FOOTNOTES


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

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

7 Unknown writer to Maria Nourse, 22 November 1796. Nourse Family Papers.

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

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


Niemcewicz, Visit to Mount Vernon, p. 18.


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


Sarah Trebell Galt to M. (Polly) Farquharson, 26 February 1800. Galt Personal Papers.


Countess of Carlisle, Rudiments of Taste, p. 57.


40 Rice, ed., *Chastellux Travels*, p. 541.


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

43 Farish, ed., *Pithian Journal*, p. 130. In a similar vein, Frances Bland Tucker received the following poem on her birthday:

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

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

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

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

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


45 Gregory, *Father's Legacy*, p. 11.

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


52 Ibid., p. 41-42.


54 Elizabeth Foote Washington, Diary, 1788.

55 Virginia Gazette (Rind), 11 October 1770.


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

61 Gregory, Father's Legacy, p. 220.

63 Gregory, *Father's Legacy*, p. 28.


66 James Rind to Maria Rind, 1 June 1789. Brown Coalter Tucker Papers.
CHAPTER III
ADVICE UPON MARRIAGE

By continually reinforcing subdued behavior while decrying affectation, Virginians raised daughters who were supposed to approach courtship with an obedient and dutiful attitude. "Lucy Gordon is a truly good girl," Lucinda Lee Orr remarked, "but nothing of the romance in her. So much the better, say I; she is much happier without." Subdued behavior, natural reserve, and modesty required that all romantic initiative come from men. A Virginian urged Dr. Philip Mazzei, an Italian agricultural advisor to Thomas Jefferson, that he should marry Madame Martin for "by their living with me, the daughter (of Madame Martin) could never marry in this country, where the slightest suspicion of living together without being married was an abominable thing, dishonoring the man more than the woman, since he was supposed to be the seducer." Dr. Gregory clarified this position by writing, "It is a maxim laid down among you, and a very prudent one it is, That Love is not to begin on your part, but is entirely to be the consequence of our attachment to you." This restraint was probably difficult for some young women. Margaret Davenport felt the constraints of such suggestions as she was informed
that a "Beau" of hers "shou'd leave Town in a few days, but whether he means to return, or not, I cou'd not learn as I did not ask, tho' I wished very much to know." Other Virginians noted and urged this retiring courtship behavior. George Washington may have suspected that seventeen-year-old Eleanor Parke Custis would fall in love with a gentleman who did not return her affection. To further inform her, and to protect her from hopeless one-sided longings, he asked her to closely examine her feelings about a particular gentleman:

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

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

Young women, if not leading the chase, were certainly not supposed to discourage it. In a society where most adults married at some time, relatives often nudged young women to consider marriage. "Not to be serious my Lady Ann
Frances - are you not by this time fatigued with the name of Tucker?" Mrs. Lucy Randolph wrote Anne Frances Tucker in 1798, "you had better look around you . . . ."7 "My sister, has she had any more Admirers, and has she yet found one with whom she is pleased?" inquired Charles Carter, writing from medical school in Paris in 1806, "If she has not, I am afraid she has let all the good opportunities escape."8

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

For my own part, I never did, nor do I believe I ever shall give advice to a woman who is setting out on a matrimonial voyage, first, because I never could advise one to marry without her own consent;
and secondly, because I know it is to no purpose to advise her to refrain, once she has obtained it. A woman very rarely asks an opinion or requires advice on such an occasion, 'til her resolution is formed; and then it is with the hope and expectation of obtaining a sanction, not that she means to be governed by your disapprobation, that she applies. In a word, the plain english of the application may be summed up in these words; "I wish you to think as I do; but if unhappily you differ from me in opinion, my heart, I must confess, is fixed, and I have gone too far now to retract."¹¹

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

In the broad spectrum of prescriptive writings guiding the behavior of young Virginia women, Virginians themselves were most articulate about the correct standards of wifely behavior. Most parents were concerned that the first years
of their daughter's marriages be happy and free of turmoil. Many of the suggestions about a proper wife's behavior came from fathers and mothers who were, of course, husbands and wives in their own right. Parents knew that marriage was more complicated than the following verse, copied for Ann Frances Tucker, suggested:

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

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

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

Love is a mighty pretty thing; but like all other delicious things, it is cloying; and when the first transports of the passion begins to subside, which it assuredly will do, and yield, oftentimes too late, to more sober reflections, it serves to evince, that love is too dainty a food to live upon alone, and ought not to be considered father than as a necessary ingredient for that matrimonial happiness which results from a combination of causes; none of which are of greater importance, than that the object on which it is placed, should possess good sense, good dispositions, and the means of supporting you in the way you have been brought up.
Such qualifications cannot fail to attract (after marriage) your esteem and regard, into wch. or into disgust, sooner or later, love naturally resolves itself; and who at the same time has a claim to the respect, and esteem of the circle he moves in. Without these, whatever may be your first impressions of the man, they will end in disappointment; for be assured, and experience will convince you, that there is no truth more certain than that all of our enjoyments fall short of our expectations; and to none does it apply with more force, than to the gratification of the passions. 15

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

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

If Anne Randolph's sentiments were expressed so clearly to the stepfather of the future groom, Judith probably heard numerous variations of these ideas during her courtship. Anne Randolph's reasoning was based on her "wish to keep my Daughters single 'till they were old enough to form a proper judgment of mankind; well knowing that a Woman's happiness depends entirely on the Husband she is united to; it is a step that requires more deliberation than Girls generally
take; or even Mothers seem to think necessary . . . ."16

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

A wife was responsible for domestic tranquility in the marriage, and she could accomplish it by acting in a way calculated not to upset her husband.20 "The love of a husband
can be retained only by the high opinion which he entertains of his wife's goodness of heart," wrote Patrick Henry to Anne, adding that the husband's opinion "should augment every day; he should have much more reason to admire her for those excellent qualities which will cast a lustre over a virtuous woman, whose personal attractions are no more." 21 The Countess of Carlisle suggested that a young wife "Make choice of such amusements, as will attach him to your company, study such occupations, as will render you of consequence to him --such-as-the-management-of-his-fortune-and-the-conduct-of his house; yet, without assuming a superiority unbecoming your sex." 22 "Harmony in the marriage state is the very first object to be aimed at," wrote Thomas Jefferson to his recently-married daughter Mary, "Nothing can preserve affections uninterrupted but a firm resolution never to differ in will and a determination to consider the love of the other as of more value than any object whatever . . . ." 23

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

... one of my first resolutions I made after marriage, - was never to hold disputes with my husband, - never to contend with him in my opinions of things, - but if ever we differ'd in opinions not to insist on mine being right,
& his wrong, - which is too much the custom of my sex. - they cannot bear to be thought in the wrong, - which is the cause why there is so much contention in the married state, - & the Lordly Sex - they can never be in the wrong in their own opinion - therefore cannot give up to a woman but I blame my sex most - it is their business to give up to their husband . . . I think a woman may keep up the dignity of a wife and mistress of a family - without ever disputing with her husband . . . 25

"Little things, that in reality, are mere trifles in themselves, often produce bickering and even quarrels," Patrick Henry explained, "Never permit them to be a subject of dispute; yield them with pleasure, with a smile of affection." 26 Thomas Jefferson echoed these conciliatory sentiments in a letter to newly-married Martha. "Your new condition," he advised, "will call for (an) abundance of little sacrifices, but they will be greatly overpaid by the measures of affection they will secure you. The happiness of your life depends now on the continuing to please a single person. To this all other objects must be secondary . . . ." 27

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

Occasionally wives recorded suggestions about how they wished their husbands to behave. Though these comments are directed towards men, they revealed a great deal about the wife's perceived role and behavior in marriage. Elizabeth
Foote Washington wrote in 1784

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

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

Martha Jefferson Randolph reported to her father in 1790 that "I have made it my study to please him in everything and to consider all other objects as secondary to that ... ."31 In 1779, shortly before her marriage, Elizabeth Foote Washington prayed "may gracious God direct and influence my heart and its affections that I may make it my study to please my husband in everything that is not
against the divine Laws . . . ." 32 Elizabeth Byrd wrote her straying husband William Byrd III that "If I should ever be bless'd with seeing you, you allways may depend that I will do everything in my power, conducive to your satisfac-
tion." 33 Repeated comments on these themes indicated that Virginia women took very seriously the charge "to please" their husbands.

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

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