial Journal, No. 98 (April, 1833), quoted in Richmond Enquirer, April 9, 1839.

[59]John H. Cocke to Ralph R. Gurley, March 31, 1833, quoted in Staudenraus, African Colonization Movement, 183.

[60]Political Register, II (October 16, 1833), 769-832. Green's endorsement was printed on the final page.

Such was the immediate reaction to Dew's defense of slavery and criticism of emancipation. Relatively few of his readers seem to have been suddenly converted to Dew's position, although many were confirmed in their thinking on the subject. There was considerable adverse reaction, not all of it from organized emancipation and colonization groups. Nevertheless, it was clear that the legislative debates had been something of a turning point for many, just as they had been for Dew himself, and that in Virginia and elsewhere in the South, the years immediately following would witness fewer and fewer apologies for the institution of slavery.

There would continue to be some channels for anti-slavery viewpoints, such as the columns of the Richmond Whig and more westerly journals, but the bulk of the state's citizens would accept the pro-slavery argument as it was elaborated upon. Dew's essay played a clear role in this evolution of thought. Whereas during the months immediately following its publication, reaction had been mixed, and people undecided, by the latter half of the decade, and afterward, Dew's work was being cited as a standard, unquestioned source of pro-slavery arguments. One of Dew's faculty colleagues invoked his essay to answer the jurist William Blackstone's charge that slavery cannot originate in compact.[61] Judge Abel Upshur stated simply that Dew's

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[61] N. Beverley Tucker, "Note to Blackstone's Commentaries," Southern Literary Messenger, I (January, 1835), 227.

historical treatment of slavery could not be elaborated on, and an anonymous work published in Philadelphia under the title The South Vindicated, quoted page after page verbatim from Dew's essay.[62] A publication of the Anti-Slavery Society reluctantly admitted that Dew "has gained immense popularity at the South," as a result of his essay,[63] and Dew's fellow laborer in the free trade vineyard, Chancellor Harper of South Carolina, prefaced his own essay on slavery with a tribute to Dew's work. At the same time, Harper saw as a sign of the world's prejudice the fact that Dew's study, "perhaps the most profound, original, and truly philosophical treatise" to appear within Harper's memory, had not attracted the slightest attention beyond the borders of the slaveholding states.[64]

There were some exceptions to Harper's generalization, but it was a fact that communication between North and South on the subject of slavery would gradually become almost non-existent. Sectionalism was to limit the audience of many young Southern writers of promise, such as Dew. He continued to devote many hours outside of the classroom

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[62]Abel P. Upshur, "Domestic Slavery," Southern Literary Messenger, V (October, 1839), 677; The South Vindicated from the Treason and Fanaticism of the Northern Abolitionists (Philadelphia: H. Manly, 1836).

[63]Anti-Slavery Record, I (April, 1835), 47-48. Such praise of Dew's essay could also be a technique for convincing northern readers of the wide acceptance of the pro-slavery argument.

[64]Harper, Pro-Slavery Argument, 2.

to the application of political economy, although his subjects would often be local, rather than national, in scope. Nevertheless, Dew had greatly enhanced his reputation, for the slavery issue attracted much broader lasting attention than even the tariff controversy. His essay was the first comprehensive American defense of slavery. Dew never used the term "positive good" in describing the institution, and although such a position is implied throughout his essay, an apologetic note occasionally crept into the work. Later justifications of slavery would carry individual arguments further, but none would surpass the William and Mary professor's reasoned, documented analysis.

CHAPTER IV

BANKS, USURY, AND THE SEXES

Although Dew had expressed a desire for the peace and tranquility of academic life, the months from late 1831 through early 1833 had been extremely full and sometimes hectic for him. Following the publication and distribution of his essay on slavery, however, he resumed a more relaxed schedule. The number of students at the College had dropped to approximately twenty, but Dew continued to offer his junior and senior courses. At the weekly faculty meetings, College business affairs and student discipline filled most of the agenda, and the latter, because of the quantity of student regulations, sometimes claimed an entire session. In June, 1833, Dew's brother John Wesley was among several students reprimanded for attending an unauthorized dinner at the Raleigh Tavern. Such reprimands sometimes led to expulsion from school, but John Wesley was allowed to graduate in July.[1] During the same commencement week Robert Saunders, Jr., member of an old Williamsburg family, succeeded Ferdinand S. Campbell as professor of mathematics.[2]

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[1]William and Mary Faculty Minutes, 1830-1836, 154.

[2]Ibid., 157.

The next College session witnessed a doubling of the enrollment, but provided Dew with little challenge. Williamsburg was "a miserably dull city," he informed his absent colleague, William Rogers, and "we are travelling our eternal round of dulness and insipidity as usual, - lecturing, to me more intolerable than ever."[3] Two of those lectures, however, enabled Dew to accommodate Edmund Ruffin's request for a contribution to the Farmer's Register and at the same time define his views on recent economic developments. The article, an expanded version of Dew's senior class lectures on the subject of interest or usury, also made reference to national banking and President Jackson's role in it.

In 1832 Jackson had vetoed a bill rechartering the second Bank of the United States, thereby assuring that the Bank would become a major issue in that year's presidential contest. Jackson, in his campaign for re-election against Bank supporter Henry Clay, had as his running-mate former Secretary of State Martin Van Buren of New York. Among many Southerners, especially Calhoun supporters who believed Van Buren had damaged the South Carolinian's political career, there was open opposition to Van Buren. Within Virginia a movement had formed to support Philip P. Barbour of that state for second place on the Jackson ticket.

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[3]Dew to William Barton Rogers, April 23, 1834, Rogers, Life and Letters, I, 110.

The public was informed that Van Buren was either hostile to, or equivocal in support of, every interest Virginians held dear, including free trade.[4] Dew had been among those named to a forty-member Jackson-Barbour central standing committee, and he was also listed as a Jackson-Barbour elector from the eighth Virginia district.[5] However, the movement collapsed after Barbour urged support for the regular Democratic ticket. Dew had hitherto declined to become actively involved in politics, and apparently contributed no more in this instance than his name, but it could be inferred that he was at least thought to be a Democrat in sentiment. Jackson had interpreted his re-election as support for his anti-Bank stand, and to weaken the Bank before its legal demise in 1836, he began placing federal funds in selected state or "pet" banks while drawing on the Bank of the United States for disbursements, a policy known as "removal". In his lectures on usury, Dew indicated his opposition to Jackson's policy.

Ruffin's journal was aimed at a farm audience, and in his cover letter to the editor, Dew sought to explain a connection between agriculture and usury laws. Many westerners, especially, believed that the continuation of such laws worked to their advantage and therefore Dew admitted

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[4]Richmond Whig, June 29, 1832.

[5]Richmond Enquirer, July 24, 1832; Charles Taylor to Littleton W. Tazewell, October 9, 1832, Tazewell Papers.

that his opposition to them would be an unpopular stance. But if he could arouse the interest of his readers to a spirit of inquiry, he would consider himself fully compensated for his labor.[6] Political economists had long opposed usury laws, and Dew's position was therefore not a minority one among members of his own profession. As an undergraduate, he had heard John A. Smith label such restraints on the rate of interest "absurd, impolitic, and unjust," and a similar stand was taken by Thomas Cooper and George Tucker.[7]

Dew's major criticism of usury laws, which in Virginia limited the legal rate of interest a money lender might charge to six percent, was the artificiality of such laws. As he had argued in opposing protective tariffs, natural, rather than man-made, laws should guide the economy. Since interest rates depended on the profit and risk incurred by the lender, and both profit and risk in turn depended on such uncontrollable factors as weather, land speculation, and competitive markets, why should not interest rates be allowed to follow the rising tide of prosperity, and to vary accordingly from one region to another?[8]

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[6]Dew to The Editor, June 17, 1834, Farmer's Register, II (July, 1834), 97.

[7]Smith, Lectures on Government, 74; Cooper, Political Economy, 111; Tipton R. Snavely, George Tucker as Political Economist (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1964), 73.

[8]Thomas R. Dew, "Essay on the Interest of Money and the Policy of the Laws of Usury," Farmer's Register, II (July, 1834), 98-101.

Usury laws also operated unfairly, in that the money lender was restrained by law while the landowner, slaveholder, merchant and manufacturer could take what rents and prices they pleased. Further, borrowed money was wanted for what it would buy, not for itself; the land or goods purchased with the money brought in varying rates of return. The pressure of public opinion had great influence on money lenders, Dew noted, and was a much better regulator than usury laws. Not only did interest restraints impede the general flow of circulation, Dew argued, but they particularly hindered the ambitious young man who, because he was a high risk, was prevented from borrowing at the legal rate. The Watts, Arkwrights, and Whitneys might fail many times, but their successes were of high value.[9]

Dew was writing in the spring of 1834, after a winter of economic tightness caused by the reaction of the Bank of the United States, under its president, Nicholas Biddle, to Jackson's removal policy. As Biddle saw the President thus weakening his bank, he called in loans and refused to make new ones, hoping that the resulting credit squeeze would pressure Jackson into abandoning his withdrawal policy. Dew defended the Bank by contending that a circulating medium depends on the compound ratio of its quantity and velocity of circulation. There had actually been very little

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[9]Ibid., 101-105.

reduction of the quantity of bank paper, Dew argued, but rather a diminishing of the velocity of circulation as a result of "the shock given to public confidence" by Jackson's "rash removal" of the deposits from the Bank.[10]

In proposing a solution to the situation, Dew regretted having to differ with Calhoun, who advocated fixing the rate of interest of the Bank of the United States at five percent. So soon as the Bank was brought below the marketable rate of interest, its branches would be deluged with borrowers using their property as security; "the entire property of the country stands ready to mortgage itself to the banks," and the resulting power of the Bank was a threat to the liberties of the country. The crisis surrounding the panic of 1819 was a result of specie drained from the North and then recalled, to the ruin of western banks. This situation could have been eased if the mother bank and each branch had been permitted to take the market rate of interest in the area in which it was located. The solution, in other words, was to adjust or abolish usury laws so as to prevent banks from acquiring undue and dangerous power; the banks themselves were needed, and ought to be preserved.[11]

Examining next the moral influences of usury laws, Dew saw them as causing money lenders to fall into disrepute by

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[10] Ibid., 112.

[11] Ibid., 108.

forcing them to give up a straight-forward character. He listed sources of historic prejudice against usury, and then sought precedents for the abandonment of such laws. Just as France had eliminated usury laws without higher rates resulting, and South Carolina found her marketable rate to be below her legal rate of seven percent, so Virginia could safely repeal her restrictions, and as the marketable rate during normal periods was six percent in Virginia anyway, the process of repeal could be gradual. Usury laws, he concluded, were in fact a branch of the odious system of restriction he had previously opposed in other forms.[12]

Dew's article on usury was almost immediately printed in pamphlet form and, like his slavery essay, added to the list of assigned texts for his senior course. James Madison, who was presented with a pamphlet copy of the usury essay, replied that he thought the essay would aid in dissipating the erroneous views which had so long prevailed on the subject.[13] However, the question of legal rates of interest in Virginia remained in dispute at the time of Dew's death.

Immediately after commencement exercises in July, Dew traveled to Richmond, where he delivered to Nathaniel Beverley Tucker the news of the latter's appointment as full-time professor of law at William and Mary, succeeding Judge James

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[12]Ibid., 119.

[13]James Madison to Dew, September 15, 1834, Dew Papers.

Semple, who had served only when the General Court was not in session.[14] Tucker, who would thus be assuming the chair once held by his father, St George Tucker, was a graduate of the College and had recently returned to Virginia after practicing law in Missouri. When in Richmond, Dew may well have been on his way to the springs of western Virginia, for Tucker noted in November that Dew had recently returned from the mountains "renewed in bodily health, and, I presume, heart-whole."[15] Tucker and Dew had both received editorial tribute in the September issue of Ruffin's Register, Dew being praised for the manner in which his teaching was shedding light on the ignorant prejudices which had hitherto forged the fetters of the restrictive system and other policies on Virginians.[16]

The end of 1834 brought Dew a greater compliment than the praise of Edmund Ruffin. The trustees of South Carolina College at Columbia had conducted a study of that institution, finally asking for the resignation of all the faculty members. A chair of political economy and history, subjects until then included in the professorship held by Thomas Cooper, was created, and Dew was, in effect, invited

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[14]N. Beverley Tucker to Lucy Tucker, July 8, 1834, Nathaniel Beverley Tucker Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary, folder 337.

[15]N. Beverley Tucker to Elizabeth T. Bryan, November 22, 1834, Bryan Papers, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

[16]Edmund Ruffin, "College of William and Mary," Farmer's Register, II (September, 1834), 239.

to succeed Cooper at South Carolina College. One of the trustees was William Harper, who probably nominated his close friend Dew, but in announcing the appointment, Governor George McDuffie also spoke of Dew in very high terms.[17] Dew, however, declined the offer, preferring to remain at William and Mary. South Carolina College subsequently hired the German-born writer, Francis Lieber, to fill the position.[18]

A renewed burst of literary energy was forthcoming from Dew in the spring of 1835, although he, along with most of his colleagues, was sick during April, perhaps as a result of the climate. Late in that same month he stopped by the Tucker's one evening and was prevailed upon to stay for dinner. Among the other guests was Duff Green, editor of the pro-Calhoun United States Telegraph, a Washington paper.[19] Two years earlier, Green had printed Dew's slavery essay in his Political Register, and he continued to be interested in the economic views of both Dew and Tucker. Dew's major undertaking at the moment, however, was far removed from economics. He had begun writing an essay on the differences between the sexes for the April

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[17]Daniel W. Hollis, South Carolina College (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1951), 120; Richmond Enquirer, December 23, 1834.

[18]Frank Freidel, Francis Lieber, Nineteenth-Century Liberal (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1948), 122.

[19]N. Beverley Tucker to Lucy Tucker, April 15, 28, 1835, Tucker Papers, Folder 337.

issue of the Southern Literary Messenger, and late in the month he informed the editor, Thomas W. White, that the subject had expanded under his reflection so that two installments would be necessary.[20] White had once praised Dew as an "acute and ingenious reasoner" but thought that "he ought to study Calhoun's method of condensing more than he has heretofore been in the habit of doing,"[21] an opinion which may have been reenforced when Dew's essay eventually required a third installment.

As a twenty-three year old describing his European adventures, Dew had discussed at great length the qualities of the female sex, and in his introductory remarks now, he wrote of "throwing together" an essay to "amuse his leisure hours." But the subject had a more serious aspect for Dew as well. In his essay on slavery he had defended that institution for improving the status of white women, mentioning at the same time that no adequate explanation of the origin of chivalry had ever been written.[22] A few years later he would attempt to fill that vacuum, but the present essay suggested the evolving cult of praise for Southern white women which Dew and others would elaborate upon.

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[20]Dew to Thomas W. White, April 24, 1835, Thomas R. Dew Miscellaneous Papers, Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library.

[21]Thomas W. White to N. Beverley Tucker, February 16, 1835, Tucker Papers.

[22]Dew, Pro-Slavery Argument, 340.

When the first installment did appear, a month late, in the May, 1835, Messenger, Dew signed himself "Z.X.W.," although his identity was soon known. He described this first section as the sentimental portion, bringing together, with classic examples, such factors as woman's modesty and gentleness (she is the wooed, not the woer), her vanity (she must appear pleasing to men), and her relative weakness (she bears the children). Woman by her influence on man makes him more agreeable and sociable, and less proud. Dew described the relationship of mother and child, and the romantic attachment of man and woman. "We have never learned so well to know the unappreciable, the priceless value of a woman's heart," he noted near the end, "as when we have experienced the pains and pleasures, the doubts and hopes, pertaining to the period of courtship."[23] For a bachelor, Dew spoke with great feeling.

He had requested his readers to "suspend all judgement" until the dissertation was completed.[24] This was sound advice, for the second and third installments were an improvement over the first, although what Dew obviously meant was that he had not yet said all that he wished to on the subject. The second installment dealt with the differences between the sexes regarding religion. Woman has

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[23]Thomas R. Dew, "Dissertation on the Characteristic Differences Between the Sexes," Southern Literary Messenger, I (May, 1835), 510.

[24]"Z.X.W." to the Editor, May 12, 1835, Southern Literary Messenger I (May, 1835), 492.

always been, everywhere on the globe, more religious than man, Dew began, estimating that in the United States women comprised three-fourths to four-fifths of the total church communicants. To explain this fact he noted that women were less skeptical, less scientifically trained than men, and at the same time more dependent upon religion. Women more often turn to God in time of suffering and sorrow, and it was the peculiar character of the Christian religion to elevate women to a higher place than did the less modest Greek religions, for example. Dew suggested the scope of his own faith by observing that "the mind which can trace back in its reflexions the history of man along the pathway of ages, and see how dynasties have been overthrown, and thrones crumbled, how nations have risen, flourished for a day, then have declined and fallen . . . cannot fail to turn, upon the principle of contrast, to the God of nature, whose throne is eternal, and whose dominion can never pass away."[25]

The New York Mirror, in praising Dew's "taste, gallantry, and philosophy," expressed the wish that he would not stop until he had vindicated the rights of women,[26] a request which Dew partially met in the third installment. He stated that there were no natural differences between the intellectual powers of the sexes, but that the educational process

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[25]Dew, "Dissertation on...the Sexes," July, 1835, 627.

[26]New York Mirror, quoted in Richmond Enquirer, July 14, 1835.

left women ultimately far behind. A girl's education was finished just as a boy was entering college, and she was thereby deprived of the benefit of the lectures, libraries and scientific equipment which the college experience affords. Although women should not vote or take an active part in politics, they should be consulted by politicians on matters of importance. The proposals which Dew had for improving the system of female education he unfortunately was obliged to omit, for he had already consumed too much space, he explained.[27]

Thomas White had predicted editorially that the completed dissertation would constitute the "most perfect essay on the subject in the whole range of English literature."[28] Although one commentator could "quarrel with that odd fancy which could so curiously mingle gallantry with theology, and poetry with logic,"[29] most reviewers agreed with the sentiments of the Augusta, Georgia, Chronicle, that Dew, already too well known to need commendation, exhibited great research, and charming originality, from a chaste, lucid, and powerful pen.[30] Dew indicated to Henry Carey, the economist son of Philadelphia's

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[27]Dew, "Dissertation on...the Sexes," August, 1835, 672-691.

[28]Southern Literary Messenger, I (May, 1835), 531.

[29]"Pocosin," Richmond Enquirer, August 21, 1835.

[30]Augusta, Georgia, Chronicle, quoted in White, Genealogy, 113.

Mathew Carey, that he had been advised to produce a pamphlet version of the dissertation, and asked Carey if he would consider publishing it.[31] Although nothing ever came of this suggestion, the wide circulation of the Messenger had given his views a national exposure, and he was to indicate on several occasions in the future how seriously he did regard the position of woman in society, particularly Southern society.

In the meantime, even while Dew was preparing his dissertation, Edmund Ruffin's Farmer's Register was printing his latest views, and warnings, on the state of the national economy, and Virginia's relation to it. The article was intended to appear anonymously, but Ruffin persuaded Dew to append his name to what he had rather verbosely titled "On Price - the Causes and Effects of the Fluctuations Considered, and the Principles Maintained, Applied to the Present Rage for Speculation."[32] The title at least had the virtue of timeliness, for since he had described a depressed condition when discussing usury the year before, the economy had rapidly revived. Dew explained in some detail how increased foreign investments and a loosening of credit by the Bank of the United States had led to an increased circulation momentum. Prosperity had returned, and with it the speculation mania, which prompted Dew to observe that a calm consideration

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[31]Dew to Henry Carey, November 26, 1835, Carey Papers, New York Historical Society.

[32]Farmer's Register, III (May, 1835),

of the economic situation was in order, so as hopefully to prevent yet another depression. Once again Dew defended banks, which were forced to contract in hard times and expand as prosperity dictated. Current high prices he ascribed to the great foreign demand for American cotton, which in turn led to increased speculation in cotton-producing land. Since cotton accounted for two-thirds of American exports, the foreign capital which it brought in through a favorable balance of trade probably explained why the recent depression was so relatively brief.[33]

A rise in cotton prices, in turn, had other effects on the economy. The market value of slaves came to be determined almost exclusively by cotton prices. Dew reiterated what he had briefly mentioned in his slavery essay, that Virginia and Maryland could probably not afford to raise slaves but for the demand from the cotton producing states. As it was, if the high slave prices continued, the South was apt to drain "all the procreative energies of the race." A second impact of high cotton prices was the tendency of Southerners to raise cotton exclusively, which made that section a market for western grain and northern manufactures.

As for the immediate future, Dew foresaw a continued price rise, and a corresponding speculative mania. The latter evil would probably not effect Virginia directly, but labor and capital would be drained from the state. In

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[33] Ibid., 65-9.

the meantime, Virginians should preserve their industry, sobriety, and morality; if the Bank of the United States should wind up its business too quickly, a contraction in the banking community might lead to another financial shock.[34] Ruffin stated that he had been convinced by all of Dew's arguments except for the anticipated consequence of high slave prices.[35] And the Richmond Enquirer reprinted the article in full at the end of June.[36] By then Virginia was feeling the effects of the Bank of the United States' concluding operations, as Dew had predicted, and he wrote to a friend that the Virginia banks were refusing to accommodate B.U.S. debtors. The same letter included a reference to a recent labor strike in Philadelphia:

> I should like to witness one, although I do not like the principle. All these things have a tendency to generate the dangerous spirit of agrarianism, which we have to dread in this country, above everything else, because of the character of our institutions & the system of universal suffrage so generally prevalent in our country,..I..will never support any system of things which meddles with the great regulator of market price, viz: the ratio of the supply to the demand, which these combinations among workmen certainly do.[37]

The statement reveals not only a consistent attitude on Dew's part toward the desirability of natural law in economics,

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[34] Ibid., 69-72.

[35] Farmer's Register, III (May, 1835), 65.

[36] Richmond Enquirer, June 26, 30, 1835.

[37] Dew to Col. Burwell Bassett, June 12, 1835, Bassett Family Papers, Library of Congress.

but also a conservative approach toward organized labor which was shared by most Americans in the 1830's. Within Virginia, as Dew wrote Ruffin in a letter intended for publication, the price of both free and slave labor would be raised in the process of canal building. Such internal improvements would also result in grain production rather than cattle grazing in western Virginia, a change which would employ excess slaves from eastern Virginia, check white emigration from the state, and revitalize the state's eastern port towns.[38]

This flurry of article-writing came to a halt as the 1834-1835 session drew to a close with what Dew regarded as "the most disagreeable part of our course" - examinations, which were conducted orally and left everyone exhausted at the end of each day.[39] Activities during the summer months revealed the extent to which the residents of the Williamsburg area were developing a ruffled-back attitude toward Northern criticism of Southern institutions. On commencement day, during the annual post-graduation celebration, Dew's brother John Wesley proposed a toast to "States Rights and State Interposition: The Ægis and Palladium of American Liberty."[40] More serious in their implication were John

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[38]Thomas R. Dew, "The Improvements of the James and Kanawa Rivers: Mischievous Effects of the Immigration to the West," Farmer's Register, III (June, 1835), 138-140.

[39]Dew to Burwell Bassett, June 12, 1835, Bassett Family Papers.

[40]Richmond Whig, July 10, 1835. John Wesley Dew had received the A.B. degree in 1833, and in 1835 was awarded a law degree.

Tyler's remarks to a large crowd which gathered at the James City County Courthouse in Williamsburg in early August. The meeting had been called to protest Northern abolitionist interference with slavery, and the Virginia Senator noted the rapid increase which had occurred in the strength of the Anti-Slavery Society - the time had been when he had paid no heed to the northern agitators. The meeting went on to pass resolutions calling for protective legislation against the minority of northern "knaves and madmen," and warning Northern friends of the South that unless the fanatics were stopped, "this union must be dissolved."[41]

Dew's name was not mentioned in connection with the meeting, but it was brought to public attention for a similar purpose a few weeks later when "A Voter of King and Queen" wrote to the Richmond Whig, condemning Thomas Ritchie's "soft" policy toward the abolitionists as protection for Martin Van Buren, and bemoaning the lack of able Southern spokesmen in Congress. Someone was needed to take a "cool, deliberate, but calculating stand" in Washington, and the writer called his readers' attention to the name of Thomas Roderick Dew. "The first politician of the day - a mind stored with the riches and most valuable information on all subjects - a close and logical debater, Professor Dew would carry to Congress a reputation

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[41]Richmond Enquirer, August 21, 1835.

possessed by few statesmen of his years," the King and Queen voter stated, adding that Dew's slavery essay should "carry conviction to the most incorrigible infidel as to its policy, as well as abstract right."[42] As Dew would have been quick to point out, there was no basis for describing him as "the first politician of the day," and nothing came of "Voter's" proposal, although Dew's name would appear in a similar context in a later campaign. He preferred to remain at William and Mary, although a rumor was already circulating that he, for an entirely different reason, had resigned his faculty position at the College.

Rather suddenly, in late summer, William Barton Rogers decided to accept the offer of a teaching position at the University of Virginia, and it was rumored that Dew and Tucker had also left William and Mary. A "Friend to Science" hastened to assure the public, through the pages of the Whig, that Dew had never intimated any intention of deserting the chair which he held with such honor to himself and the College, nor had Tucker resigned his post.[43] Tucker was bitter over Rogers' "defection" and supposed attempt to prevent a successor from accepting a position at William and Mary. He also credited the rumor that he and Dew had resigned with the loss of at least twenty-five prospective students to the College, although he acknowledged that the

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[42]"A Voter of King and Queen," Richmond Whig, September 8, 1835.

[43]Richmond Whig, September 15, 1835.

enrollment would still surpass that for the previous session.[44] Dew, writing on the same day to Rogers himself, indicated the prospects of the College were encouraging, and lamented the absence of the friend with whom he had labored so many years at their alma mater. "I wish most cordially I had you here to accompany me in my long and solitary rides," he wrote. "I think in one more year I should become quite a geologist without reading. . . ."[45]

Rogers' successor, Dr. John Millington, was expected early in 1836, as soon as the James River opened up. Dew rode down to Jamestown one day at the beginning of February, and saw that the river was still frozen across; it was almost March before Millington finally arrived. The new natural philosophy professor had an imposing background, including an education at Oxford University in his native England, a professorship at the University of London, and the superintendency of the largest mining establishment in Mexico. Driven to the United States by a Mexican revolution, he had most recently operated a laboratory in Philadelphia.[46]

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[44]N. Beverley Tucker to Elizabeth T. Bryan, November 2, 1835, Bryan Papers.

[45]Dew to William B. Rogers, November 2, 1835, Rogers, Life and Letters, I, 124.

[46]Richmond Enquirer, March 1, 1836; N. Beverley Tucker to Lucy Tucker, February 5, 1836, Tucker Papers, folder 338; Lavonne O. Tarleton, "John Millington, Civil Engineer and Teacher 1779-1868" (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, The College of William and Mary, 1966), 32-37.

It was bad weather, accompanied by illness, which prevented Dew from appearing before the annual meeting of the Virginia Historical and Philosophical Society on March 2, 1836. He had been elected to membership in that body in 1834, and late in 1835 received an invitation to deliver the main address at the Society's next annual meeting.[47] At the end of February he learned of the death of his only surviving sister, Mary Ellen Gresham.[48] This news may have upset the delicate balance of his health, as illness was the explanation given for his absence to a disappointed audience in Richmond on March 2nd. The Society voted to request the publication of Dew's address in the next issue of the Southern Literary Messenger, and Dew was sufficiently recovered to be in Richmond on the 10th, to deliver the manuscript to the assistant editor, Edgar Allan Poe.[49]

The subject of the address, entitled "Influence of the Federative Republican System of Government Upon Literature and the Development of Character," was broad enough to allow Dew's comment upon several contemporary themes,

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[47]William M.E. Rachal, ed., "Early Records of the Virginia Historical Society, 1835," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXVII (July, 1959), 359. The Society was organized in 1831.

[48]Dew to Thomas Gresham, March 1, 1836, in Sweeney, "Ancestry of Lucy Gatewood," William and Mary Quarterly, XLVI (April, 1938), 191.

[49]Edgar Allan Poe to Lucian Minor, March 10, 1836, A.W. Anthony Collection, New York Public Library, Facsimile, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

and provides a revealing indication of the evolution of his thought. He began with a reference to the American system of government as "the great experiment of the eighteenth century," and praised the literary atmosphere of a republican government - it was liberty, not monarchy, which had called forth Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. In appealing for a truly American literature, Dew was joining many well-known literary figures of the past half-century, and anticipating by a year the most famous of all such appeals, Ralph Waldo Emerson's address on "The American Scholar."[50]

Turning from such a nationalistic outlook, Dew moved to a discussion of the influences of the federative system, which he defined as a government binding states together while leaving the sovereignty and liberty of each unimpaired. The atmosphere fostered by such a government left writers free of a central state control, and allowed the circulation of literature. How soon, he asked, would the literature of Germany wane away, if those states were moulded into one consolidated empire? Higher education was an important adjunct of literature, and the United States already had many colleges, perhaps too many to guarantee

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[50]Thomas R. Dew, "Influence of the Federative Republican System of Government Upon Literature and the Development of Character," Southern Literary Messenger, II (March, 1836), 261-264.

the high quality of each.[51]

Unlike many European states, the United States had liberty, but there was danger in the opposite extreme as well. The almost unlimited extension of the suffrage provided demagogues in the North with the opportunity for turning the poor against the rich, leading to lawless mobs which defied civil authority. The time would come when the "great safety valve of the West" would be closed, and then the agrarian spirit, of which Dew had spoken with concern before, would be channeled into disregard for the sanctity of private property.[52] In the South, however, where slavery existed, such dangers would be allayed by the spirit of equality which reigned among all white men. As for the slave himself, he was happy with his lot and aspired to none of the white man's goods. There were no Manchester and Smithfield riots in the South, no turning out of slaves into the cold world after they were too old to work. Dew defied the world to produce a parallel to the rapid improvement of the slave since his arrival in America. Slavery, he was now saying, was a positive good - "let us cleave to it as the ark of our safety." "Expediency, morality, and religion alike demand its continuance, and perhaps," he declared, "I would not hazard too much in the

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[51] Ibid., 269. Dew described the German states as having twenty-two universities in 1826, all of good quality, and all having over 200 students.

[52] Ibid., 276-77.

prediction, that the day will come when the whole confederacy will regard it as the sheet anchor of our country's liberty."[53]

Dew reached the climax of his address on a somewhat pessimistic note. If ever disunion should come, the radical or agrarian spirit and executive usurpation in the North would combine to form a despotism which the slaveholding South could probably avoid. But there was a greater danger - consolidation, which would lead to enslavement of all the people. If, however, all of these pitfalls could be avoided, the United States could be to the world an unequalled theater for the display of the arts.[54]

The Messenger's editor, Thomas White, who had delayed the March issue so as to include Dew's address, remarked privately that he considered it the best thing Dew had ever written.[55] The Baltimore Patriot commended the essay to every American, and the Richmond Compiler predicted that those who had yet to acquire a well-balanced love for the sovereingty, and the union, of the states would read the essay with profit.[56] In preparing the address, Dew had been aware that his audience would include many of Virginia's

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[53]Ibid., 278.

[54]Ibid., 279-282.

[55]Thomas W. White to N. Beverley Tucker, March 24, 1836, Tucker Papers.

[56]Baltimore Patriot and Richmond Compiler, quoted in Southern Literary Messenger, II (April, 1836), 342, 341.

leading citizens, for membership in the Society encompassed more than those with a professional interest in history. He was clearly responding, in part, to the increased Northern pressure on the South, which had prompted a flow of letters to the press warning the Northern abolitionists to "keep hands off" the institution of slavery. Dew's tone now was considerably less reserved then when he composed his essay on slavery four years earlier, but the response from reviewers was equally favorable. In his opposition to executive usurpation, as with his earlier criticism of Jacksonian fiscal policy, Dew was implying sympathy for the Whig political party, which had come into existence in 1834 out of negative reaction to Jackson's Bank veto and anti-nullification stand. And in his prediction of Northern class conflict, Dew was alluding to a concept which John C. Calhoun would develop fully in his 1849 Disquisition on Government.

The public was introduced to the dangers of excess governmental power in another Dew essay later in the same spring of 1836. He deprived the brief article of its fullest impact by signing it only "Z.W.," but the seriousness of the situation as he interpreted it was easy to grasp. The public had not been exposed sufficiently to the dangers inherent in the large federal treasury surplus, Dew believed. The surplus, unique in the nation's history, came not from tariff revenue, which was either steady or declining each year since the 1833 compromise, but from the sudden and tremendous increase in public land sales, which in turn

reflected the mania for land speculation. In accord with the Jackson administration's "pet bank" policy, this revenue was deposited in selected state banks across the country. A money pressure was easily created under such circumstances, Dew explained, for the "pet banks" could make loans on the federal deposits, but must always have funds to meet a call for governmental disbursements. Thus when Congress was to be in session, the banks frequently had to call in loans, leading to constant uncertainty and money pressure.[57]

As Dew was preparing his article for the Farmer's Register, the Whigs in Congress, under the leadership of Henry Clay, were advocating a program of distribution of the surplus funds to the states, technically as a loan. Although Dew did not believe this scheme to be a complete remedy, it seemed to be the best immediate solution to the problem. What ever decision Congress reached, it must be made soon, Dew urged, for under the existing system, the power of the government over the economy was fearful.[58] On June 23rd, Congress did pass the Surplus Revenue Act, embodying the policy of distribution to the states, and President Jackson signed it.

In the meantime, another academic session was drawing to a close. On the fourth of July, following the exercises

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[57]"Z.W." "Surplus Revenue of the United States," Farmer's Register, IV (June, 1836), 121-122.

[58]Ibid., 123.

at Bruton Parish Church, the students returned to the College for a dinner at the Brafferton. Some of the holiday celebrants, including John Tyler, attended another dinner at the Raleigh, where, according to one account, nullifiers and opponents of that viewpoint exchanged heated words and dishes were thrown.[59] That same week, Tyler, as Rector, presided over another, and presumably less violent, meeting, the annual gathering of the William and Mary Board of Visitors. The major business before the Board was the selection of a successor to President Adam Empie. Earlier in the year Empie had complained that "there seems no prospect of our ever enjoying health in this wretched place, though we were to spend our lives here,"[60] and when another opportunity appeared, Empie submitted his resignation to the Board of Visitors. To fill the vacant presidency, the Visitors chose Thomas R. Dew. Not since the Reverend James Madison became president in 1777 had a member of the faculty been promoted to presiding officer of the College. Although only thirty-three years old, Dew was the senior professor in years of service, and, more important, he had established himself as an able writer and lecturer, with a reputation which was likely to attract students to the College. There would be no increase in

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[59]Richmond Enquirer, July 12, 1836.

[60]The Reverend Adam Empie to William B. Rogers, April 1, 1836, Rogers, Life and Letters, I, 123.

salary, and he would continue with his regular teaching load, actually working Empie's moral philosophy course into his own offerings, while Beverley Tucker incorporated the political section of Dew's course into his law lectures. The other faculty members continued to be John Millington, the professor of natural philosophy, mathematics professor Robert Saunders, and Dabney Browne, whose chair of humanities included responsibility for the college preparatory students.

There was some immediate College business to attend to, and then Dew and his colleagues departed for the summer. Eighteen years before, Dew had looked forward to his first session as a student at William and Mary; now, in 1836, October would bring challenges of a different kind.

CHAPTER V

DEW AT THE HELM: WILLIAM AND MARY'S GOLDEN ERA

The paths of Dew and two of his colleagues, Robert Saunders and John Millington, crossed in Philadelphia during the summer of 1836; one common objective was the purchase of books for the College library. Dew returned to Dewsville early in September to begin drafting his inaugural address, and while still at home he received encouraging word regarding the number of probable matriculates for the coming session.[1] At noon on October 10th, those students who had arrived in Williamsburg, together with townspeople and visitors, gathered in the College chapel to hear Dew address the community for the first time as president.

In that inaugural message, Dew began with a discussion of the College curriculum, stressing those areas which were new or recently reorganized and advocating a broad field of study, each discipline contributing to the others in the "little republic of the mind." Greater emphasis, he noted, was being placed on the classical department, which offered courses designed to prepare its students for a teaching

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[1]Dew to John Millington, September 7, 1836, William and Mary College Papers, folder 98A, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

career. In addition, William and Mary now offered the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Law, and Master of Arts degrees. Among the courses leading to those degrees were new ones such as civil engineering, prompted by the heightened interest in internal improvements and Dr. Millington's proficiency in that field. But, Dew continued, "the most important of all" were the moral and political studies, which had long been stressed at William and Mary, and which had produced many distinguished statesmen among her alumni.[2] Those latter courses must continue to be emphasized, for under the country's federative system of government, the people were the source of all political power, and everything therefore depended on the "general intelligence and virtue of the mass." The times were very unsettled, Dew observed; "Monarchists and democrats, conservatives and radicals, whigs and tories, agrarians and aristocrats, slaveholders and non-slaveholders" were locked in combat. The latter illustration prompted Dew to advise the student body:

> You are slaveholders, or the sons of slaveholders; and as such, your duties and responsibilities are greatly increased. He who governs and directs the actions of others, needs especially intelligence and virtue. Prepare yourselves, then, for this important relation, so as to be able to discharge its duties with humanity and wisdom. Then can we exhibit to the world

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[2]Thomas R. Dew, "An address," Southern Literary Messenger, II (December, 1836), 761-64.

> the most convincing evidence of the justice of our cause; then may we stand up with boldness and confidence against the frowns of the world; and if the demon of fanaticism shall at last array its thousands of deluded victims against us, threatening to involve us in universal ruin by the overthrow of our institutions, we may rally under our principles undivided and undismayed-firm and resolute as the Spartan band at Thermopylae; and such a spirit, guided by that intelligence which should be possessed by slaveholders, will ever insure the triumph of our cause.[3]

What had been for Dew a regrettable burden a decade earlier was now "our cause."

Dew had additional advice for the young men assembled before him. There were several vices, specifically "extravagance, drinking, and gambling," which the faculty were bound to supress by every means in their power. To assist the faculty, the merchants of Williamsburg had unanimously agreed not to extend credit to students, unless with the written permission of a parent or faculty member. Finally, Dew urged his students to be conscious of their institution's past - "you tread on classic soil" - and gave them a charge which was almost autobiographical: "Arouse all your energies, waken up your faculties, enter on your career like the combatant at the Olympic Games, resolved to win the prize, and in advance I tell you, the victory will be yours."[4]

A committee of students immediately paid Dew the compliment of requesting that his address be printed for general

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[3] Ibid., 765.

[4] Ibid., 769.

distribution. An inquiry had also come to Dew from Edgar Allan Poe of the Southern Literary Messenger for information about the College and its program, and he was able to accommodate both petitions by sending Poe the manuscript of his address, with a plea for its immediate publication, as he wished it to be before the public as soon as possible. He also outlined briefly for Poe the history of the College, praised the Williamsburg setting, and reiterated that, while some colleges might have equalled William and Mary in physics and mathematics, few had in morals and politics.[5] Returning the proof sheets to Poe at the end of October, Dew could state that the ninety students then in attendance represented a figure probably never equalled so early in the session. And rather paternally, he suggested that Poe give copies of the Messenger to the Richmond editors and to each student who had comprised the committee requesting Dew's address - such little acts of kindness were always flattering to the recipient, and in addition Dew liked to see the Messenger circulated among the students.[6]

When the address appeared in the December issue of the Messenger, the response was not completely favorable. The Norfolk Beacon praised Dew's "sober earnestness and genuine philanthrophy" but found fault with his great emphasis on

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[5]Dew to Edgar A. Poe, October 17, 1836, Griswold Manuscripts, Boston Public Library, Photostat in Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

[6]Dew to Poe, October 31, 1836, ibid.

moral and political subjects which were considered "somewhat beyond the strict line of ordinary academical disciplines." Also questioned was Dew's carelessness in citing his classical quotations.[7] Similar criticism marked a more detailed analysis of Dew's address by "N" in the February, 1837, Messenger. Because of President Dew's established reputation as a writer, and the station which he occupied at the College, "N" asserted, it was important that his errors should be exposed, in order that they might be avoided by those who selected him as a model for imitation. The reviewer criticized Dew's misuse of quotations, his overly flowery style, and his use of words such as "pervasive" and "incipiency," which, because they were new to him, "N" concluded had not yet been licensed by general usage. The bulk of the criticism, however, was aimed at Dew's emphasis on the very subjects which he taught. Denying the need for political training, "N" described as among Virginia's greatest evils the "numerous swarm of hungry politicians" which had destroyed useful enterprise in the state, and he called instead for a class of country gentlemen educated in sciences useful to agriculture.[8]

A final word on Dew's inaugural message appeared in April when Thomas White returned to active editorship of

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[7]Editorial headed "President Dew" in Norfolk Beacon, copied in Richmond Enquirer, December 6, 1836.

[8]"N," "Review of President Dew's 1836 Address," Southern Literary Messenger, III (February, 1837), 130-135.

the Messenger and explained that his able acting editor had authored the review. If "N" was actually Poe, then his motive in criticizing Dew can be assumed to have been constructive, for he was an acknowledged admirer of Dew's literary ability.[9] White praised the reviewer for his style, and then defended Dew on the grounds, for example, that new words came into popular usage only if some authors had the courage to take new steps. As for the charge that Dew was emphasizing his own discipline, White answered that Dew was aware that the moral and political fields were slighted in many institutions, and that he was only contending for their equal consideration with other subjects. It had long been charged, White wrote, that at William and Mary, too much stress had been placed on these fields of study, and Dew was attempting to justify that stress.[10]

If Dew had transgressed at all in his address, it was only in over-enthusiasm and slight tactlessness. As the 1836-1837 session commenced in earnest, enthusiasm was justifiable, for the enrollment reached a record 113 students, as compared with forty-eight just two years

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[9]Poe to John P. Kennedy, June 7, 1836, Griswold Manuscripts. In that letter, Poe listed Dew along with Mrs. Sigourney, James K. Paulding, James Fenimore Cooper, etc. as among the "highest sources" from whom he hoped to obtain contributions for the Messenger. Benjamin B. Minor, Southern Literary Messenger 1834-1864 (New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1905), is unclear as to the actual editor of the February, 1837, issue.

[10]Thomas W. White, "To Our Readers," Southern Literary Messenger, III (April, 1837), 268-270.

before.[11] Since the faculty members received $20 per student, plus the base salary of $1000, an increased enrollment also had salutary financial implications. Tucker predicted that his income for the session would be between $1500 and $2000, Dew's fully $2000, Saunders' somewhat more and Millington's fully $2500. The latter's figure pleased Tucker because during the summer Millington had turned down an offer paying that amount in Philadelphia.[12]

Actually, Dew's total income from the College was $2522, because in addition to his salary and fees, he received $130 for house rent and $50 for gardener's expenses.[13] The latter sums were presumably paid out of rent received by the College for the President's House, while Dew, a bachelor, boarded with a Williamsburg family. He is known to have been living with the Peachy family in 1837 and 1843, and may have resided with the Sheldon family in 1846.[14] Such an arrangement enabled Dew to participate actively and conveniently in

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[11]The previous high was 96 students in 1816-17.

[12]Tucker to John Randolph Bryan, November 3, 1836, Grinnan Family Papers, Box 5, Alderman Library, University of Virginia. Why do you think he turned down the Philadelphia offer, Tucker asked Bryan? "Because experience has convinced him (an English radical and personal friend of Lord Brougham) of the superior advantage of living in a country whose institutions are based on domestic slavery."

[13]Thomas R. Dew Account Book, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary, 207.

[14]Dew to Col. Burwell Bassett, June 22, 1837, Bassett Family Papers; Edmund Berkeley to Lewis Berkeley, October 16, 1843, Berkeley Family Papers, Alderman Library, University of Virginia; Dew to Fanny T. Burwell, April 13, 1846,

Williamsburg social life, which enjoyed a widespread reputation for refinement. The Peachy, Sheldon, Browne, Tucker, Millington, and Saunders families, together with that of a new resident, John Tyler, all occupied homes facing the two-block Palace Green, which was located three blocks east of the College.[15] In addition, a brother or nephew of Dew was in Williamsburg attending the College during almost all of his twenty years as a faculty member, providing a contact with his family, whom he visited each summer in King and Queen County. While in Europe he had expressed the hope that he would never be "banished from the intercourse and sweets of society," a possibility which he avoided in Williamsburg, although he occasionally experienced a sense of loneliness.

The classes faced by the tall, lean Dew, perhaps now wearing the narrow beard shown in his portraits, increased in proportion as the over-all enrollment grew. During his first session as president, Dew met with sixty-eight students in his junior moral class each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning at 10:15. The subjects covered included belles lettres, rhetoric, logic composition, moral philosophy and history. The smaller senior political class of twenty-six

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George B. Harrison Papers, Duke University Library. In 1842-43, a Mrs. Dixon, "Owing to embarrassed circumstances," was not requested to pay the $150 rent due on the President's House, Dew Account Book, 234.

[15]Percy Winfield Turrentine, "Life and Works of Nathaniel Beverley Tucker," (Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1952), III, 1161-62.

met at 10:30 on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings for the study of political economy, government, and the philosophy of the human mind. Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations continued to be an assigned text, along with Dew's published works.[16]

Since the faculty and student body had always been relatively small, and because he continued to teach, Dew's duties did not change greatly after he assumed the presidency, although they became more time-consuming and he shouldered greater responsibility for the smooth-functioning of the College. There was a part-time College bursar, but day-to-day expenses were handled by Dew himself. During his first months in the presidency, he recorded the purchase of such items as 110 lbs of pork, 10 barrels of lime, a bucket for the President's House, and, always, books for the library. There were also maintenance expenses, as for example "to Bob for cleaning two wells," or "to three women for two days of scouring."[17]

The weekly faculty meetings continued to be spent in consideration of student discipline and attendance, but there were also frequent petitions to be discussed. The College steward, who was responsible for the feeding and lodging of the resident students, revealed on one occasion that damage had been done to the second floor of the College,

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[16]William and Mary Faculty Minutes, 1836-1846, 1; Dew Account Book, 204; Catalogue of the Officers and Students of William and Mary, 1836-1837, (Petersburg, 1837).

[17]Dew Account Book, 129.

and reported another time that he had received student complaints about the quality of his food.[18] Students also presented grievances to the faculty. In December a special meeting was called to consider the request of three former University of Virginia students for admission. The request was granted, since their dismissal from the other institution had been for a single infraction of rules. And just before Christmas, a memorial signed by 67 of the students was presented to the faculty, asking that classes be suspended for the week between Christmas and the new year. Although College regulations stated that only Christmas Day (which fell on a Sunday in 1836) was to be observed as a holiday, the faculty decided to reward the students' behaviour and grant the request. It was a pragmatic decision as well, for many of the students would have gone home anyway, some for longer than one week.[19]

Dew occasionally found time to comment privately on contemporary economic developments, continuing his attack on the deposit or pet bank system of handling federal revenue.[20] But College duties occupied the vast portion of his time, climaxing with the always-exhausting examinations. Those sessions had run for over three hours a day the first week, he wrote an old friend, and now a week of public

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[18]William and Mary Faculty Minutes, 1836-46, 22, 42.

[19]Ibid., 12, 18.

[20]William C. Rives to Dew, January 9, 1837, Dew Papers.

examinations had begun, lasting for six hours at a time,

> So you may well imagine I am jaded in body & mind. I do assure you that although learning is good in itself, yet it is very disagreeable to have too much of it at one sitting. After all man's susceptibility of receiving knowledge is not like the capacity of a cistern for receiving water. You cannot pour into the mind until it is filled.

As if that were not enough, his horse had been ill for three weeks, and he was "suffering terribly" for want of exercise.[21]

Commencement day was much brighter for Dew. He had invited the Norfolk Light Artillery Blues and the Williamsburg Light Infantry Guards to escort the academic procession to Bruton Church. Once there, Dew called upon the four bachelor of arts candidates for their orations. They were good, a witness related, but "the great thing of the day was the address of President Dew."[22] The themes which he stressed in his baccalaureate message he had emphasized before. The aristocracy of wealth and birth might be overthrown by trade revolutions or the progress of civilization, but the aristocracy of talent and learning would abide for the world's duration. Where the people are sovereign, everything depended on their intelligence, and, Dew cautioned would-be politicians in his audience, they

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[21]Dew to Col. Burwell Bassett, June 22, 1837, Bassett Family Papers.

[22]"Grigsby" of the Norfolk Beacon, printed in the Norfolk Herald and copied in the Richmond Enquirer, July 18, 1837.

should always act on principle. He concluded by assuring the students that love and veneration for their parents would supply them with the noblest impulses, and that the importance of religion should not be overlooked - "you should sometimes leave the multitude, and give yourselves up to the solemnities and the severities of self-examination and the awful stillness of religious contemplation."[23] A dinner followed at the City Hotel, during which a toast was proposed "to Professor Dew: unrivalled as a political economist," and thus his first year as president of William and Mary came to a close.[24]

As soon as he had hastily prepared the manuscript of his baccalaureate address for inclusion in the July Southern Literary Messenger, Dew departed for Dewsville and then, early in August, for the Fauquier Sulphur Springs.[25] Among the five hundred guests at the Springs were several of the William and Mary professors, Dr. John P. Emmet of the University of Virginia, Judge Thurston of Washington, and a son of President Van Buren, but, according to Beverley Tucker, "no Lions at all...perhaps Dew comes as near the thing as any body else."[26]

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[23]Thomas R. Dew, "An Address," Southern Literary Messenger, III (July, 1837), 401-406.

[24]Richmond Whig, July 18, 1837.

[25]Benjamin F. Dew to John Millington, August 16, 1837, William and Mary College Papers, folder 123.

[26]N. Beverley Tucker to Lucy Tucker, August 21, 1837, Tucker Papers, folder 338.

When the students began arriving in Williamsburg for a new session in October, it was soon evident that another high enrollment would be realized. Among the 111 regular matriculates were 104 from Virginia, six from North Carolina, and one from Mississippi, in addition to twenty-two preparatory students in the classical school.[27] These were encouraging statistics, but there might have been some justification for asking how long the College could experience such prosperity. For the country at large was already feeling the widespread suffering which would eventually be known as the Panic of 1837. In July of the preceding year, President Jackson had issued his "specie circular," which specified that the government would accept only hard money in payment for public lands. The President's objective was to check the rage of speculation, and also to prevent the country from a further gorging on valueless paper money, but the result exceeded Jackson's expectations. Land sales did decline substantially, but there was a drain of specie from banks, especially the "pet" banks already weakened by the first phase of the Distribution Act which removed ten million dollars from those banks for distribution among the states. This factor, combined with other effects of speculation, crop failures, the loss of a favorable balance of trade and a decline in prices, led by mid 1837 to a national depression,

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[27]Catalogue of the Officers and Students of William and Mary College, 1837-1838 (Petersburg, 1838), 8.

accompanied by bank failures, unemployment, and lack of foodstuffs.

In September, President Van Buren, who had inherited the economic crisis within weeks of his inauguration, convened a special session of Congress. He had never been in favor of Jackson's "pet bank" policy, and now he advocated a program disassociating the government from all banks, depositing and disbursing federal funds instead in several sub-treasuries to be established around the country.[28] The President also advocated a specie currency and criticized state-chartered banks. As Congress began considering Van Buren's proposals, a number of individuals indicated they would like to know Dew's attitude toward the whole economic picture.[29] In February, 1838, Dew spelled out his views, but the format was a private letter to an Alabama acquaintance which eventually found its way by a circuitous route into public print under Dew's name.

In the letter, written after the United States Senate had passed Van Buren's sub-treasury plan but before the House of Representatives had taken final action on it, Dew described the scheme as fraught with the most formidable evils, at war with the present age, a move backwards toward

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[28]These sub, or independent, treasuries could be existing federal offices such as customs houses and post offices.

[29]Duff Green to Beverley Tucker, September 9, 1837; Richard K. Cralle to Tucker, November 22, 1837, Tucker Papers; William C. Rives to Dew, January 9, 1837, Dew Papers.

barbarism. More specifically, he depicted the credit system, exemplified by banks, as a great engine of improvement developed by the more civilized countries, such as the United States and England. Unfortunately, Dew observed, the public always blames creditors for a depression, and since in the United States banks were the largest creditors, they were always blamed, as in the case of the recent 1837 panic, He did not deny that banks had furthered a speculative spirit, but he believed that the sub-treasury scheme was nothing less than an unfair declaration of war on the entire banking system, symbolized by the cry for divorce of the government from banks.

Dew also offered a critique of the sub-treasury concept. The removal from circulation of a large sum of surplus revenue, such as the $40 million existing prior to the recent panic, would seriously deplete the nation's total of $120 million circulating medium, leading to a fall of prices and depression. The sudden addition to the economy of that hoarded $40 million, on the other hand, would lead to a speculative price rise, and another revulsion. Sub-treasury advocates might cry that the government would guard against a dangerous surplus, Dew noted, but an equally closely guarded pet-bank system had produced that very evil. Here Dew mentioned to his anonymous addressee that he hoped soon to write an essay citing historical examples of the hoarding of specie by governments, something few historians had been able to do because of their lack of familiarity with political economy.

Van Buren had declared his opposition to state-chartered banks but, to Dew, they represented a solution to the financial problem. His greatest objection to the Bank of the United States, Dew stated once again, was its artificial regulation. A system of State banks on the other hand, with their relatively small revenue and regular annual income and disbursements, would enable natural regulators to work. As long as the sub-treasury system also existed, however, the ominous threat of executive encroachment existed. Calhoun relied on "the antagonistical" position of the state banks to the federal government, once the former were divorced from the latter. But, Dew argued, once the sub-treasury had weakened the banks, by hoarding and then disgorging funds, those banks would become slaves to the President and to a sub-treasury system more powerful than any national bank.

The general nature of Dew's opposition to the sub-treasury system was evident here, and he would become even more specific before the sub-treasury system was finally enacted by Congress in 1840. This 1838 letter, intended as a private expression of Dew's views, came into the hands of the editor of the Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Intelligencer, who printed the letter in February. In a preface, the editor explained to his readers that the letter had been received by a member of the legislature of one of the Southern states, and that it came from

> one of the ablest and most distinguished pens in our country - a pen that has often been

> wielded with tremendous power, in defense of the institutions of the South. The writer has devoted many long years to the study of finance as a science, and is probably the most learned and profound political economist in America. He is, too, any thing but a partisan. Far removed from the din and bustle of politics, he looks out upon the world, through the 'loop holes' of his retreat, with the calm eye of a philosopher; careless of the ascendency of this or that party, and intent only upon the establishment of scientific principles, and the wise administration of the government of his country.[30]

Thomas Allen, editor of the anti-Van Buren Washington Madisonian, in reprinting the letter from the Alabama paper in March, 1839, believed he "erred not" in attributing the letter to Langdon Cheves, former president of the Bank of the United States and member of Congress from South Carolina.[31] Some individuals were aware of Dew's authorship, however, for at a dinner in October, Senator Rives referred those present to the "most able letter" of "that profound and distinguished political economist," Thomas R. Dew.[32] The printing of Rives' address led to requests for the publication of Dew's letter, and Thomas Allen complied later in October, even though he had already printed it a few months earlier, under the authorship of Cheves.[33]

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[30]Tuscaloosa, Alabama Intelligencer, quoted in Washington Madisonian, March 30, 1839.

[31]Washington Madisonian, March 30, 1839.

[32]Ibid., October 2, 1839.

[33]Ibid., October 19, 1839.

And in November, an extract of the letter appeared in the Baltimore Niles' Register.[34] By a rather indirect route, Dew's position was thus made known to a large number of readers. Given the fact that it was intended as a private letter, it was a very clear and complete statement.

At the same time as Dew was writing on the subject of national economic policy early in 1838, he was also engaging in an expansion of his personal finances. Even before assuming the presidency of William and Mary, Dew's income from the College had been more than adequate for a single man maintaining neither a home nor a family. Beginning about 1830, therefore, he had begun loaning sums to acquaintances, and by 1836 a total of $15,250 was due him, at six percent interest, from such prominent Williamsburg residents as Doctors Peachy and Galt, Professors Saunders and Tucker, and Judge Christian. The following year he purchased twelve shares of Virginia State stock.[35] Although he declined Tredegar Iron Company president Joseph R. Anderson's offer to sell him twenty-eight shares of his company's stock in January, 1838, Dew made several purchases between then and July, when he figured his annual income. By then, he owned not only the Virginia State stock but also fifteen shares of Tredegar, ten shares of Richmond

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[34]Baltimore Niles National Register, November 30, 1839.

[35]Dew Account Book, 1-3, 57.

Corporation, and sixty-five shares of James River and Kanawha Canal stock. Other purchases soon after included James River and Kanawha bonds, and Richmond and Fredericksburg Railroad stock.[36] His total income from July, 1837, to July, 1838, was $3,105.72, a sum frequently surpassed in succeeding years, and giving him, usually, the largest income of any Williamsburg resident. His father had given him $7000 by 1839, an amount which undoubtedly assisted him in his investments and reflected his father's increased income from similar sources.[37] In keeping with his frequent admonition to Virginians to help Virginia, the younger Dew's investments were all in state-related securities.

Enrollment at the College continued to climb in September, 1838, in spite of the adverse effects of the panic. There were 132 undergraduate students, plus 16 in the classical school, and 6 master's degree candidates. Most of these were enrolled in one or more of Dew's courses, for he had 80 students registered for his junior course, 49 in his senior course, and six graduate advisees.[38] While Dew's time

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[36]Joseph K. Anderson to N. Beverley Tucker, January 10, 1838, Tucker Papers; Dew Account Book, 57.

[37]Dew Account Book, 3; Dew to Col. Burwell Bassett, June 12, 1835, Bassett Family Papers; Thomas Dew Last Will and Testament, dated May 7, 1839, copy in Dew Papers; King and Queen County Tax Records, Virginia State Library. Dew's father and brothers became the leading money lenders within the county, in addition to their agricultural pursuits, the senior Dew's wealth being estimated in excess of $200,000 by the 1840's.

[38]Catalogue of the Officers and Students of William and Mary College, 1838-39 (Petersburg, 1839). Benjamin F. Dew was one of the M.A. students.

was thus occupied, a newspaper debate was attempting to decide his future for him.

During February a writer from King and Queen County raised a question in the Richmond Whig as to whether Congressman Robert M.T. Hunter's sympathetic attitude toward the sub-treasury and other "locofoco" Democratic policies justified his re-election by the Whig party.[39] "A Caroline Whig," agreeing that a true Whig should be nominated to replace Hunter, "now the Van Buren candidate in our district," proposed Professor Dew of William and Mary, who would be "a distinguished accession to the ranks of those who now proclaim, entertain, and defend Southern principles and Southern rights." "Caroline" was sure that Dew could be elected, and that if elected, he would not decline to serve.[40] These sentiments were supported by "Many Voters of Essex," who believed that Dew, "the soundest politician in Virginia," would come forward to assist the Whigs, although he had not yet been consulted on the matter.[41] A negative note, however, was injected by "A Voter of Essex," who argued that Hunter was still the same man politically that he had always been, and that Dew's entry into the race would divide the vote and throw the election to a "whole-hog Van Buren man." Dew would undoubtedly make a good repre-

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[39]Richmond Whig, February 15, 1839.

[40]"A Caroline Whig," in Richmond Whig, February 23, 1839.

[41]"Many Voters of Essex," in Richmond Whig, May 3, 1839.

sentative, "Essex" added, but Dew would never engage in such a shallow plot against Whigism, he was confident. Nor was Dew "the soundest politician in Virginia" - "the fact is, that very few persons in our district, comparatively speaking, know Professor Dew, even by sight, much less do they know what are his politics."[42] Since Dew spent only vacations and holidays in King and Queen County, and Williamsburg was not in the Congressional district which Hunter represented, the assessment of "Essex" was understandable. Also, Dew had not engaged in partisan politics, except in so far as his sub-treasury opposition placed him in the Whig camp. No Dew movement gained momentum in May, 1839, although later in that same month a candidate for the state senate addressed a Williamsburg audience, referring to William and Mary as one of the "great fountains of Whig learning," at whose head "stands the soundest Politician of the Country."[43] The image, at least, persevered.

While readers of the Richmond Whig could follow this discussion, Enquirer subscribers were treated to a literary battle between "A" and "Alumnus" which temporarily cast a shadow over William and Mary. "A," later identified as Colonel Robert Anderson of Williamsburg, accused William and Mary officials of poor handling of College funds, and

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[42]"A Voter of Essex," in Richmond Whig, May 10, 1839.

[43]Richmond Enquirer, May 21, 1839, quoting James Lyon.

claimed that he was not allowed to see the financial records at his request. "Alumnus," who proved to be mathematics professor Robert Saunders, resorted, as Anderson had done, to figures to support his contention that the College had weathered the national economic fluctuations of the preceding twenty years and now held $106,992.00 in safe securities, plus $28,368.00 in debts owed the College.[44] Prior to commencement in July, Anderson was invited to a special meeting of the faculty and the Colonel, who had been denied the position of bursar several years before, agreed to cease his criticism. The debate actually gained the College favorable publicity in the end, and during the post-commencement dinner on July 4th, Dew could proudly observe that the condition of the College had never been equalled, nor the deportment of the students surpassed. Then he proposed a toast "to the Students of William and Mary: As a body they have had the wisdom to discover the identity of interest between professor and student, and the firmness to act accordingly - their conduct has gone far towards the solution of the difficult problem of College discipline."[45] Beverley Tucker was even more optimistic in asserting that the College had been influential in reversing the tide of

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[44]"A" in Richmond Enquirer, May 3, June 18, July 5, 1839; "Alumnus" in ibid., May 21, June 25, 1839.

[45]Richmond Enquirer, July 16, 1839.

emigration from the state.[46]

Dew left Williamsburg during the summer, as usual, but before he arrived at the Springs he had an attack of the fever. When he reached the watering spot in mid August, he was somewhat thinner than usual, although ready to hold Tucker to an earlier promise to bring him and "A.E." together. By the first of September Dew was described as "in a fidget" to get to "Chapawamsic," so much so that he had set his heart on buying the "magnificent equipage" of the Mexican Emperor's son who was visiting the Springs.[47] "A.E.," the reason for Dew's possible extravagance, was probably Miss Ann Elizabeth Fitzhugh, the twenty-three year old daughter of Major William Henry Fitzhugh of "Chapawansic" in Stafford county.[48] Whether or not the anticipated meeting took place then, the principals definitely would meet at a later date.

The 139 students who registered at William and Mary in October were aware that they formed the largest number ever to assemble at the College, but they could not have known that over seventy years would lapse before their record was surpassed. Of the 1839 number, 116 were

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[46]N. Beverley Tucker to Lucy Tucker, July 13, 1839, Tucker Papers, folder 338.

[47]Ibid., August 7, 25, September 1, 1839.

[48]"Fitzhugh Family," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, VIII (April, 1901), 431.

Virginians, while eleven came from North Carolina, four from Alabama, two from Maryland and Missouri, and one each from South Carolina, Mississippi, Louisiana, and New York.[49] A greater choice of courses was available, since the classical school had been dissolved during the summer, and Dabney Browne now offered elective courses in Latin and Greek which enjoyed the same standing as the courses required for graduation. Overlapping again accounted for the fact that Dew had more students in his undergraduate courses - 144 - than were enrolled in the College, plus nine graduate advisees.[50] In spite of the relatively large number of students since 1836, the behaviour of the young men had merited frequent approbation from the faculty. There were still rule violations, as for example when Dew surprised two students entering the Raleigh. They explained to the president that they were on their way to visit some ladies and wished only to obtain water in the Raleigh to cleanse their mouths of tobacco. They refused to pledge themselves not to violate again the rule against entering taverns.[51] But most students supported the enlightened policy of honor initiated by the faculty when Dew became president, a system which gave the students a greater degree

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[49] Catalogue of the Officers and Students of William and Mary College, 1839-1840 (Petersburg, 1840).

[50] Ibid., Tucker had 141 students, Millington, 100, Saunders 78, and Browne 26.

[51] William and Mary Faculty Minutes, 1836-46, 99.

of freedom, and responsibility for their behavior. When, in December, 1839, damage was reported done to the College, the faculty assumed that the guilty student would arrange for the repairs at his own expense.[52] Such a policy, even with occasional infractions, appears to have been superior to that of many other campuses. Four years of violence at the University of Virginia were climaxed in 1840 in the murder, by a student, of Dew's former classmate, Law Professor John A. Davis.[53]

As the record 1839-1840 session began, Dew's attention was diverted again to Washington, D.C., where the three-year debate over the sub-treasury concept was being concluded. A brief upswing in the economy after the 1837 panic was reversed in 1839 with the collapse of the United States Bank and a drop in cotton prices.[54] In December, President Van Buren devoted half of his annual message to Congress to an appeal for sub-treasury legislation. He argued that the Post Office and Treasury Departments had very ably handled the federal funds which they had collected during the last two years and that most foreign countries kept their public

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[52] Ibid., 179.

[53] William C. Bruce, The History of the University of Virginia 1819-1919 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1920-22), II, 309.

[54] The resources and directors of Biddle's B.U.S. were incorporated under Pennsylvania law after 1836 as The United States Bank.

funds in the charge of such offices, rather than in banks.[55] Though banks would always exist, Van Buren added, their evils could be mitigated by keeping public revenue separate from them, and by collecting and disbursing it solely in gold and silver; only sound banks would continue without federal funds at their disposal for speculative purposes.[56]

William C. Rives, labeled a "Judas Iscariot" for breaking with the administration and joining the conservative Democrats in opposition to the sub-treasury plan, wrote once again to his friend President Dew, inviting a refutation of Van Buren's message.[57] Dew's response was again in the form of a letter, but it was polished, reasoned, and devoid of the bitterness which had crept into some of his other recent writings. When Thomas Allen of the Madisonian printed Dew's letter at the end of January, 1840, he praised Dew's 1838 letter as "one of the most powerful arguments that has been delivered against the Sub-treasury scheme."[58] Dew's arguments now were similar to those he had offered in that earlier letter. His underlying theme, in direct contradiction of Van Buren's message, was that cotton

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[55]James D. Richardson, ed., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents (Washington: Bureau of National Literature, 1914), III, 1758.

[56]Ibid., 1766-1767.

[57]"A Republican of the Old School," Richmond Enquirer, April 3, 1840; letter from Rives to -, February 15, 1840, printed on inside cover of pamphlet edition of Dew's essay.

[58]Washington Madisonian, January 28, 1840.

prices, not banks, were to blame for the nation's economic fluctuations. He cited examples of foreign panics in which the banks had been completely innocent, and contended further that the nature of a nation's trade was a major factor in its economic stability. A country, such as Scotland, could be full of banks, but as long as its trade was limited and regular, its finances would be regular, A prosperous nation, on the other hand, such as England or the United States, took the risk of instability inherent in great expansion. Dew also criticized England's corn laws, a type of protective tariff, for adversely effecting the economy not only of that nation, but also of her greatest customer and supplier, the United States.

Since cotton, which influenced land sales, slave prices, grain purchases and manufactured items, was subject to price variations and the foreign market, a flexible system of financing was required, and the banking system, if it would confine itself principally to business paper of short dates, best answered the nation's capital needs, Dew believed. The more rigid sub-treasury system, combined with a gold-and-silver-only policy of federal revenue, would destroy the banks which Van Buren had admitted must survive, and would also fail to meet the demands of expansion and contraction basic to the American cotton-based economy.[59]

The letter, accompanied by an endorsement from Rives,

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[59] Ibid., January 28, 30, 1840.

was quickly printed in pamphlet form by Allen under the title "The Great Question of the Day."[60] Developments within Congress, however, were indicating victory for the sub-treasury proponents. The Senate, with the aid of Calhoun Democrats who had re-united with the party over this issue, had passed the bill in January, and in June the House of Representatives approved the measure, over two and a half years after it was first proposed by Van Buren.

The national economic picture had local and personal manifestations also, as conditions worsened again. These developments may have limited the income of Bruton Parish Church, which resolved in May, 1840, to rent out its pews for added revenue. Dew had been reared a Baptist, but had become affiliated with the Episcopal congregation in Williamsburg. The Bruton parish was an historic one, it had a long and close association with the College, and most of the socially prominent citizens of the community, including the Peachys, with whom Dew lived, were members. Each of the five William and Mary faculty members paid the pew rent, and later in the year Dew contributed $140.00 to the church "besides the regular subscription to the

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[60]Thomas R. Dew, "The Great Question of the Day- Letter from President Thomas R. Dew, of the College of William and Mary, to a Representative in Congress from that State, on the Subject of the Financial Policy of the Administration and the Laws of Credit and Trade" (Washington: Thomas Allan, 1840).

minister."[61] His income continued to be large, and his generosity apparently compatible with his income.

At least one person considered Dew to be rather close with his money, however, for when a series of conchological lectures was presented in Williamsburg that same spring of 1840, Miss Sally Galt noticed Dew's presence, "notwithstanding the price of the book being $2."[62] Actually, all but Dabney Browne of the College faculty participated in the study of shells - Dew hoping to learn how to describe the shell parts scientifically, but not expecting to be able to classify them.[63]

Miss Galt also reported the rumor that Miss Fitzhugh had "discarded" Dew and that he was attentive to Miss Harriet Tomkins. This contrasts with the statement a month earlier by another frequent purveyor of Williamsburg gossip, Beverley Tucker. Whimsically, Tucker wrote to his sister that his wife

> is completely horrified to hear that A.E. is to marry Mr. D., and begs to know if such a monstrous profanation is to take place. It ill becomes her, you may think to criticize other people's tastes, but experience may have taught her to doubt whether a woman of

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[61] W.A.R. Goodwin, Historical Sketch of Bruton Church, Williamsburg, Virginia (Petersburg, 1903), 59; Dew Account Book, 6.

[62] Sally M. Galt to John M. Galt, March 3, 1840, Galt Family Papers, Colonial Williamsburg, Inc. Sally was the daughter of Dr. Alexander Galt, director of the "lunatik asylum" in Williamsburg.

[63] Ibid., March 6, 1840.

> her habits and associations does not hazard much in trying how far talent and reputation may supply all personal defects, and remedy all infirmities. If after spending a month in the house with Mr. D. and seeing him in as many of his phases as may be seen before marriage, a woman can find in her heart to love him, she cannot do better than to marry him, for there is no better man, & none more amiable. But to marry him first, and then learn to love him, would be a fearful risque [sic].[64]

As late as April, talk persisted of matrimony, but Dew did not wed A.E.F.[65]

The citizens of Williamsburg had other things than Dew's marital prospects to discuss in 1840, for their fellow resident, John Tyler, had been selected the previous December as the Whig Party vice presidential candidate. The Whig presidential nominee, William Henry Harrison, and Tyler, triumphed over the Democratic effort to re-elect Martin Van Buren in November, but just a month after his inauguration, Harrison died, on April 4, 1841.[66] Tyler thus became the first vice president to succeed to the presidency on the death of the incumbent chief executive.

Dew's long personal friendship with Tyler, and his opposition to the sub-treasury system, suggest that he probably supported the Whig candidates in 1840. Henry Clay

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[64] N. Beverley Tucker to Elizabeth T. Bryan, February 10, 1840, Bryan Papers.

[65] Ibid., April 4, 1840.

[66] Vice President Richard M. Johnson having met with the disfavor of many Democrats, the party nominated no national vice presidential candidate to run with Van Buren in 1840.

of Kentucky was the acknowledged leader of the Whig party in Congress, and even before Harrison's death, Beverley Tucker, after securing Dew's approval, submitted to Clay the outline of a banking plan. It has been observed that the passage of Van Buren's sub-treasury bill during the summer of 1840 had been, constitutionally, a victory for states rights at the expense of the federal government.[67] Dew would thus have been in the position of opposing states rights sentiment on the question of banks, but Tucker's proposal clarified Dew's stand on the relation of state banks to the federal government. The plan called for a national bank to which the states would contribute a total of $50 million, proportioned according to their federal representation. In addition to the mother bank, there would be one or more branches in every state. All details would be fixed in the enabling legislation giving the assent of Congress to such a plan. As points in the scheme's favor, Tucker stated that no corporation was being created, and that by placing the state institution at the head of the monetary system, a balance of power might be restored between state and federal governments.[68] Despite the weaknesses of such a plan, it did at least provide the

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[67]Bray Hammond, Banks and Politics in America from the Revolution to the Civil War (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 544.

[68]N. Beverley Tucker to Henry Clay, April 3, 1841, Tucker Papers. Tucker referred to Dew as "my very able friend...whose profound knowledge of political economy entitles his opinions to great weight."

stabilizing effect of a bank with limitations against dangerous federal control, a combination which Dew had long advocated.

Soon after Tyler assumed the Presidency, Dew wrote of him with both insight and understatement:

> Tyler seems to be going on well so far, he will be treated kindly by all parties until he takes some decisive course & then he may expect some hard blows to be dealt out. I think I shall take a trip to Washington this summer & hear some of the bank discussions for that subject will probably occupy them for some weeks.[69]

The decisive course which Tyler took was the veto of two successive bank bills late in that summer. Led by Clay, the Congressional Whigs had repealed the Independent or sub-treasury Act in mid August, to clear the way for a new national bank. But Tyler, still basically a state rights Democrat in his financial thinking, opposed the Whig bank proposals, which lacked the state guarantees characteristic of Tucker's scheme. During the period separating the two vetoes, Virginia Congressman Henry A. Wise informed Tucker that "they have got Dew into the Kitchen cabinet!"[70] No correspondence between Dew and the President survives to support Wise's statement, and it is conceivable that the relationship suffered somewhat after the vetoes, since federal finances were left in an indefinite

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[69]Dew to Benjamin F. Dew, May 10, 1841, Dew Papers.

[70]Henry A. Wise to N.B. Tucker, August 29, 1841, Tyler, Letters and Times of the Tylers, II, 91.

state for a period of five years, during which a "pet-bank" policy was unofficially utilized by the federal government. It was an arrangement which Dew must have regretted. He never published any additional articles on national finance, although he did indicate to his senior class that, had the sub-treasury act not been repealed, the country would have been saddled with an institution "infinitely more subversive of the liberties of the people" than a United States Bank.[71] In those same lectures, Dew was attempting to establish the desirability of a state banking system, such as Tucker had proposed, and therefore it was necessary to debase not only the sub-treasury system, but a national bank on the scale of the Bank of the United States. Accordingly, Dew now stated that Jackson "deserves a premium" for vetoing the Bank recharter bill in 1832. His major criticism of the Bank, Dew told his students in 1841, was its sectional operation, benefitting the north-east while weakening or destroying the banks in the South.[72]

As the Tyler administration struggled with itself, and Dew indicated again the increased weight of state rightism in his thinking, another session had reached adjournment at William and Mary. The first five years of Dew's presidency

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[71]Manuscript notebook titled "Substance of a course of Lectures on Political Economy delivered by T.R. Dew, President of William and Mary College to the Senior Political Class, 1841-42 Session, by Whitaker Harris, 183, William and Mary College Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

[72]Ibid., 160-164.

had been successful ones by every standard of measurement. Only thirty-eight, he had nevertheless been teaching and writing for fifteen years, and his life suggested the security which academic routine, financial independence, and assured social position provide. He gave no indication of wishing to disrupt that existence, for political or any other reasons.

CHAPTER VI

THROUGH THE EYES OF HISTORY

Writing to the Enquirer in November, 1841, an unidentified Williamsburg resident announced optimistically that, in spite of the pecuniary embarrassments of the country, the College of William and Mary had opened with bright prospects and ninety students registered to that date.[1] Seven more youths enrolled for the session eventually, but for the first time since Dew assumed the presidency of the College, its student body failed to reach one-hundred members.[2] This decline had begun with an enrollment of only 110 for the 1840-1841 session; the effects of the 1837 panic had obviously deprived many families of the means for sending a son to college. Another factor undoubtedly was the increased competition for students resulting from the establishment of new colleges in Virginia. The University of Virginia had opened in 1825, followed in close succession by Randolph-Macon College in 1830, Richmond College in 1832, Emory and

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[1] Richmond Enquirer, November 16, 1841. The letter was dated November 5th.

[2] Catalogue of the Officers and Students of William and Mary College (Petersburg, 1842). Slightly over 25% of the students were from out-of-state.

Henry College in 1836, and Virginia Military Institute in 1839. William and Mary was not the only institution to realize a decline in enrollment, however, for the University, with 243 students in 1839-1840, had only 170 registered for the 1841-1842 session.[3] Another explanation offered was that Southern parents were sending their sons North for an education, where, in the opinion of one "Timoleon," their minds were being "poisoned." This same letter writer urged that the youths instead be sent to William and Mary, where dignity prevailed and students were taught that most valuable of all lessons, to think. An added inducement was Williamsburg itself, with the most "cultivated, refined, and elegant" society in the United States, the only place in Virginia where the cavalier sons still lingered.[4] The explanations of "Timoleon" and others for William and Mary's loss of students had one common ground - they were all external to the College itself.

Even though the magnitude of economic problems was great, a vocal movement for progress in public education was alive in Virginia. Dew and all of his colleagues were selected as delegates from Williamsburg to an educational convention in Richmond during December, 1841. None of the professors actually attended the convention, which memorialized

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[3]Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the University of Virginia (Charlottesville: James Alexander, 1842).

[4]Richmond Enquirer, September 21, 1841.

the legislature on behalf of free primary schools accessible to every white child, but Dew had often spoken of the need for an educated electorate and had frequently endorsed private schools and academies.[5]

A partial explanation for Dew's absence from the education convention may have been the fact that he was engaged in writing another essay. A year before, in the wake of the 1840 presidential campaign, Edmund Ruffin, always anxious to receive contributions for his journal, had proposed that Dew undertake a philsophical investigation and examination of political parties and party spirit, a subject which Dew had agreed was admirable.[6] However, the article which resulted had a different orientation, and appeared, anonymously, in Thomas White's Southern Literary Messenger. From under two of his many hats, those of classical historian and professor of rhetoric, Dew had delivered lectures in his junior course on the oratory of the ancients. Now he compared that oratory with the speeches of the 1840 presidential campaign in the article "Ancient and Modern Eloquence." He saw the presidential contest as a return to the Grecian assemblages, with vast audiences listening for hours to eloquent speeches, and concluded that

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[5]Ibid., December 9, 11, 1841, January 4, 1842.

[6]Edmund Ruffin to N. Beverley Tucker, January 24, 1841, Tucker Papers, folder 288. By February, Tucker had given up hope of obtaining anything from Dew's pen, and regretted that the state rights men would make no effort to present their side; ibid., February 5, 1841.

a new era had been introduced in American political life. There were numerous differences between ancient and modern oratory, caused by changing customs, styles, laws and cultural progress, but Dew declared that the Americans were generally equal to the ancients in eloquence.[7] A contributor to the Enquirer, in reviewing the article, disclosed Dew's authorship, and stated that that information alone was sufficient to attract readers who, he was sure, would retain their favorable opinion of Dew's talents and erudition after a perusal of the article.[8]

Another compliment, an unmerited one, Dew thought, was paid him by Virginia Congressman Edmund W. Hubard during March. Hubard opposed the idea of tariff protection for tobacco, and sought support from Dew. In his reply, the William and Mary professor disclaimed familiarity with the character of the tobacco trade, but observed that the tobacco interests generally were sufficiently strong and competitive to do without protection. He would "most unhesitatingly reject," as an unfair tax on "the Southern gentlemen," a tobacco tariff which was offered as a Southern equivolent for protection of northern manufactured items.[9] Dew's letter was one of several

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[7] Thomas R. Dew , "Ancient and Modern Eloquence," Southern Literary Messenger, VIII (March, 1842), 167-170, 184.

[8] Richmond Enquirer, April 8, 1842.

[9] Dew to Edmund W. Hubard, March 25, 1842, Executive Documents, 27th Congress, 2nd Session, IV, Document 235, 88.

included in the Secretary of the Treasury's report to Congress on imports and exports of tobacco. At the end of the month, Congress enacted the first major tariff legislation since the 1833 compromise. It was a Whig measure, raising rates to the high level of the 1832 act.

Thus it was in a spirit of disappointment that Judge Thomas Bayly of Accomac sent a toast to the College's post-commencement dinner in July, proposing

> Professor Dew's doctrine of Free Trade: Substantially those of Smith and Say, sustained by the scientific and dispassionate political economists throughout the world, repudiated by politicians more intent upon protecting party interest than domestic industry.[10]

On the following day, while many guests of the College were still in Williamsburg, the first formal meeting of the William and Mary Society of the Alumni was held. The Society had been established very informally a year earlier, and now, with Dew presiding as president, a post he would occupy until his death, the Society heard Beverley Tucker deliver the first Alumni Day oration. In addition, rules were adopted, a committee was appointed to frame a constitution, and Benjamin Watkins Leigh was selected as the orator for the 1843 meeting of the Society.[11]

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[10]Richmond Enquirer, July 19, 1842. Dew had begun assigning Smith's work to his graduate students, replacing it in his senior course with J.B. Say's Treatise on Political Economy.

[11]Richmond Whig, July 22, 1842; Dew to Franklin Dew, July 12, 1842, Dew Papers.

During that same busy commencement week, the Board of Visitors acted to fill the first faculty vacancy to occur under Dew's presidency. Dabney Browne had resigned in January to accept the presidency of an academy in Brunswic,[12] and advertisements for the post of humanity professor had been run in the newspapers. A total of thirty-six applications for the position were submitted, suggesting the high stature which the College occupied even beyond Virginia. The successful candidate, Charles Minnegerode, was a native of Hesse Darmstadt, in Germany, had studied at the University of Giessen, and been imprisoned in a dungeon for eighteen months for possessing revolutionary literature which he hoped to distribute among the students. He arrived in the United States in 1839 at the age of twenty-three, and was teaching French and German in Philadelphia at the time of his appointment to the William and Mary faculty. He had submitted letters of recommendation from professors at Harvard, Yale and Cambridge Universities, and was described by a William and Mary Visitor as "one of the best educated men in this country...unsurpassed as a classic - writing Hebrew, Greek and Latin with perfect ease & elegance." Minnegerode took his seat on the faculty immediately, and Dew thought him to be the most thorough scholar he had ever met, "a very

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[12]William and Mary Faculty Minutes, 1836-1846, 294; Dew to Franklin Dew, December 3, 1841, Dew Papers.

amiable little gentleman...deeply imbued with all the German literature."[13]

Dew also wrote, as he was about to leave for a brief, health-restoring visit to Point Comfort, Virginia, that he expected great aid from Minnegerode in completing his history.[14] This was a reference to the historical digest which Dew had been compiling since he first began teaching. The "Manual of History" was continually being expanded, and printed at his own expense, for class use by the students in his junior course.[15] He hoped to publish the manual in book form, and noted in 1841 that he was devoting all his spare time to writing out his notes.[16] It was his favorite work, William Boulware later wrote, "a labor of love."[17]

Although the project was not completed at Dew's death, by the early 1840's most of the contents had been presented at least in outline form through his lectures. He had begun

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[13]Richmond Whig, July 22, 1842; Marietta M. Andrews, Memoirs of a Poor Relation (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1927), 15-17; George Blow to Dr. Alexander Galt, July 6, 1842, Galt Papers; Dew to Franklin Dew, July 12, 1842, Dew Papers.

[14]Dew to Franklin Dew, July 12, 1842, Dew Papers.

[15]Dew Account Book, 5; Ruffin to N. Beverley Tucker, February 5, 1841, Tucker Papers, folder 288.

[16]Dew to Franklin Dew, May 10, 1841, Dew Papers. By 1845, Dew could announce that the Modern History portion was complete, and that he hoped to finish the work by the end of the year, a goal which he did not reach, Dew to B.B. Minor, January 29, 1845, Dew Miscellaneous Papers, New York Public Library.

[17]Richmond Enquirer, October 23, 1846.

one session by announcing "Gentlemen, in this course of lectures on history, I intended directing your attention more to the philosophy of History than to the mere relation of incidents and facts which is too often considered by the student as the sole province of history."[18] Accordingly, he utilized a topical approach within a broad chronological framework, dividing ancient and "modern" history at the fall of the Roman Empire. A topical digest requires the assimilation of a broad body of knowledge, and Dew clearly had done extensive reading and thinking on all phases of history. The loose format also enabled him to relate many contemporary subjects to their historical antecedents.

One theme which reappeared in numerous contexts was the relation of the white man to the non-white. When Dew wrote his anonymous essay on internal improvements in 1831, he indicated a moderate, uncertain attitude toward the Negro, praising the accomplishments of the Egyptian civilization and then noting that that land along the Nile was inhabited "by a black race with woolly heads." By the early 1840's, in his history notes, he was interpreting that phrase from Herodotus to mean "dark brown race with curly

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[18]Student Notebook of Thomas B. Montague, containing lectures on history by Thomas R. Dew, commencing March 26, 1838; Virginia Historical Society. Dew informed his students that not all facts are historical - "For instance, Cromwell's wart is not an historical fact because it had no significance on his conduct and consequently has no degree of importance attached to it. Richard the 3d is said to have had a crooked back - which is a historical fact because it influenced his conduct."

hair" and concluding that there were actually different races in Egypt, that the "one approaching to white was the ruling race, while negroes were always subjects and slaves."[19] Elsewhere, Dew wrote of the importance of slavery to the Greek states, the presence of that institution enabling the freemen to attain military and mental pre-eminence in their world.[20] As for slavery in the United States, it would be perpetuated by "antipathy to an intermixture of the two colors," and by the preference for slave labor in the Southern states.[21] Slavery, in other words, served a dual purpose as a regulator of society and as a source of labor.

Dew devoted almost thirty pages of his history to the subject of "Ancient Eloquence," concluding generally as he had specifically in his recent article that the trend toward greater emphasis on oratory in the United States would have salutary consequences.[22] Another section was devoted to chivalry, a subject of interest to Southerners, and one which Dew had noted earlier needed examination in an historical context. He explained that chivalry had arisen as a civilizing influence at a period in the history

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[19]Thomas R. Dew, A Digest of the Laws, Customs, Manners, and Institutions of the Ancient and Modern Nations (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1852), 24.

[20]Ibid., 81.

[21]Ibid., 406.

[22]Ibid., 132-160.

of Europe when governments were weak and women defenseless. The ranks, duties, and attire of knighthood were discussed, and among the sources cited by Dew was Sir Walter Scott, with whose works Dew clearly assumed his readers to be familiar.[23]

The development of the English Constitution, and the French Revolution, were the two subjects which Dew dealt with most extensively in his treatment of modern history. He emphasized the importance of property-holding, and also the political structure of western civilization. He was optimistic about America's "grand experiment" in popular government and her "sound, temperate public opinion." He believed the manner in which Tyler had been able to assume the Presidency upon Harrison's death would strengthen public confidence in the country's institutions. However, the real test had not come; the greatest strain would occur

> when our land shall be filled up with a dense population, - when a strong line of demarkation [sic] shall be drawn between those who <u>have</u> and those who <u>have not</u>, and thousands shall be born who can only expect to live like their fathers, labor like their fathers, and die like their fathers, without being able to accumulate more than barely enough to support life,

At that point, which had been reached in France in 1789, America would face its extreme challenge. In the meantime, the best means of defense against such a possibility lay in the "much reviled, much slandered institutions of the South."[24]

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[23] <u>Ibid.</u>, 341-355.

[24] <u>Ibid.</u>, 659.

The ideas expressed in Dew's historical manual had provided the basis for several of his published articles, but the entire study, the product of many years of labor, remained incomplete and unpublished at his death. Dew never finished the project, partly because of the many interruptions necessitated by his teaching and by his inclination to comment publicly on contemporary events. An example of the latter was an article in the January 20, 1843, Whig attacking the stay law which had been proposed, authorizing Virginia to cease interest payments on her state bonds. Heading his essay "The Times - Stay Laws and State Debts," and signing himself "Giles," Dew first examined the factors which had led Virginia to consider so drastic a step as a stay law. He noted that during the period of great national prosperity from 1831 to 1837, the United States had borrowed large sums of money from abroad, primarily in response to the building of the Erie Canal and the successful application of steam to railroads. Dew, long an advocate of internal improvements, now criticized the extravagance with which governments were committing themselves to canals and railroads - even old Williamsburg, surrounded by navigable rivers, demanded a railroad line. Only as the panic of 1837 came did people realize how costly railroad maintenance was, and consequently unfinished projects dotted the landscape. That 1837 economic downfall had resulted from the familiar theme of unparalleled speculation.

Now, in the midst of suffering and low prices, the

legislature was considering a stay law. What must be realized, Dew argued, was that prices run in cycles, with highs, as in 1836, and lows, as in 1825 and perhaps at the present, in 1843. At the onset of a low it was necessary to determine whether one was in the midst of a long or a short cycle, and then endure a period of low prices, bankruptcy, partial revolution in property, and personal economy. Such a period was as necessary as the intervention of night between days; when it was past, times would be easy again, but there must be no tampering with stay laws. Generally high prices throughout the country would return only with high cotton prices, of which England was the regulator.

It would be disgraceful, Dew continued, for the American states to repudiate their debts when countries such as England and France had passed through much more expensive ordeals, all for the benefit of monarch and war. In the United States, such indebtedness was imposed by the people themselves, and there was usually something tangible and worth-while to show for the expenditure. Virginia must stop borrowing and increase taxes, after which she would see her bonds rise to par. Fortunately, most of the state's indebtedness was due Virginians or Virginia corporations, so that the tax revenue collected to pay the interest on state bonds would remain within the Old Dominion. Anglo-saxon civilizations were debt-paying societies, Dew concluded - was Virginia to let that characteristic wither and die, by a

"shallow and dishonest" tampering with the obligation of contract?[25]

The editor of the Whig was certain that the subject matter of the essay and the ability with which it was treated would arrest the attention of statesmen. However, the editor was equally sure that "Giles" overlooked an important cause of the present economic crisis in not condemning the "vicious political action" of the federal government. Dew's identity must have been known to the editor, who excused the omission on the grounds that the author was probably excessively anxious to avoid partisanship.[26] A reader of the article in the Whig requested its publication in the Enquirer, affirming it to be the best writing on either side of the stay law question, and the editor of the latter paper agreed that it deserved the attention of every reader, in or out of the legislature.[27]

Dew's name still was not identified with the article, although his brother Franklin guessed Dew's authorship, and the William and Mary professor heard that a number of his former students "found me out, by certain ear marks." He

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[25]"Giles," "The Times - Stay laws and State Debts," Richmond Whig, January 20, 1843.

[26]Ibid., editorial comment.

[27]"Observer," Richmond Enquirer, January 24, 1843. That paper printed the article in the January 26th issue. Similar favorable comment was that of "Charles of King and Queen," Richmond Whig, February 3, 1843. A William and Mary student reported from Williamsburg that the essay was "praised very highly indeed here," Edmund Berkeley to Lewis Berkeley, January 29, 1843, Berkeley Papers.

was gratified to learn that the article was having wide influence, noting that the idea of prices running in cycles had not occurred to many persons until he pointed it out.[28] Ironically, this article by Dew, never publicly ascribed to him, may have had more direct influence than any of those signed by him; early in February the stay law proposal was indefinitely postponed by the legislature, and in April an income tax was enacted.[29] The measure provided for a tax of one percent on income over $400 a year. Dew, who stood to gain slightly by the legislature's decision to continue interest payments on state bonds, clearly had not written his article for personal gain, since the income tax which he had proposed raised his annual assessment from a dollar or two in property taxes, on his slave, horse, and gig to over $50 on his large income.[30] He continued to advise his brothers, particularly Franklin, on the type of investments to make and, referring to the hard times in Williamsburg, mentioned that several local men wished the senior Thomas Dew would "turn his money fountain for a while on our old city."[31]

Williamsburg's fabled social life managed to survive the depressed conditions, though at a somewhat reduced pace.

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[28]Dew to Franklin Dew, February[ ], 1843, Dew Papers.

[29]Richmond Enquirer, February 4, April 7, 1843.

[30]Dew to Franklin Dew, March 27, 1843, Dew Papers.

[31]Dew to Franklin Dew, April 17, February[ ], 1843, ibid.

Beverley Tucker informed his wife that he still ached from riding "Old Tom" Dew's horse - "such a brute!" - to Gloucester, where he relayed an invitation to "A.E." from Mrs. Sheldon to visit Williamsburg.[32] In May, Charles Minnegerode was married, and the groom upon returning from his wedding trip described a party given by Dew and Judge Christian in Mrs. Sheldon's garden as the finest in some time.[33] By then, another College commencement was at hand. The exercises in 1843 were held in the College chapel, after which those assembled gathered for a dinner prepared "in Old Virginia style" at Henley's Hotel. Dew was toasted as "The Philosopher and Gentleman. He is the pride of Virginia - the uncompromising defender of the South." Toward the end of the sixty toasts offered was one sent by Hill Carter, a leading agriculturist and state senator, which praised protection of all home industry, "Professor Dew's anti-protection system to the contrary not-withstanding."[34] Such a statement, read in the midst of good company on a happy occasion, could be disregarded by Dew. Before the year was over, however, that same sentiment in another context would cause the president of William and Mary considerable anguish.

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[32]N. Beverley Tucker to Lucy Tucker, June 12, 1843, Tucker Papers.

[33]Edmund Berkeley to Lewis Berkeley, May 28, 1843, Berkeley Papers: Charles Minnegerode to Cynthia B. Tucker, July 6, 1843, Tucker Papers.

[34]Richmond Enquirer, July 11, 1843.

In the meantime, there was another summer visit to the Fauquier White Sulphur Springs. One afternoon late in August, several hundred guests at the Springs, "Judges and divines, Senators and Congressmen, sages and scholars, soldiers and sailors, blooming girls and stately matrons, bounding youth and tottering age," assembled on a hillside beneath wild poplar trees to watch the last ring tournament of the season. In this carry-over from chivalric jousting, sixteen "knights" on horseback sought to drive their lances through a suspended ring "no bigger than the Fairy Queen's girdle." At the conclusion of the contest, the competitors drew up before the presiding judge, President Dew, who crowned the victor and then addressed him:

> Remember, Sir Knight, that the Institution which now claims you as her son, was established for great and generous purposes. At that dark period in the history of Europe, when the whole frame work of society had well nigh been dissolved by the dissensions of the times - when Governments were too weak to repress disorders - when the feeble were everywhere oppressed by the strong - when the laws of God were trampled under foot - when that sex, Sir, which we so much delight to honor, which now constitutes the pride and ornament of the social circle, was unhonored and unappreciated; when their rights and their privileges were despised - then did this Institution spring into existence, to remedy the frightful disorders of the time, and to arrest the downward progress of civilization. It was, in truth, a holy brotherhood of self-denying philanthropists, formed to carry out all the cardinal virtues of the time. Its characteristics are love of arms, attention to the point of honor, courtesy, liberality, generosity, clemency, loyalty, devotion to women and devotion to religion. Go forth, then Sir Knight, and enter upon the brilliant and useful career which lies before you, with determination to practice all the self-denying duties of your noble Institution; and when your course is ended, I

> hope that society will acknowledge that you have every where assisted in repressing disorders - that your country will have found you loyal, and devoted to her institutions - that the vanquished will find you clement, humane, and merciful - That the distressed every where will experience your generosity - that Religion will acknowledge you her benefactor, and woman her protector and advisor. Go forth, and never forget the noble motto inscribed on your institution, parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.[35]

Something as romantic as the ring tournament obviously had become, for Dew, a serious institution, linked with the praise of white womanhood and the servitude of the blacks. Together, they represented a system of stability and security for the South.

The year 1843 marked the 150th anniversary of the granting of the College charter by King William and Queen Mary of England. There was some indication, as the session commenced in October, that the prosperous condition which the school had enjoyed during Dew's first years as president would return, for the enrollment stood at 86, six above the previous session.[36] Almost immediately, however, an unpleasant exchange in the papers cast suspicion on the College and its president. Early in November Dew wrote to his youngest brother, Calvin, "I suppose you have seen the unprincipled attack of the Whig on the College and myself . . . There has been a desperate effort to run down this old

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[35]Richmond Enquirer, August 29, 1843.

[36]Catalogue of the Officers and Students of William and Mary College, 1843-1844 (Richmond: Shepherd and Colin, 1844).

College and I hope it will signally fail. I am suddenly pounced on for doctrines which I have been teaching for the last 16 years."[37] Dew was referring to an editorial which appeared in the October 18th Richmond Whig under the headline "The Universities - Hints to Parents." The author attacked the teaching of political economy at William and Mary and the University of Virginia, arguing that many parents in the state held the free trade doctrines being taught in those institutions to be little better than the reveries of mad men, and urging those parents not to send their sons to those schools lest they be brought up radical Loco Focos.[38]

The Richmond Enquirer immediately took issue with the Whig, accusing its editor of sacrificing the genius of George Tucker and Dew at the shrine of Henry Clay.[39] And the editor of the Petersburg Republican challenged the Whig to find a single William and Mary student from the past ten years to substantiate its statement.[40] The Whig immediately countered the Enquirer, accusing the chair of political economy at William and Mary of becoming a means for interjecting party politics into the classroom, through the subject

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[37]Dew to Luther Calvin Dew, November 6, 1843, Dew Papers.

[38]Richmond Whig, October 18, 1843.

[39]Richmond Enquirer, October 20, 1843.

[40]Petersburg Republican, quoted in Dew to Luther Calvin Dew, November 6, 1843, Dew Papers.

of free trade. Henry Clay, with more practical sense "than all the Editors of all the Enquirers in the world," held views more valuable than the theories "purloined from Say" by Dew and clothed by him "in language much worse than the original."[41] Such bitterness, the Enquirer responded, resulted from the Whig's realization that many young men in Richmond had joined the Democratic ranks, and the hasty conclusion that Dew, rather than "the infatuated course" of the Whig party itself, was responsible for that development.[42]

Alexander Moseley, editor of the Whig, observed at the end of October that from personal acquaintance with Dew, his estimation of the William and Mary President was different from that expressed in the original Whig article.[43] He clarified this statement a week later by explaining that he had been out of town when the "hassle" began, and that an acting editor had initiated the criticism of Dew. Although there was nothing very heinous in persons disagreeing over the abilities of a distinguished figure such as Dew, Moseley added, he himself regarded Dew as one of the most accomplished scholars in the country, and as a professor who went to extremes to avoid party politics in his classroom.[44]

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[41]Richmond Whig, October 21, 1843.

[42]Richmond Enquirer, October 27, 1843.

[43]Richmond Whig, October 30, 1843.

[44]Ibid., November 6, 1843.

This was the status of the controversy when Dew addressed his brother. On the following day a former classmate and pupil of Dew, signing himself "S," defended the William and Mary president in a lengthy letter printed in the Whig. "S" suggested that the unfair attack on Dew might have been written by "some literary whipper snapper" who wished to establish a reputation at the expense of another. Why not let Dew's literary efforts and his contribution to the revival of William and Mary speak for themselves? Dew, he was sure, was no Loco-Foco, but rather a Whig to the back-bone, in favor of Clay as the next President. He was, "S" concluded, an honor to the state, and a scholar of whom the union might justly boast.[45]

The final round in the journalistic debate came the next day, in a letter to Moseley from John H. Pleasants, former editor of the Whig. Pleasants explained that he had authored the criticism of the political economists while acting as editor during Moseley's absence. He had based his accusation, against William and Mary in particular, on Dew's reputation as an enthusiastic, albeit most able, advocate of free trade, and the fact that every alumnus of the College he had met, regardless of his views prior to matriculation, had graduated a flaming, if not a bigoted and intolerant, disciple of free trade. Pleasants added that he had subsequently talked with Dew, and been informed by that

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[45]Richmond Whig, November 7, 1843.

gentleman, or someone else, that while Say's work was the text in Dew's senior course, the students were also exposed to the pro-tariff philosophy and left to judge for themselves. On the basis of this information, Pleasants declared, he had decided not to make a formal appeal to the people of Virginia against the chair of political economy at William and Mary.[46]

Pleasants thus retracted his statement without actually denying it. The entire episode had become a political debate between two rival newspapers, and Dew had been an innocent victim trapped in the middle. One William and Mary student had written to his father the same year that the majority of students were "Locos," but Dew's published lecture notes on the restrictive system substantiate the view that he presented both sides of that subject, however well known his personal feelings were.[47]

The sensitivity of journalists in late 1843 reflected the approach of a national Presidential campaign. The Virginia Whig party held its state convention in February, 1844, and among the delegates were William, Franklin, and Calvin Dew. Their brother John Wesley and their father had also been elected to represent King and Queen County but had

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[46] Ibid., November 8, 1843.

[47] Edmund Berkeley to Lewis Berkeley, January 29, 1843, Berkeley Papers. The term "loco-foco" could refer to Democratic party adherents generally, or more specifically to the radical or progressive wing of that party. The town of Williamsburg was overwhelmingly Whiggish in sympathy, the College students usually less so.

not actually attended.[48] The fifth living Dew brother, Thomas Roderick, indicated a moderate support of the national Whig party when he wrote Franklin regarding the party's probable presidential nominee, "I go for Clay, but with a most decided opposition to his two great measures , a tariff and the Bank. Some of the more ardent friends of Mr. Clay are doing the Whig cause incomparable injury by demanding of every supporter an endorsement of all his measures." He noted further that a Clay man could be successful in the Williamsburg Congressional district by disavowing the Bank and tariff. Robert Saunders, acceptable on these grounds and spoken of for Congress, had ruined his chances, Dew felt, by expressing on all occasions his aversion to democracy, and his preference for monarchy.[49]

The Whig party did nominate Clay, and the Democrats did, as Dew had hoped, "throw Van Buren overboard,"[50] nominating instead James K. Polk of Tennessee. The campaign attracted Dew's interest, but even as he wrote of throwing Van Buren overboard, he found himself rumored to be in the same position, at the hands of the woman who soon became his wife. For Dew, the fulfillment of marriage was to come not at the beginning but at the end of his career.

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[48]Richmond Whig, January 23, February 16, 1844.

[49]Dew to Franklin Dew, February 13, 1844, Dew Papers.

[50]Ibid., May 27, 1844.

CHAPTER VII

AT THE BEGINNING, THE END

While visiting the Springs in 1843, Dew had written to Mrs. Sheldon in Williamsburg that he had met "the flower of the Burwell family," Natilia Hay, and that she was a magnificent woman.[1] The subject of Dew's tribute was the daughter of Dr. James Hay and Elizabeth Burwell Hay, of Clarke County. Natilia subsequently paid an extended visit to Williamsburg, during which she and Dew were, in his own words, "very intimate during her whole stay here, and I believe the general opinion was we should make a match as the hack phrase is." But a sudden misunderstanding occurred, and an interview arranged by third parties was prevented from taking place by the press of visitors coming to bid Natilia farewell. Thus the whole affair had terminated "in a fog" as she returned to Clarke County and Dew, explaining to his brother that he had not been discarded, as the rumor went, added "I never expect to see her again."[2] Professor Dew proved to be a false prophet.

For the immediate future, however, Dew's days were

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[1]Edmund Berkeley to Lewis Berkeley, October 16, 1843, Berkeley Papers.

[2]Dew to Franklin Dew, May 27, 1844, Dew Papers.

filled with examinations and then commencement, at which seven baccalaureate and eleven law degrees, and one graduate degree, were awarded.[3] The debate of the previous fall may have prompted the numerous toasts at Henley's Hotel predicting prosperity for the College under Dew's leadership. The president's response, "always appropriate," was "peculiarly so" on this occasion, according to one commentator, and Dew's remarks were greeted with universal applause.[4]

At summer's end, only sixty-nine students registered for the 1844-1845 session, and Dew felt certain that the Whig attack on the College was somewhat responsible. He hoped that once the Presidential election then taking place was concluded, the rancor and bitterness of party strife would end, and the College would be spared further criticism. Williamsburg had just cast a majority vote for Clay, Dew mused in a letter to Franklin, but he thought Polk would probably be elected. Clay, he felt, had become hackneyed as a result of his numerous candidacies, and furthermore was identified with a specific program which must be defended. He predicted that in the future those candidates on the offensive would most often be elected, for they could always "plant themselves on principles," while those with specific programs must defend their measures at every

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[3]William and Mary Faculty Minutes, 1836-1846, 375.

[4]Richmond Enquirer, July 19, 1844.

point.[5] Such words could be autobiographical - Dew clearly valued a stand on principle over participation in partisan politics. As for his immediate predictions, Polk was elected to the Presidency, and the nation's focus did increasingly shift from fiscal policy to territorial expansion. Texas, the territory whose future had played a large role in the 1844 campaign, was annexed to the United States in 1845.

John Tyler's administration came to an end with Polk's inauguration in March, 1845, and the William and Mary commencement in July was an official "welcome home" for the former President. A total of twenty-two degrees, a high number considering the total College enrollment, were conferred, after which the City Hotel became the scene for a gathering of well-known figures. In addition to President Tyler, those present included Governor James McDowell of Virginia and Caleb Cushing who, as American commissioner to China in 1844, had negotiated the first trade agreement between those two nations. Dew praised the conduct of the students during the session just concluded, and in turn was praised by Professor Minnegerode as "a good friend, whose social virtues all must love."[6]

It was Dew's reputation as a political economist, rather than his social virtues, which presumably explained his appointment that same July 4th as professor of moral

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[5]Dew to Franklin Dew, November 4, 1844, Dew Papers.

[6]Richmond Enquirer, July 11, 1845.

philosophy at the University of Virginia.[7] The chairman of the faculty at the University, Dew's close friend William Barton Rogers, had publicly advertized the vacancy created by George Tucker's retirement, but Dew had not applied, and was appointed without his knowledge.[8] A decade earlier he had been invited to succeed one of the South's leading political economists, Thomas Cooper, and now he was being asked to replace the man who, along with Dew himself and Cooper's successor, Francis Lieber, stood at the pinnacle of their profession in the South.

In declining the University's appointment, Dew informed Beverley Tucker that the latter's wife, Lucy, had alone prevented him from going to Charlottesville, by convincing him that it would be an unwise move.[9] Subsequent expressions by Dew indicate that Lucy Tucker at best evoked an already existing warm feeling in Dew toward William and Mary. When word of his decision to remain became known, a group of Williamsburg residents convened at the court house to honor Dew for rejecting "the inducements held out to lure him away" from William and Mary. The meeting resolved

> 1) that we offer to Mr. Dew our sincere thanks for the warm interest in our College, which he has so lately manifested, and assure him of the

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[7]Minutes of the Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia, Manuscripts Division, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

[8]Richmond Enquirer, July 1, 1845.

[9]N. Beverley Tucker to Lucy Tucker, July 14, 1845, Tucker Papers, folder 339.

> high gratification we derive from the persuasion, that a gentleman of his distinguished social and personal qualities will long remain amongst us, an ornament to the society of our old city, and that a man of his learning and extensive reputation will continue to illustrate an institution with which his name is already so eminently identified. Resolved 2) that we offer to Mr. Dew our earnest congratulations for the testimony recently afforded by his appointment as Professor at the University of Virginia of the high estimation in which his talents are justly held by the Visitors of that Institution and the whole community.

The meeting resolved further to offer a public dinner in Dew's honor on any date in October at his convenience.[10]

In his response to the committee named at the meeting, Dew wrote that the resolutions surely regarded his defects with indulgence while magnifying his virtues. He added that his great object was to have his name identified with the College of William and Mary, and that success in that endeavor would be the proudest triumph of his life.[11] Such a voluntary manifestation of regard was perhaps the most genuine compliment which Dew's friends of twenty years could have paid him.

At the dinner in his honor during October, Dew delivered remarks which were reflective, informal, and quite revealing. He acknowledged that he had the ambition to make some impress on his country's literature and especially to do real service to the South. On the institutions of the South, he conscientiously believed, the success of republican

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[10]Richmond Enquirer, August 9, 1845.

[11]Ibid.

institutions generally could be said to hang. He also dwelt at length on his relationship with William and Mary. From the age of sixteen all but a few years of his life had been spent either as a student or as a teacher at the College, and the little fame he had won in the world was in its service. Addressing the chairman of the dinner, Dew continued:

> Sir, I have made my daily pilgrimage to that ancient building and wondered [sic] through her halls for so many years that the habit has grown into nature. Sir, my very affections are entwined around the building and its rooms. A daily communion with them has almost become essential to my existence. I almost behold them as objects which know me and love me.[12]

These were the words not of an aged man but of one forty-two years old, presumably with a long life before him. Yet there seemed to be a greater emphasis on the past than on the future.

The College session opened with only sixty-eight students, although Dew had a total of seventy-eight in his courses for the year. The Richmond Enquirer, under the heading "Old William and Mary," expressed optimism over the College's prospects for the session, and noted that Virginians seemed prepared to support their institutions of higher learning.[13] A meeting of Williamsburg residents, concerned with popular education, selected Dew and others to attend an

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[12]Manuscript of Dew's remarks, undated, Dew Papers.

[13]Richmond Enquirer, October 21, 1845.

education convention in December, and placed themselves on record as favoring higher taxes if that were necessary to establish public education, which would indirectly benefit all classes of society. Dew was not among the delegates who convened in Richmond just before Christmas.[14]

On the national level, Dew was very interested in what President Polk's first annual message to Congress would contain. That paper, in December, included an elaboration of the Monroe Doctrine and an affirmation of the United States' claim to all of the Oregon territory. Domestically, Polk followed Democratic party policy in asking Congress for a downward revision of the tariff and a revival of the sub-treasury system. Dew thought the message would be a "capital thing" but for Polk's positions on the sub-treasury and Oregon. If the President involved the nation in war, Dew wrote, "I for one would deeply regret he was ever elected." He asserted that the lower tariff, a good thing in itself, would do no good if war should come.[15] By April, English newspapers convinced him that that country was becoming war-like over Oregon, and he announced to Fanny Burwell of Clarke County that, if things grew worse, he would be in Clarke sooner than she knew, for he could not stand his region if war came.[16]

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[14]Richmond Enquirer, October 20, December 25, 1845.

[15]Dew to Franklin Dew, December 12, 1845, Dew Papers.

[16]Dew to Fanny T. Burwell, April 13, 1846, George B. Harrison Papers, Duke University Library.

War did not ensue, but Dew did travel to Clarke County that spring. Fanny Burwell was probably a first cousin of Natilia Hay, and by then there was a rumor once again that Dew and Miss Hay, whom he had never expected to see again as of 1844, were to be married. This time the rumor proved correct. At forty-three, and still plagued by illness, Dew sought the rewards of a union which everyone predicted would be successful. In June he informed the faculty that he would be absent for the remainder of the session,[17] and on the seventeenth of the month the wedding took place. The couple then hurried to New York and embarked on June 25th aboard the "Great Western" for a quick tour of Europe, planning to return in time for the October opening of the College.[18]

Dew had planned carefully for his second visit to Europe. He obtained from President Edward Everett of Harvard a letter of introduction to Dr. William Whewell, Everett's old mentor at Cambridge University. Everett explained that Dew, whom he knew by reputation as a writer of celebrity, wished to become familiar with English universities, and asked Whewell to be of assistance to the president of the second oldest college in the United States.[19] Andrew Stevenson of Virginia, former Speaker of the national

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[17]William and Mary Faculty Minutes, 1836-1846, 445.

[18]Alexandria Gazette, July 9, 1846.

[19]Edward Everett to Dr. William Whewell, May 20, 1846, Dew Papers.

House of Representatives and United States minister to England, not only wrote letters of introduction to friends abroad, but also gave Dew detailed suggestions on what to see and where to stay.[20] To finance his journey, Dew liquidated $2000 worth of stocks, leaving a balance of $49,543.40 in securities.[21]

The ocean voyage was a rough one, and Dew was in very poor health by the time he arrived in Paris on August 5th, after a brief stay in England. The Dews checked into the Victoria Hotel and Mrs. Dew summoned a doctor, who accepted the professor's own diagnosis of bronchitis and advised that he return to the United States immediately. On the following morning, Mrs. Dew discovered that her husband had died in his sleep during the night; the strain of travel had aggravated the weak respiratory system which had threatened him throughout his adult life. An English newspaper in Paris announced the Virginian's death and invited friends and countrymen to a funeral service on August 7th at No. 3, Rue Chameau-la-Garde. At the conclusion of the service, a number of Americans accompanied Dew's remains to a burial plot in Montmartre Cemetery.[22] Mrs. Dew, who had sailed on the

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[20]Andrew Stevenson to Nassau Senior, May 28, 1846; to Dew, May 29, June 7, 1846, Dew Papers.

[21]Dew Account Book, 11.

[22]James E. Yeatman to William Bates, August 8, 1846, Millington Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary; Land, "Thomas R. Dew," 10. Dew's remains were returned to the United States in 1939 and reinterred in a crypt beneath the Wren Chapel at the College.

"Great Western" as a bride, returned to the United States aboard the same ship in September.[23]

Among the first mentions of Dew's death in the United States was a notice in the Richmond Enquirer headed "A Light of Science and Learning Extinguished." The article observed that, "in the prime of usefulness and at the threshold of his greatest happiness, he is cut down!"[24] The tributes which came in the following weeks were more reflective. A correspondent for the Washington Union wrote that he had congratulated Dew in June, as the latter was embarking for Europe, on the general success of the free trade principles for which Dew stood. The American Congress had just enacted the low Walker tariff, and the British Parliament had abolished the protective Corn Laws.[25]

A more personal tone characterized the eulogy delivered by William Boulware on the morning of October 12th, before a crowd assembled at King and Queen Court House. Boulware, a former American minister to Naples, had known Dew since their childhood, and he dwelt on Dew's love of books and ability to work:

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[23]Natilia Hay Dew's later life had a tragic quality. Her father committed suicide a year after her husband's death. She married Dr. J.W.R. Dunbar in 1848, had three sons by him, and died in April, 1855. She is buried in Winchester, Virginia; William Whiting, Jr., to Dr. E.G. Swem, December 2, 1939, William and Mary College Papers, folder 98A.

[24]Richmond Enquirer, September 8, 1846.

[25]Washington Union, quoted in Richmond Enquirer, September 18, 1846.

> Such was his command of his powers, that, one moment, he would be the gayest of a convivial party, and the next, upon retiring to his apartments, he would plunge with perfect facility into the most profound argument, take it up where he had left it, and follow it out in all its hidden and complicated relations. His discipline of his own faculties seemed perfect.

The result of such labor was not only a large number of published and unpublished writings, some of which Boulware discussed, but also an intensive study of governments and institutions. "In all that information necessary to an American statesman," Boulware declared, Dew was "profoundly proficient," yet he chose to influence men's thinking by literary efforts rather than by active political participation.

Notable as all these achievements were, Dew's qualities of heart were superior to those of his mind, Boulware concluded. Indulged, caressed, and admired by family and friends, Dew had yet emerged as a modest, generous and considerate man. Now the country had lost one of its leading figures, and Dew's personal friends had sustained a loss "which they cannot estimate, and which time cannot fill."[26]

Dew's passing left an emptiness at William and Mary. One student wrote "I see they have elected 'Old Bob' President pro tempore, and distributed old 'Tom's' classes amongst the other professors."[27] Robert Saunders, "Old Bob,"

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[26]Richmond Enquirer, October 23, 1846.

[27]George G. Thompson to William Berkeley, October 30, 1846, Berkeley Papers.

presided over a faculty meeting which praised Dew's service to the College and the cordiality and amenity which had marked his relations with the faculty. That body agreed to wear badges of mourning for thirty days.[28] In his opening address to the students, Saunders described his predecessor as an embodiment of Cicero's statement that benignity of disposition is one of the most beautiful qualities which can adorn a man. He also praised Dew's personal kindness and unaffected simplicity, as well as his contributions toward bringing the College to the highest prosperity in its history.[29] A more succinct statement came from the pen of an outsider, Professor Gessner Harrison of the University of Virginia, who wrote of Dew's death "I am truly sorry for the loss William and Mary will suffer . . . for he seemed to be a main prop of that venerable institution."[30]

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[28]William and Mary Faculty Minutes, 1846-1883, 1. Similar resolutions were adopted by the Society of the Alumni, of which Dew was president at his death, Southern Literary Messenger, XIII (August, 1847), 512.

[29]Richmond Enquirer, October 17, 1846.

[30]Gessner Harrison to William Galt, September 23, 1846, Galt Papers.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LONG SHADOW OF A SHORT LIFE

Thomas R. Dew's influence did not die with him in France. Although he lived only forty-three years, they were active and productive ones. The writings which comprised his legacy continued to have public exposure and currency in the decade and a half between 1846 and the outbreak of the Civil War. It would have grieved Dew, however, to know that his most immediate bequest was a critical disruption of the College of William and Mary.

Gessner Harrison's expression of concern for the College after Dew's passing was magnified in December, 1847, by "A Friend of the College" who observed that "When the lamented Dew fell, it was seen by all that a crisis had arrived in the affairs of the College."[1] The crisis so in evidence by then had evolved from the efforts of the Visitors to fill the professorship and presidency left vacant by Dew. The 1846-1847 session had begun with Robert Saunders as acting president and Dew's courses divided among his former

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[1]"A Friend of the College" to the Visitors of William and Mary, December 6, 1847, Richmond Enquirer, December 24, 1847.

colleagues.[2] This temporary arrangement was to be corrected by permanent appointments as quickly as possible. At its annual meeting in July, 1847, the Board of Visitors offered the presidency to Episcopal Bishop John Johns and to a Dr. Hawkes of New Orleans, both of whom declined.[3] Robert Saunders was then appointed, in November, to the presidency which he had occupied pro tempore for over a year.[4]

At the same November meeting, the Visitors selected Archibald C. Peachy of Richmond as professor of moral philosophy. Peachy had been a graduate student of Dew at William and Mary, and had written to his former classmate Benjamin Franklin Dew in January applying for the faculty position encompassing the courses "which your brother taught with such distinguished success."[5] Robert Saunders, upon learning of Peachy's appointment, immediately submitted his resignation not only from the presidency but also from the professorship of mathematics. In an exchange of correspondence with Peachy made public in December, Saunders explained that the Visitors selected Peachy in the full knowledge that he was "personally at variance" with Saunders.

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[2]Beverley Tucker, who assumed half of Dew's former teaching load, reported at first that the College had suffered by Dew's death, but not so much as had been feared, Tucker to Elizabeth T. Bryan, January 31, 1847, Bryan Papers.

[3]Richmond Enquirer, December 24, 1847.

[4]Ibid, November 12, 1847.

[5]Archibald C. Peachy to Benjamin Franklin Dew, January 15, 1847, Dew Papers.

The College would be wrecked, Saunders declared, if there were a "cessation of individual cordiality" among the professors. He agreed to remain in his present position only until the conclusion of the session.[6]

Before that date arrived, the Visitors had requested the resignation of the entire faculty so as to have greater freedom in solving the conflict. "Since the death of our late esteemed President, Mr. Dew," John Millington explained to a friend, "a great change has taken place in the affairs of our College. . .a schism exists between the Faculty and the Visitors. . ."[7] Millington was among those reelected to the faculty, but he accepted instead an offer from the State University of Mississippi, and only Beverley Tucker of Dew's former faculty eventually remained. One result of the schism was a serious decline in enrollment, which was reflected in the picture painted by a young artist, David H. Strother, who visited Williamsburg during the session following the controversy:

> The College is still extant - a venerable brick edifice of the prevailing style of architecture the most imposing building in the place. At the entrance to the grounds are two stunted live oaks and a noseless image of Norbonne Berkeley, Baron of Botetourt...The interior of the College is as bare and antiquated as everything else. Some old portraits of worthies of the old times are there - some unintelligible books in the dead Indian

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[6]Richmond Enquirer, November 12, December 10, 1847.

[7]John Millington to Professor Joseph Henry, May 30, 1848, William and Mary College Papers, folder 108.

> languages, etc. The endowment of the College supports seven professors and there are now 17 students in attendance.[8]

Fortunately this sad state of affairs did not continue for many years. In the decade prior to the Civil War, the College experienced another revival. Under the presidency of Benjamin S. Ewell, the student body rose to about 80, and a four-year undergraduate program became standard. Dew's former professorship was divided into the components which had existed prior to 1836; Bishop Johns became professor of moral and intellectual philosophy and Henry A. Washington assumed the professorship of history and political economy.[9]

During Dew's twenty year tenure as a faculty member, hundreds of Virginians and dozens of youths from other Southern states had passed through his courses. It is an almost impossible task to gauge accurately the influence of a teacher upon a student, but the subjects which Dew taught afforded the greatest opportunity for consideration of the problems confronting Southerners during the 1830's and 1840's. Dew's greatest gift as a writer was his ability to apply theory to specific contemporary issues,

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[8]Cecil D. Eby, Jr., ed., "'Porte Crayon' in the Tidewater," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXVII (October, 1959), 446. The Enquirer of December 11, 1841, listed the William and Mary library at 3,500 volumes plus a 600 volume "student library."

[9]Catalogue of the Officers and Students of William and Mary College, 1854-1855 (Richmond: Shepherd and Colin, 1855).

and such a gift could also be effectively applied in the classroom. His students did not have to guess at his opinion on a specific subject, and this was a genuine service on the part of a political nonpartisan in a day when virtually all of the press was outspoken in support of one national party or the other.

Dew was an ambitious man, who recognized that he had considerable ability to express himself clearly, and who sought to make a contribution, as he expressed it in 1845, to the country's literature. His relative youth at every stage of his career, and his awareness of his delicate health, help to explain his haste and urgency at times, particularly in dealing with editors. All accounts, however, suggest that he remained essentially a modest, unassuming person.

His literary ambitions were furthered by the posthumous publication of his historical manual early in 1853. A reviewer in the Southern Literary Messenger praised the work for its order and clearness, crediting Professor Henry A. Washington with preparing the work for publication.[10] As Dew had anticipated, his Digest filled a need for an interpretive history, and additional printings in 1854, 1856, 1858, 1891 and 1893 indicate that extensive classroom use was made of the work during the remainder of the century.

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[10]Southern Literary Messenger, XIX (April, 1853), 256. The full title of the work, published by D. Appleton & Company of New York, was A Digest of the Laws, Customs, Manners, and Institutions of the Ancient and Modern Nations.

Another of Dew's writings which he had utilized as a text, his essay on usury, was invoked during the 1850's, as the Virginia legislature continued to debate the question of legal interest rates. In its 1857-1858 report, the Select Committee on the Usury Laws disavowed any claim to originality, relying instead on the views of "Dew, McCulloch, Say, Ricardo, and some of Jeremy Bentham's too." Such a listing placed Dew in very distinguished company; elsewhere in the report the committee declared that "the fame of the lamented Dew will long be treasured with affectionate regard and veneration by Virginia, as one of the brightest jewels that glistens in her diadem."[11]

To the extent that Dew's name was recalled during the fifteen years following his death, however, it was most often in connection with the subject of slavery. Several new versions made Dew's essay more accessible, beginning with two separate printings in 1849 by J. W. Randolph of Richmond.[12] In 1852, as has been noted, Dew's essay was published with writings by William Harper, James Hammond, and William Gilmore Simms under the title The Pro-Slavery Argument.[13] A year earlier, J.D.B. DeBow had written that

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[11]"Report of the Select Committee on the Usury Laws," n.d. [1857-1858] Document No. 27, Virginia House of Delegates, 3,5.

[12]Thomas R. Dew, An Essay on Slavery (Richmond: J.W. Randolph, 1849).

[13]William Harper et. al., The Pro-Slavery Argument (Charleston: Walker, Richards & Co, 1852).

he had finally acquired a copy of Dew's work, then "almost entirely out of print." He thought no greater service could be done to the South, than by presenting the essay for study and future reference. Accordingly, he began running it in his journal, DeBow's Review, using the original American Quarterly Review version, but for some reason ceased printing it after only two installments until 1856, when it was continued without reference to Dew's authorship.[14] While reviewing another book in 1859, DeBow observed that "the great book upon Slavery has yet to be written . . . None but a Southern author of rare abilities and calm philosophic temper can do it justice. If Professor Dew were yet living, with the ripened experience he would have acquired, and with the light furnished by the incessant discussion of the past fifteen years, he might have written the great treatise. As it is, his essay, making proper allowances for the early period of its appearance, is probably the best which has yet been published."[15] DeBow was voicing an opinion very similar to that expressed by Edmund Ruffin in his 1857 Political Economy of Slavery. Ruffin in 1833 had printed reviews of Dew's and Harrison's opposing works side by side, but two decades later his praise was all for Dew and the

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[14] DeBow's Review, X (June, 1851), 658-665; XI (July, 1851), 23-30: XX (January, 1856), 118-140; (February, 1856), 175-189; (March, 1856), 269-290; (April, 1856), 468-487.

[15] Ibid., XXVII (April, 1859), 490.

pro-slavery argument. Never had any work of mere reasoning on previously known facts had such great effect, Ruffin contended, and although various of Dew's arguments had been surpassed, "no one, yet, has so well covered the whole ground of investigation, exposition, and argument, as Professor Dew."[16]

Even as DeBow and Ruffin extolled Dew's essay, however, they were seeking, or attempting to supply, something which the William and Mary professor's work was not - a specific refutation of Northern criticism of slavery. In 1860 a large volume was published in Georgia entitled Cotton Is King, and Pro Slavery Arguments.[17] The preface indicated that the work was presented in response to Northern attitudes symbolized by the recent John Brown raid at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. Among the seven contributions were two, those of William Harper and James Hammond, which had appeared with Dew's work in the 1853 Pro-Slavery Argument. Even those essays, written in 1837 and 1845, had revealed a hostility to abolitionist attacks which was lacking in Dew's response to Southern criticism of slavery. Effective as Dew's work continued to be, even twenty-five years after it first appeared, it inevitably lost some currency as the pace of events led the South rapidly toward secession in 1860 and 1861.

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[16]Edmund Ruffin, The Political Economy of Slavery (Washington: L. Towers, 1857), 14, 15n.

[17]E.N. Elliott, ed., Cotton Is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments (Augusta: Pritchard, Abbott & Loomis, 1860).

Those events, generally, influenced the attitude of future generations toward Dew and his Southern contemporaries. At the first William and Mary commencement after Dew's death, a toast was proposed "to Thomas Roderick Dew: History will do him injustice if she does not class him among the first of his countrymen."[18] History has in fact classed Dew among the first of the pro-slavery advocates but has gone little further. Part of the explanation lies in Dew's refusal to become active in politics.

By the mid 1830's, the public assumed that Dew was a Whig in political sympathy, and on several occasions his name was mentioned in connection with a Congressional seat, as a Whig. His family connections, his wealth, and his private expressions of support for Henry Clay lend credence to a Whiggish interpretation. There is little additional evidence for such a conclusion, however. He opposed each of the planks of Clay's American System, which provided the basis for Whig platforms during the party's two decades of existence. Dew's condemnation of a protective tariff came early, never wavered, and was public knowledge. He advocated internal improvements, but insisted upon state and local rather than federal financing, as the Whigs proposed. His position on the third American System plank, a national bank, evolved over a period of years. Initially he sympathized with the plight of the National Bank and criticized Jackson's

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[18]Richmond Enquirer, July 13, 1847.

manipulations of it. By the 1840's, as his lecture notes indicate, his state-rights views had led him to the conclusion that such a powerful bank had too much potential for fiscal concentration, and he urged a system of state banks as preferable to either a national bank or a subtreasury system. Taken together, such sentiments left Dew without concrete issues on which to base a Whig party affiliation. It was equally evident in 1843 that John H. Pleasants, a former editor of the leading Whig paper in Virginia, did not wish to claim Dew as a party supporter. The conclusion must be that Dew was sincere in his nonpartisan expressions, and that he preferred a consistent economic attitude rather than undeviating loyalty to any party.[19]

In his attitude toward the South, Dew was not so broad-minded. His public and private statements reveal a gradual moving to the concept of state rights, which eventually became the scale on which he weighed most governmental actions. For the most part his was a calm, considered state rights attitude, only occasionally lashing out in terms which might eventually have ranked him with the more extreme Southerners, had he lived through the remainder of the ante bellum period.

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[19]Dew's friend William Boulware wrote to a candidate for Dew's former political economy professorship that Dew considered it preferable to a federal cabinet position, Boulware to Henry A. Washington, December 7, 1848, quoted in Land, "Thomas R. Dew." There is no other evidence of a cabinet offer to Dew.

State rights was only one facet of the ideological framework which united the South and which Dew embodied more than perhaps any other person. Slavery was defended by him as both a means of organizing a bi-racial society and as a system of labor. That institution in turn raised Southern white women to the high position symbolized by the revival of chivalric practices. With each of these subjects Dew's name could be prominently linked, and in his mind all were inter-related with state-rights and the natural laws which he believed should operate in economic questions.[20]

The cult of Southernism which encompassed all of these characteristics had the potential for obscuring the serious concerns of the nation. At times that cult clouded Dew's vision. However, historians have often overlooked the fact that those who defended such issues as slavery and state rights were often doing so out of a firm conviction that those institutions and concepts were the only means of saving the nation. One person who saw this quality in Dew was the editor of the New Orleans Jeffersonian, who in a eulogy at the time of Dew's death praised the latter's devotion to the South and particularly to Virginia, but then added that Dew

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[20]As previously noted, 76 n 36, Dew believed that certain practical factors, laws of war, etc., negated the application of the natural rights argument to the question of slavery.

> believed in the virtue of the people and in the power of intelligence. 'Four hostile newspapers,' said Napoleon, 'are more to be feared than a hundred thousand bayonets,' and it was this power and that of universal education, with which this eminent scholar desired to guarantee the stability of the American Republic.[21]

Although Dew stated as early as 1836 that disunion would be preferable to consolidation of governmental power in the hands of one or a few men, he was anxious that neither extreme should materialize.

Dew's death, in August, 1846, occurred just at the moment when the causes with which his name is identified were in the combination most calculated to have satisfied him. A few weeks earlier or later, such would not have been true. Prior to mid-1846, the concept of economic protection would not have been dealt the blow which was achieved by the Walker tariff in the United States and the abolition of the Corn Laws in England. It was in 1846 too that a second period of railroad development began in Virginia, and in this decade that the trend of emigration from the state was reversed, with measurable Northern migration into western Virginia.[22] Finally, Dew had found personal happiness through marriage. Conversely, on the day following Dew's burial in Paris, the American House of

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[21]Quoted by Robert Saunders, Richmond Enquirer, October 17, 1846.

[22]Patricia P. Hickin, "John Curtis Underwood and the Antislavery Crusade 1809-1860," (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1961), 27; Rice, "Internal Improvements in Virginia," 345.

Representatives adopted the Wilmot Proviso, symbolizing the revival of the latent slavery issue as a major political question. And within a short time, the College of William and Mary would be victimized by disputes which Dew's presence had prevented.

The young man who hiked across Italy in 1826 in an effort to restore his health eventually lost that battle twenty years later. His death at an early age, and at the beginning of married life, was a real loss, but not a tragedy. He had made each year count for much, and assured that in Williamsburg and throughout the South, his name would be well known for many years. If there were a tragic aspect surrounding Dew, it was the growing sectionalism which prevented him, and many like him, from being recognized as national figures. He deserves to be identified as one of the leading political economists and spokesmen of the Old South; he had the ability to speak for the nation.

THE DEW FAMILY OF DEWSVILLE

Thomas Dew
b. May 28, 1763
d. April 23, 1849

m. June 7, 1793

Lucy Gatewood
b. March 24, 1776
d. November 17, 1857

- Infant, died
- William
  b. September 28, 1796
  d. March 29, 1855
- Mary Ellen
  b.
  m. Thomas Gresham,
  Dec. 22, 1817
  d. February, 1836
- Thomas Roderick
  b. December 5, 1802
  m. Natilia Hay,
  June 17, 1846
  d. August 6, 1846
- Philip Augustus
  b.
  d. by 1839
- John Wesley
  b. 1812
  d. by 1849
- Elizabeth
  b.
  m. --- Hudgins
  d. by 1839
- Infant, died
- Benjamin Franklin
  b. June 8, 1820
  d. October 10, 1877
- Luther Calvin
  b. 1822
  d. 1854

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I. PRIMARY SOURCES

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Bryan Family Papers
Robert Lewis Dabney Student Notebook
Grinnan Family Papers
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Griswold Manuscripts (Photostats, Alderman Library, University of Virginia)

Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated

Galt Family Papers

J. Franklyn Dew, Richmond, Virginia

Thomas R. Dew Diary

Duke University Library

George B. Harrison Papers
George F. Holmes Manuscripts

Library of Congress

Bassett Family Papers
John Floyd Papers
Jesse Burton Harrison Papers
James Madison Papers (Microfilm, Alderman Library, University of Virginia)

National Archives

Passport Records

New York Public Library

A.W. Anthony Collection (Photostats, Alderman Library, University of Virginia)
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Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary

Thomas R. Dew Account Book
Dew Family Papers
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