

CHAPTER II

INFLUENCE

TUCKER has not exercised much influence upon the development of economic thought. Two leading reasons may be given in explanation: I. Most of his writings were controversial pamphlets dealing with current questions. II. His more ambitious essays in the realms of economic science were never published.

I. CONTROVERSIAL PAMPHLETS

Tucker won recognition as an able advocate for a general naturalization law, for abolition of privileged trading companies, and for a peace policy. His reputation as an economic writer has been largely due to his pamphlets upon these themes.

The popular aversion to foreigners, the power of custom, and the strength of the London chartered companies, rendered almost fruitless the efforts, in the decade from 1750 to 1760, for naturalization and for destruction of trading monopolies; but the tracts and speeches of that decade strengthened the movement towards freedom in British industrial and commercial life, and contributed appreciably toward the ultimate success of that movement. As the leading English pamphleteer in favor of freedom, in that ten years, Tucker had direct influence upon practical legislation, and both direct and indirect influence upon the development of the freedom idea; but it is doubtful if any later British economic writer of any consequence has been appreciably

influenced in his thought-system by any of these mid-century pamphlets of Tucker. This is to be expected. That tracts, devoted to championing or to attacking particular bills or particular companies, under particular conditions, should be buried with their kind and their generation is most natural. If any live, it will be more probable that they live rather as landmarks than as means of inspiration. So it has been with these naturalization and anti-monopoly tracts of Tucker. They have been sometimes quoted, but have been quoted usually simply as good illustrations of the advance thought of their day.

Tucker's American tracts are political rather than economic. Their leading thesis is that Great Britain should cast off her ungrateful American colonies. It is true that the basic arguments, *viz.*, that war is ruinous to trade, and that goodness and cheapness of a nation's wares, and not its political relations, win markets for it, are economic; but the political conclusion looms larger than the economic premises.

What is true of the earlier pamphlets is true of these. They undoubtedly had their share of influence in reconciling the British mind to separation; but what direct influence upon the course of scientific thought-development is reasonably to be expected from a series of *Tracts* and *Letters* upon the subject-matter of a closed controversy? Their very titles, *Tracts* and *Letters*, and their avowedly controversial and apparently political character, have failed to attract the economic student, even if they have not caused him deliberately to pass by these writings.

II. TUCKER'S SCIENTIFIC WORKS UNKNOWN

Tucker's *Elements of Commerce* and his *Instructions for Travellers* were never published. They give his leading thoughts upon economics. In main part, they are not con-

troversial, but impartially scientific in character. They contain some advances upon current ideas, and probably would have contributed to an earlier and a better systematization of economic thought if they had been published. Their titles, and their scientific and avowedly economic character, would have attracted attention among economic writers. The fact is, that they do not appear to have been known, except by the friends to whom Tucker sent them for criticism. Among these friends there seems to have been no one who won reputation as an economic writer. This distribution of the few privately printed copies of each of the above works was made in the years 1755 and 1757. Each friend was requested to return his volume, with marginal comments, to Tucker, within a few months. Since this request was probably respected, it is exceedingly doubtful if any of the leading economic writers of the seventy-five years following 1755 ever read either the *Elements* or the *Instructions*, for Tucker never prosecuted the work any further, and had no reason for redistributing these first drafts. They probably remained in his hands for the forty years following, and then perished in the irreverent ridding up after his death.

That these works were unknown to economic writers of the half century immediately following 1755 seems the more probable when it is considered that, despite the patient and painstaking research in the field of the history of economics, during the past two generations, there is very little now known, among economists, of either of these works. So far as the writer has been able to learn, there are but three copies of each of these works extant.¹ The meagerness of

¹ The British Museum Library has a copy each of the *Elements* and the *Instructions*; the New York Public Library (Astor division) has a copy of the *Elements* with a number of marginal notes in Tucker's own

knowledge of these works is most strikingly evidenced by the fact that writers of histories of economics do not mention them. McCulloch, in his *Literature of Political Economy*, does not even list the *Instructions* among Tucker's works, and he says of the *Elements*, that its principles are identical with those of Tucker's other writings, and that the "theory of taxation is not touched upon." The facts are, that the *Elements* is the only one of Tucker's writings that clearly attempts to present a science of economics, and that its closing pages outline Tucker's taxation theory. Neither Blanqui, in his *History of Political Economy*, nor Cossa, in his *Introduction to Political Economy*, mentions either the *Elements* or the *Instructions*. Ingram, in his *History of Political Economy*, mentions neither of these works, and dismisses Tucker with the statement that his "works (are) deficient in permanent interest."

INFLUENCE ON ENGLISH ECONOMICS

The above facts and reasons show why Tucker had little or no direct influence upon the development of English economics, as it is to be traced through the masters. Biographers for encyclopædiæ have insisted upon repeating the tale that Tucker was a commercial writer of some merit. Occasionally an economist has read one of Tucker's tracts and has selected a quotation for later use. Quotations from Tucker have been noticeably more frequent in the recent years of developing interest in the study of the history of economic thought. It is notable, however, that neither James Anderson, in his tracts, nor Adam Smith, in his hand; and Professor Edwin R. A. Seligman of Columbia University, has a copy of the *Instructions* in his extensive and valuable private library of economics and political science. Professor H. S. Foxwell of Cambridge, England, has a copy of each of these works in his rich collection of eighteenth century English pamphlets.

Wealth of Nations, make any reference to Tucker or to his works, while Malthus has one¹ passing reference only, in his *Essay*. Tucker does not appear to have influenced these men, and in the course of its real development since 1770, English economic thought has taken the treatises of Anderson, Smith and Malthus as starting-points. The reasonable conclusion appears to be that Tucker's *direct* influence in the evolution of English economic thought is nearly negligible.

On the other hand, Tucker must be accredited with a considerable *indirect* influence upon the development of British economics. Through his advocacy of economic freedom in relatively ephemeral, but, at the time, highly influential,² tracts, published intermittently during fifty years, through his sermons and conversations,³ and through his correspondences,⁴ Tucker undoubtedly helped to create and to ex-

¹ *Essay on Population, 3rd ed.*, vol. ii, p. 441, barely refers to Tucker's opinion that friendly societies should be voluntary.

² The tract *Reflect. on Expediency of Opening Trade to Turkey*, written by Tucker in 1753, aroused action against the Turkey Trading Company. Voluntary subscriptions were raised in Bristol and Liverpool to war against this company, and petitions were sent in from many places. June 24, 1754, Parliament, in response, opened the Turkey trade to any citizen of Great Britain on payment of £20. See *Appendix to 2nd Edition* of this tract (1755) for Tucker's account of this movement against the Turkey trading monopoly.

³ Tucker's letter of May 11, 1755, commends to Dr. Birch a young nobleman Mr. Combes, and a young clergyman, his stepson, Mr. Woodward, and says that these young men are pupils of his, in a sense, and agree with him upon all commercial topics. See Birch Mss. (4319, vol. xx, p. 818) in British Mus. Library.

⁴ Tucker's correspondences and conversations with Lord Hardwicke, Townshend and Nugent [with the latter of whom he was intimate for many years] evidence his probable influence upon British politicians; his correspondences with Hume and Kames evidence his probable influence on British men of letters; his correspondences and conversations with Dr. Birch and Dr. Forster evidence his probable influence upon the British clergy.

tend the demand for larger commercial and industrial freedom. He helped to prepare the British mind for a readier reception of the teachings of a *Wealth of Nations*. Inasmuch as he helped to shape the British commercial mind from 1750 until 1785, and the later writings of others were but expressions of this mind, he may be said to have indirectly influenced later British writers.

INFLUENCE ON THE PHYSIOCRATS

Tucker exercised a measure of direct influence upon Turgot and upon the Physiocrats.

The direct correspondence between Tucker and Turgot did not begin until 1770; but years before this Turgot had translated two of Tucker's tracts. He was but twenty-six years old when he translated the first one, a tract on *Naturalization*, and it is altogether probable that Tucker's thought aided in shaping the young man's economic ideas.

Turgot's first letter to Tucker, in 1770, does not directly acknowledge any such influence, although it is very complimentary in tone. Turgot states that he had translated, some years before, Tucker's *Naturalization of Foreign Protestants, Part II*,¹ and his tract, *The Case of Going to War for the Sake of Trade*.² He sends Tucker a copy of his *Reflections, &c.*, as a part "of the homage a translator owes to his author." He says the *Reflections* will bring to Tucker no new idea, for they have the same ideas of the principles of liberty and of the important economic aims. He credits Tucker with being the only author in a nation which allows freedom of the press, who "perceived the advantage of free

¹ *Questions Importantes sur le Commerce, etc.*, 1755. See *Biographie Universelle*, vol. xlii, p. 240.

² 1765. See *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, vol. xlv, p. 691.

trade, and had not been seduced by the puerility and hopeful illusion of exclusive commerce.”¹

Tucker's direct influence upon the Physiocratic school is unquestionable. Besides these two tracts translated by Turgot, Frenchmen had a chance to read the essence of Tucker's *Essay on Trade*, in their own language, and prior to the beginning of the physiocratic publications. In 1754 Plumard d'Angeul brought out his *Remarques sur les Avantages et les Désavantages de la France et de la Grande Bretagne par rapport au Commerce, &c.* This is, in large part, a free paraphrase² of Tucker's *Essay on Trade*. Mr. Henry Higgs notes that this tract of Plumard d'Angeul “was constantly present to Quesnay's mind in writing the article *Fermiers*, and was quoted,” and that Gournay recommends Tucker as an economic writer of merit.³

¹ See *Oeuvres de Turgot* (Paris, 1810), vol. ix, pp. 366-375, for two letters to Tucker. The above statements are taken from the letter dated Sept. 12, 1770.

² An English translation appeared in London in the same year (1754) entitled *Remarks on the Advantages and Disadvantages of France and Great Britain with Respect to Commerce*. It purported to be written by John Nickolls. In the preface the author makes the following express acknowledgment of his indebtedness to Tucker: “I hope that Mr. Josiah Tucker, a worthy clergyman of Bristol and at the same time an eminent patriot, will without offence see some of his ideas amongst mine. I borrowed from his essay upon Commerce the title which I have given to these remarks; I have taken from it almost word for word my first seven paragraphs by way of necessary introduction to my work; in short, he it was, who inspired me with the resolution of travelling and of making observations; and I pay to him homage of the fruits thereof with pleasure and gratitude.” Tucker in his *Instructions* recommends to his traveler this volume. He says of it: “This tract is in a great measure a translation of my *Essay on Trade* and other commercial pieces. But as the author is a native of France, viz., the Marquis D'Angeul, tho appearing under the borrowed name of an Englishman, Sir John Nickolls, he was capable of making great improvements on my plan, etc.” *Instruct. for Trav.*, p. 9.

³ See *The Physiocrats* (pp. 15, 31, 67), by Mr. Henry Higgs.

Aside from these French translations of Tucker, it must be remembered that Tucker's *Essay on Trade* had passed to its third edition in 1753, and that his tracts on spirituous liquors, on naturalization, and on the trade with Turkey, had all been published by the year 1753. Those of the Physiocrats who could read English thus had opportunity to be influenced by seven different economic tracts, written and published by Tucker at least two years prior to the appearance of the first Physiocratic work. These facts make a clear case that Tucker exercised a measurable influence upon the Physiocratic school, rather than that he was a satellite of theirs, as Blanqui seems to imply.¹

¹See *History of Political Economy*, p. 364, where Blanqui says that Tucker "belonged to the shade of Gournay."