

**PATRICIAN AND PLEBEIAN IN
VIRGINIA; OR, THE ORIGIN AND
DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIAL
CLASSES OF THE OLD
DOMINION: A DESSERTATION**

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Patrician and plebeian in Virginia; or, The origin and development of the social classes of the Old Dominion: a Dissertation by Thomas J. Wertebaker

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THOMAS J. WERTENBAKER

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Patrician and Plebeian in Virginia

or the Origin and Development of the
Social Classes of the Old Dominion

BY

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the University of Virginia
as a Part of the Requirements for the Degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

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Gift Mrs. T. J. Parker, Jr. May 26, 1942

Dedicated to H. R. W.

PREFACE

The origin of the aristocracy of colonial Virginia is a subject which has caused much controversy among students of the history of the Old Dominion. It was for many years the general belief that the leading planters were the descendants of English families of high rank, and that their aristocratic instincts were their birth-right, the heritage left them by noble ancestors. Others have maintained that the best families of Virginia came from the great English middle class, and the evidences upon the debated question which have been unearthed in recent years, tend to confirm this view. The author's own studies have led him to the conclusion that but few men of rank ever came to the "wilderness of Virginia," and that the planters were in most cases the descendants of merchant ancestors. With this as a basis he has sought to point out the operation of the economic, social and political forces that operated upon the colonists and instilled into them those instincts of chivalry and of pride that were so pronounced at the time of the Revolution.

The Second Part, devoted to the middle class, dwells upon the immigration of free families of humble means to Virginia and the part they played in the colony's upbuilding. Much space is given to the indentured servants, their numbers and character, and the extent to which they survived and entered into the middle class which was forming in the 17th century.

In conclusion it only remains for the author to express his appreciation of the kindness of those who have aided him in his work. He wishes especially to acknowledge the services rendered by Dr. R. H. Dabney, of the University of Virginia; by Mr. Charles Puryear, of the Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College; by Mr. J. S. Patton, Librarian of the University of Virginia; by Mr. P. L. Windsor, formerly Librarian of the University of Texas; by Dr. H. R. McIlwaine, Virginia State Librarian; and by Mr. William Clayton-Torrence, of Richmond, Virginia.

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