WILLIAM RAWLE, 1759-1836
By Thomas Spence Duché
When Thomas Spence Duché was born on September 15, 1763, it was into what seemed an assured place in Philadelphia and its society. His father, the Reverend Jacob Duché, had just been ordained into priest’s orders in the Church of England and had entered upon his duties as the assistant minister of Christ Church and St. Peter’s, and it was to Christ Church that the boy was taken for baptism on October 16, 1763; his mother was a Hopkinson, the daughter of Thomas Hopkinson and sister of Francis. The world of 1763 must have seemed extremely stable to most of the members of Thomas’s family and their friends. The young king, George III, had been on the throne for three years, his accession having been celebrated at the College of Philadelphia in 1762 by a dialogue and ode exercise, written by Jacob Duché and Francis Hopkinson. Three years after the boy’s birth, almost coincident with the repeal of the Stamp Act, two of his uncles, Hopkinson and John Morgan, in competition for a medal presented to the College of Philadelphia by John Sargent, wrote essays on “The Reciprocal Advantages Arising from a Perpetual Union between Great Britain and Her American Colonies.” As a trustee, Jacob Duché was one of the judges who awarded first prize to John Morgan, though he did

1 Manuscript Collections of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, CII, 551.
not know it at the time, as the essays had been submitted under pseudonyms.

The early life of the child naturally enough passed without much occasion for him to be spoken of in correspondence or to find his way into formal record. About the only kind of reference one encounters is the sort offered by a letter of Dr. John Morgan to Miss Nancy Hopkinson of May 14, 1770, in which he remarks that “Tommy & Hetty Duché who have been on a visit present their Love to Aunt Nancy.” One may perhaps question whether they had so much asked their uncle to make this remark as that he felt it should be made. It was in December of the same year that the family was saddened by the death of a new daughter, Mary, who lived only seven weeks.

We must assume that young Thomas followed the usual educational pattern of his period and that he spent his earliest days of schooling at a dame school in Philadelphia. Then, as one would expect, he entered the Academy of Philadelphia, which his father had attended and of which he had been a trustee since January 13, 1761, the first alumnus to hold such a position. Thomas Duché was ten years old when he was entered in the Academy on November 22, 1773. The record books of the Academy show that he was fairly regular in his attendance (or at least in the payment of his tuition account) from that time until April, 1776. In April, 1777, it was noted that Duché had been absent from May 4 to October 8, 1776. It is not remarkable that the records themselves are somewhat fragmentary at this particular period of history, but the last entry for Thomas Duché shows tuition paid for the period from August 6, 1778, to January 1, 1779. As far as one can determine, this was the extent of the young man’s formal schooling.

Living as he did in Philadelphia, with his father serving for a time as chaplain to the Continental Congress, with one uncle a member of the Congress and another surgeon general of the army, the young man could scarcely escape being impressed by the American Revolution and the events which brought it on. From his point of view the

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2 Redwood Collection, Maryland Historical Society (MdHS).
3 Archives of the University of Pennsylvania, V. a. 8, 93. These records were made available through the kindness of Dr. Leonidas Dodson, archivist of the University.
4 Ibid., 140.
5 Ibid., 149.
most influential event of all was the decision of his father that the Declaration of Independence had been a mistake and his subsequent appeal to General Washington to halt hostilities. It was this decision and appeal that made it necessary for Jacob Duché to leave Philadelphia for England while the British still held the port. This he did on December 12, 1777. The defection of his father undoubtedly threw a large burden of responsibility on the shoulders of the young man. To be sure, his mother had her brother, Francis Hopkinson, and her brother-in-law, John Morgan, to lean upon, but Thomas very probably now began to think of himself as the man of the family. It was apparently Hopkinson who posted a bond of £1,500, which the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania had required of Mrs. Duché when, on April 27, 1779, it ordered that a recommendation be given her to "pass into New York with her children." Since on April 30 the Council ordered that a certificate of leave be granted, the bond must have been posted by that time.

On June 8, 1779, however, Francis Hopkinson had to appear again and ask the Council to allow his sister and her children to return to Philadelphia. In support of his petition Hopkinson cited a letter from his nephew telling of the difficulties Elizabeth Duché had undergone. From New York on May 24, 1779, Thomas had written to his "Dear & Honoured Uncle" that, having obtained passage in a convoy about to sail for England, the family had remained aboard ship from May 15 to May 23, all except the first day spent at anchor off "y" Hook, ... the wind being strong against us." "Mamma was taken with the Sea sickness, which brought on a Complication of Disorders" which in their turn so reduced her "that she was not able to Walk without Support, & was fainting continually till at last she was so ill that the Doctor of our & one of another Ship said they thought she could not support it many days longer." The doctors therefore advised her immediate return to New York. All this Hopkinson told the Council, adding that his nephew had not only informed him of these particulars, but had also requested that an immediate application be made for permission to return to Philadelphia. Hopkinson

7 Ibid., 762.
8 Hopkinson Papers, II, 108, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP). Unless otherwise noted, manuscripts cited are in the HSP.
further advised that his sister "is now amongst Strangers and de-
pends on their Bounty." 9

After twice deferring consideration of the matter, and after receiv-
ing a medical certificate from Samuel Bard, "Doctor of Physick," as
to Elizabeth Duché's condition, the Council granted the request to
return.10

Once again the family was back in Philadelphia, but the attempt
to join Jacob Duché in London was not to be abandoned. On April 7,
1780, Hopkinson again appeared in his sister's behalf. The official
records are somewhat laconic in stating that he came "praying leave
for herself and family to go to New York &ca., with her family and
effects."11 Actually, his petition listed the family as "her three Chi-
dren & a maid Servant" and the effects as "her necessary Baggage
consisting of 2 Beds, 1 Matrass, 2 Chests, 6 Trunks, 1 Case of Bottles,
1 Barrel & 1 Kegg."12 Official records again become reticent and
formal on April 15, 1780, when the Congress passed a resolution au-
thorizing the issuance to Elizabeth Duché of "letters of protection to
secure herself, her children and servants, her necessary sea furniture
and stores ... against vessels of war belonging to the United States."13

The second attempt to reunite the family was successful. Thomas
was able to write his grandmother, Mrs. Mary Hopkinson, and his
aunt, Mrs. Morgan, that "We had a passage of 21 days," remarkably
good time under the circumstances. He was forced to add that "My
mother was many times reduced so low that I thought it impossible
for her to reach land"; nevertheless, it had "pleased divine provi-
dence to bring her & us to my dear Father in Safety with whom we
live happily ... in a small but neat house 4 miles from London."14

Although the site was "thought to be the most healthy place in
England" and was so located that "from our front Windows we may
see the great City of London, & our back windows command the
prospect of beautiful well Cultivated Country," the young man did
not find the great city itself so healthful: "I was yesterday in London,
where the Noise, hurry, & bustle threw me ill with the headach."14

9 Autograph Collection of Simon Gratz, Case 19, Box 5.
10 Colonial Records, XII, 17, 18, 36.
11 Ibid., 309.
12 Autograph Collection of Ferdinand J. Dreer, Signers of the Declaration of Independence, I.
13 Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, XVI, 368.
14 Hopkinson Papers, II, 109.
Thomas did not tell the precise location of their new residence, but it must have been in Hampstead, from which place Jacob Duché dated the preface to the first edition of his two volumes of published sermons on September 1, 1779. The preface to the second edition was also dated from Hampstead, March 1, 1780.

For an American boy in his seventeenth year, even though his father was a Loyalist and a clergyman of the established church, the London atmosphere of 1780 must have been somewhat strained. There is little direct evidence of their activities during the years immediately following the Duchés' arrival in England, for their correspondence with America before 1783 was necessarily limited. What evidence has survived indicates that the family saw much of other American Loyalist refugees in London and gradually more and more English people, particularly those associated with the church and some of its institutions. Since no record exists of young Duché's interest in painting while still in America, one may hazard a guess that it was his father's renewal of acquaintance with his old Pennsylvania friend Benjamin West and the desire to fill his time with some interesting activity that led Thomas Spence Duché to seek instruction from West, already historical painter to the King and to become in a dozen years the second president of the Royal Academy. West's studios in Newman Street were even then established as the lodestone toward which most aspiring young American artists were drawn. In 1780 John Trumbull was in and out of West's studio (and in and out of jail as a suspected rebel). Gilbert Stuart had for several years been a member of West's household and remained there at least two more years. Later in the decade came Robert Fulton and, late or soon, such painters as Matthew Pratt, Charles Willson Peale, Rembrandt Peale, Washington Allston, Samuel F. B. Morse, and Thomas Sully found their way to 14 Newman Street.

Although we lack any letters or other documents describing Duché's apprenticeship with West, it may be surmised that it followed West's usual pattern, with great emphasis placed upon careful draftsmanship. The anecdote which William Dunlap gives of Morse's attempts to please West with a drawing from a cast of the

15 Jacob Duché was one of those with whom West told John Galt he had been most intimate as a young man in Philadelphia. John Galt, The Life, Studies, and Works of Benjamin West, Esq. (London, 1820), I, 40-41.
Farnese Hercules is well known, and the advice given to Morse had probably been given earlier to Thomas Duché: "It is not numerous drawings, but the character of one, which makes a thorough draughtsman. Finish one picture, sir, and you are a painter."\(^{16}\)

The first record of young Duché's painting occurs in a letter from his sister Esther to their aunt, Mrs. Mary Morgan, written April 19, 1782. Esther remarked that her father had been ill and ordered by his doctor to "go in the Country thinking the Change of Air would be of service to him." During this period, Esther went on, "I was with Lady Blois, who was very kind to me and made me many presents." Then she added, "She has a sweet little Girl whom she calls Lucretia. My Brother is now drawing her Picture which will be very much like. She is to be drawn playing with a Dog. She is a Beautiful Child and will make an Elegant Picture."\(^{17}\) Lady Blois was herself also Lucretia, second wife of Sir John Blois, the fifth baronet of his line. That her daughter made an elegant picture is scarcely to be doubted. Even Esther's brief description of the pose makes it clear that the young artist had already absorbed much of West's attitude and manner of portraiture.

Duché may have painted one of his surviving portraits even before this time. A portrait of William Rawle, traditionally attributed to Benjamin West, has been ascribed to Duché on stylistic grounds by William Sawitzky.\(^{18}\) Rawle was a stepson of Samuel Shoemaker, whose portrait Thomas Duché was to paint later, and may well have sat to the young artist, whom he had undoubtedly known in Philadelphia. The likelihood of this possibility is increased by a letter which young Rawle wrote his mother from London on October 2, 1781. In this letter, which he described as "the second letter I have written from London," he remarked that already "Mr. Duché & his family I have seen several times."\(^{19}\) The several visits may well have been devoted to sitting for his portrait; that would account for their frequency.

In mid-1782 the Duché family moved from Hampstead. On July 16, 1782, Jacob Duché was elected chaplain and secretary of an

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17 Redwood Collection, 32.
19 Rawle Family Papers.
institution with the incredible and mellifluous title of the “Asylum or House of Refuge situate in the Parish of Lambeth, in the County of Surry for the Reception of Orphan Girls, Having Resided six months within the bills of mortality; whose settlements cannot be found.” Among the perquisites of this new dignity was the providing of “apartments . . . in the House” for Duché and his family. To judge from indirect evidence, these apartments must have been fairly spacious, since reference is made several times in letters to Thomas Spence Duché’s “painting room,” a luxury which could scarcely have been available to the artist before this move.

As soon as he received word of the “Signing of the provisional & Preliminary Articles of a General Peace,” as he termed it, Jacob Duché began inquiries into the possibility of his return to America. He wrote to Benjamin Franklin at Paris on January 28, 1783, and received a reply sometime before April 22, 1783, when he again wrote to Franklin. In the second letter Duché gave Franklin a rather particular account of his children. Of Thomas he said:

My Son, who is now in his 20th year is a Pupil of my good Friend West, and most enthusiastically devoted to the Art, in which he promises to make no inconsiderable Figure. As he is my only Son, and a good Scholar, I wished to have educated him for one of the learned Professions. But his Passion for Painting is irresistible. West feeds the Flame with the Fuel of Applause: And his great Example has excited in my Boy an Ambition to distinguish himself in his Native Country, as his Master has distinguished himself here. The late Revolution has opened a large Field for Design. His young mind already teems with the great Subjects of Councils, Senates, Heroes, Battles —And he is impatient to acquire the Magic Powers of the Pencil to call forth and compleat the Embryo Forms.

Perhaps one can at least be thankful that Jacob Duché was not the kind of father who dominates his son to the extent of denying his natural instincts and inclinations. When the painter’s father wrote to Mrs. Morgan, calling her “My dear Sister,” on June 5, 1783, he again spoke of his son and his ambitions. After saying of all his children that “They seem not to have either Inclination or Ability to shine in Conversation—They have plain good Sense & plain good Manners—

20 Franklin Papers, XXVIII, 54, American Philosophical Society. It is interesting to note that John Trumbull returned to West’s studio at the end of 1783 and that he actually painted many of the subjects to which T. S. Duché aspired.
But I cannot say much for their *Graces,*” he particularized about his son:

I hope your Nephew will be a good Man—I think he will not be a bad Painter—Money seems not to be his Object but Fame—He has the Presumption to aspire after Excellence, in the Historical Line—and to think too meanly of Portraits—In America he may make out a Living by the latter—but I am apt to think, he will starve, if he confines himself to the former—He is, however, which is better than all the Rest, a dutiful Son, and very attentive to his Parents—We have hitherto been so happy as to have him always under our Roof—We cannot expect this to continue—our only Comfort, if it should be necessary for him to leave us, is that he will leave us, we hope, unstained by the outward Pollutions of a wicked World.

In the same letter Duché referred to a portrait of Esther which was being sent “for her Uncle,” Dr. Morgan. “A Fancy Dress was not agreeable to her Friends—You have her, therefore, in her common Afternoon Tea-table Attire, in which she sat to her Brother.” This portrait is one of those now preserved in the Hopkinson Collection at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania and has been reprinted as an illustration of the dress and hair style of the period. Another portrait was sent at this time, since Duché commented that “Your dear Sister’s and Sophia [sic] likeness are also very exact.” Unfortunately, Duché merely assured Mrs. Morgan that “Tom will tell you Mr. West’s opinion” instead of writing it himself; we can only presume that it was highly favorable. That it was at least approbatory is made clear by a letter to Mrs. Morgan from the young artist himself, dated June 7, 1783. Although some of the references cannot now be understood in the absence of the previous correspondence alluded to, the letter deserves quotation in full as one of the few surviving from the pen of its author and as an even rarer example of the playfulness and good humor which seem to have been his:

I am, my dear Aunts, most obedient, humble Servant for the honour of her Epistle of the 25 March, tho’ I must confess the apologetical Preface by no means satisfactory; but hope her strict attention to the Rules of Correspondence in future will render that stile of preface unnecessary. As to the Intelligence you were so good as to communicate to me I can assure you it

21 Hopkinson Papers, II, 110.
22 Notably in the various editions of Mrs. Alice Morse Earle’s *Two Centuries of Costume in America.*
23 Redwood Collection, 34.
neither affected nor afflicted me. I only hope that she has made a choice which will ensure her, that happiness her many amiable Qualities so highly merit. I beg you will present my best respects to them both, with my congratulations, & sincere wishes to be considered among the Number of their Friends. I have entrusted to the care of Dr DeNormandie the portrait of my Sister, which I beg you & my Uncle would accept. I have painted it in her present dress thinking it would be most agreeable. It is generally thought very like. I would not send it without Mr West’s approbation, & he is very particular in those of my pictures that are going to P—-a. Give my Love to my dear Grandmother, tell her I thank her sincerely for her kind note, would have answered it but have not time. Present my best respects to Mrs & Mrs Stamper, Mr Benezet, Mrs Gibson, Mr Meade’s family &c &c &c. I received Mr Stringers Letter & will answer it very soon. I have never heard from Mr Abercrombie whether he received the cloth, remember me to him & his family—I suppose Mr Warren is with you it is some time since he left England. I have just written to Relatives at Baltimore in answer to Favour received. I cannot close my letter more to my feelings than in your own words that nothing short of seeing you will satisfy

Your affectionate
Nephew

From a letter which Jacob Duché wrote John Morgan on August 12, 1783, it seems that Thomas was then sending “a Painting on Copper of his Mother & Sister Sophia, as a Present to his Uncle Hopkinson.” Since this portrait was sent by Dr. Foulke, it would appear that it was to a separate portrait of Elizabeth Duché that her husband referred in his letter to Mrs. Anne Coale (Nancy Hopkinson Coale) of June 5, 1783:

... You were always particularly endeared to me by the Resemblance I often told you I discovered in your Form, as well as Temper of Mind to my dear Betsey’s. I still retain the strong Impression; and plainly see ye Lineaments of your Face even in the Picture which our son has just finished of his Mother, and which goes by Dr. Denormandie in a day or two to Philadelphia.

Like a true child of the eighteenth century Thomas Spence Duché did not confine his interests to a single field of observation or study. On February 20, 1784, Dr. John Morgan rose before a meeting of the

24 Gratz Collection, Case 9, Box 6. In the same letter Jacob Duché remarked, “You have now all ye Family in Philad—as I trust you have received Esther’s Portrait by the Hands of Dr Denormandie.” This suggests the possibility that the portrait of Jacob Duché and Thomas S. Duché may belong to 1783 rather than to 1785. See below, pages 16-17.
25 Redwood Collection (typescript), MdHS.
august American Philosophical Society (of which Jacob Duché had also been a member) to say that “I have lately received the following communications upon the Cortex Rubber, which I have found so efficacious in the cure of obstinate remittent and bilious fevers, that I think it my duty to lay them before this society, in hopes of so valuable a medicine being thereby better known, and introduced more generally into practice.” The first of the “following communications” was an extract of a letter from Thomas Spence Duché, dated London, August 9, 1783:

I was lately at a lecture delivered at Guy's hospital, by Dr. Saunders, upon the cure of intermittent fevers, and observing the doctor spoke very much in favour of a new species of bark which he had introduced into the practice of physic, I procured a specimen of it for you, thinking it might be agreeable to you to hear of any new improvements in the healing art. It is called Red Bark. According to his account it possesses so much virtue, and is of such certain efficacy, that compared with it, the common bark is an inert mass. It contains a much larger portion of resin, has a much stronger aromatic taste than the common bark, and does not require half the quantity for a dose. Amongst other particulars, he mentioned the following proof of its superior virtue, namely, that of this medicine, when administered in a simple cold infusion, any given quantity is much stronger and effectual to remove the fever than a chemical extract from the same quantity of the other. I now send you a specimen, by which you will be able to make a trial and form some judgment of its virtues.

Since this extract is all that survives of Duché's letter, one cannot tell whether the young man just happened to attend Dr. Saunders' lecture, whether he was interested in intermittent fevers per se, or whether he was just idly curious about things in general. Certainly, there is no indication that he was entertaining any thought of entering upon a career in medicine. His mind was clearly fixed upon art.

It is, indeed, quite possible that at this time he was painting the portrait of Dr. Morgan which was preserved in the family and which is now in the collection of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. This painting presents something of a problem, since the portrait of Morgan clearly belongs to the post-Revolutionary period, yet there was no opportunity during this period for subject and artist to get together for a sitting; Morgan almost surely did not get to England after the war. The most reasonable suggestion is that of William

Sawitzky that Duché may well have worked from a miniature sent him from America, a method not unknown at the time. Whatever the explanation, there is no reason to doubt the long family tradition which ascribes the portrait to Duché. On stylistic grounds there is no difficulty whatever in assigning it to him. Since no direct mention of the portrait enters the surviving correspondence, one cannot be sure of its date, though it is pleasant to think that it may belong to the period of correspondence on the efficacy of red bark.

The most intimate day-to-day account of the life of the Duché family and particularly of Thomas Spence Duché is provided for a period beginning in January, 1784, by the diary of Samuel Shoemaker, a Quaker Loyalist from Philadelphia who spent the years 1780–1786 in London. His diary was written not only for his own purposes, but also to send to his wife in Philadelphia as a close account of his life abroad. Shoemaker and his son Edward saw much of the Duchés. The first meeting in London between the families apparently occurred on January 19, 1784, when Thomas Spence Duché called at Mr. Shoemaker's to pay his parents' respects and to request that Shoemaker and his son dine with them the following Friday, January 23. On that day Thomas called for the Shoemakers, as he was to do many times in the following months. Samuel Shoemaker noted that "I think the Parson is very comfortably situated. Thos. lives with him & follows Portrait Painting, in which he is likely to succeed," a judgment a bit clouded by his continuing, "I had not time to view his work as I wanted to get home before Night."

Finally, on March 5, 1784, Shoemaker was able to report that he had spent nearly an hour at the Asylum "with Parson Duché and in viewing his Sons painting, among others he shewed me the picture of Betsy Hurly formerly Allen which she has got done to send to her mother, and I think is very like her. I hope Tho. Duché will succeed in this Business in which he is greatly improved." After this inspection of his work, the young artist then took his visitor to call upon Benjamin West.

It is about this time that we get one of the few references to Duché's personal appearance. Speaking of her family in a letter to her sister, Mrs. Coale of Baltimore, on May 29, 1784, Elizabeth

27 Sawitzky, 110.
28 This diary is now included among the Shoemaker Papers.
Duché remarked, "Your Nephew is taller than his Father, we are very happy in him, he is dutiful, affectionate, and industrious."  

The routine of the Duché household was pleasantly disturbed in July, 1784, when Thomas's grandfather, Jacob Duché, senior, arrived from Philadelphia, landing at Deal on July 20. Jacob Duché, junior, now despaired of returning home and had brought his father to join him in exile. Samuel Shoemaker visited the new arrival on July 22, and two days later Thomas took Shoemaker some packets of letters which the elder Duché had brought along and which had finally reached him in London.  

The first hint of what one might have expected to come out of this intercourse between the Shoemakers and Duchés is found in Samuel Shoemaker's note of September 7, 1784, remarking that Thomas was pressing him "to consent to his drawing a picture or piece which he is very desirous to send to my son as a present." Although Shoemaker did not confide his answer to his diary, probably so that his wife should not know what was afoot, his visits and those of his son to the Duché household became increasingly frequent. Such entries as "sat half an hour with old Jacob and his Grandson Thomas," "walked to the Asylum and sat with Tho in his painting Room," or "dind & spent afternoon with Duché's family" are very common for the remainder of 1784 and the early part of 1785. However carefully he may have tried to hide the nature of his visits, Samuel Shoemaker was unable to fool his wife. Writing to Edward on March 11, 1785, Rebecca Shoemaker shrewdly observed, "I have a Suspicion that we shall see a performance of Thos. Duché's before long. I hope I shall not be disappointed; if it is what I expect it will be a most acceptable present to me till I have the Originals."  

Mrs. Shoemaker did not have to wait long for Thomas Duché's performance. She wrote to her husband on April 27, 1785:  

But the most acceptable & truly Valuable of our presents is T. Duché's performance, which is so perfect & Striking as really to make one imagine we are looking at Life. I do not think it possible to have drawn a portrait more Like the original than thine is, & I also see Edward very like, but the

29 Redwood Collection, 39.  
30 By son Shoemaker probably meant his stepson, William Rawle, whose portrait T. S. Duché had previously painted.  
31 Shoemaker Papers, II, 191.  
32 Ibid., 196-197.
different Manner in which his hair is now worn from what he did in N. York makes a considerable alteration in his appearance, tho' some of our frds think they should have Known him anywhere. I see him in his usual free familiar attitude, Leaning on the Shoulder of a Beloved parent. The design is exceeding easy & natural, & much more pleasing than a single person in a formal stiff Manner. . . . I have never seen better representations of the Life anywhere, & until I have the originals You are to be with me. . . . never was a complexion better imitated or represented than thine; it is exact; thy Size or person is extremely well & like thy self as much as a pencil can make it.

Apparently, Duché’s work soon made the Shoemaker home a favorite place of resort for friends of the family. On May 22, 1785, Mrs. Shoemaker mentioned to her husband that “Miers Fisher, upon entering our parlor, says, ‘I should have known Edward had I seen this painting in Canton in China.’ . . . Thos. Duché has great merit in the profession he pursues, & must from every account I hear of him be a very religious, good Young Man, & give his parents & his ancient Grandfather great Comfort & Satisfaction. I hope his Health will be better, that these agreeable prospects may not be interrupted.” And on June 20, 1785, Mrs. Shoemaker told her husband that “Old Hugh Roberts, who is very feeble, took a walk up & drank tea with me the other day.—I expect his Visit in part was to see T. Duché’s Performance; he was pleased with it.”

The question of the likeness of the portraits can scarcely be opened at this time. If family and friends found so exact a resemblance, one can only conclude that the young painter had learned his craft well and that he was certainly able to give great satisfaction to his clients. A photograph of the Shoemaker portrait shows it to be a smoothly done, carefully planned portrait in something of the middle manner of Duché’s master, Benjamin West.

Samuel Shoemaker’s close account of his visits to the Asylum also enables us to know of some other work that young Duché was doing at the same time. On December 29, 1784, Shoemaker was sitting with the painter when “Dan’l Coxe’s son John came in to set for his Picture which Tho: is painting with his Father and bro’ Dan’l in one piece, to send to Philad about 18 inches by 2 feet.” On February 8, 1785, he met “Andrew Allens Wife and Daughter, Andrews Wife looks very

33 Ibid., 204–205.
34 Ibid., 215.
well and tells me she is quite hearty, she is getting her Portrait
drawn by Tho. Duche to send to her mother.”

Shoemaker’s diary likewise affords a glimpse of another of Thomas
Spence Duche’s interests. The entry for August 29, 1785, told Mrs.
Shoemaker that

At 10 [o’]Clock this morning Ed. & I took a walk thro. St George’s fields,
call’d at the Assylum and paid a Visit to Duché’s family, while we were there
Rob: Barclay’s wife came in, she has a violent inflamation in one of her
Eyes and was advised to try the Effects of being Electerized and came here
for that purpose, Tho. Duche having a good Electrical aparatus try’d the
Effects of the Electrical fluid on friend Barclays Eye, in which thy son
Edw d (who is always ready) assisted by turning the Machine &c and by
which friend Barclay found considerable benefit.

During the year 1785, also, interests other than painting and
electricity were occupying Thomas Duché. Mrs. Shoemaker’s refer-
ence to him as a “very religious, good Young Man” points to this
aspect. Further light is shed by several letters from Elizabeth Duché
to her mother. On February 7, 1785, Mrs. Hopkinson was told that
“By this Vessel you will receive Swedenborg’s Works” as a present
from Mr. George Adams. “Mr. Duché and our Son are now engaged
in reading them, & are much pleased with them,” Mrs. Duché
explained, going on to give a fuller account of her son’s state of
mind:

Our Son who I have reason to hope has made religion his chief study for this
two Years past, says his writings has been particularly advantage[ou]s to
him. You will no doubt be surprised that I have never mentioned his
religious turn to you before. It [is] what I often wished to do as I knew
there was nothing you had more at heart, & was about to do it soon after
he went to the Sacrament, but was deterred thro’ fear as I knew that human
nature was subject to many relapses until it was established by grace. how-
ever I hope that is the case now, & I trust that he who has begun the good
work in him will not leave it unfinished, & flatter myself that the same will
be done for my other dear Children, that has been done for him.

On May 6, 1785, Mrs. Duché had to excuse her son’s failure to
write to the fact that he was busy “painting two family pieces.”

35 Redwood Collection, 42.
36 Ibid., 46.
JACOB DUCHÉ AND ELIZABETH HOPKINSON DUCHÉ
ESTHER DUCHÉ
JACOB DUCHÉ AND THOMAS SPENCE DUCHÉ
Perhaps it was modesty that prevented Elizabeth Duché from describing these pieces, for it is probable that they included the portrait of Jacob and Elizabeth Duché which is now in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. This portrait is, of course, of great interest because of its subject matter. Yet it is also remarkable for its treatment of the subject. The artist is clearly sympathetic to his sitters, yet without any suggestion of sentimentality. One certainly feels a strong artistic integrity in the picture and that there has been idealization of the subjects for personal reasons. The other “family piece” is possibly even more interesting in its subject, since it is a portrait of Jacob Duché and Thomas Spence Duché. Whether the same honesty that marked the portrayal of his parents went into his self-portrait, one cannot say, but there seems no reason to doubt it, especially since the only existing references to the artist’s personal appearance are altogether favorable.

Mrs. Duché returned to the subject of Thomas’s religion on February 22, 1786, telling her mother that “Our Son advances daily in his Christian course, & we have the greatest reason to hope he will not stop in it. He has been this winter up the greatest part of every night translating one of Swedenborg’s books upon the scriptures. It is now in the press, as soon as it comes out I will send you one of them.”

Mrs. Duché did not specify just which work of Swedenborg her son had translated.

At the same time that he was thus actively translating Swedenborg, the young man did not lack for more orthodox Anglican society. Samuel Seabury, who had been consecrated as a bishop by the successors of the nonjuring Scottish bishops on November 14, 1784, spent much of the time before his departure for America on March 15, 1785, in London, and was a frequent visitor in the Duché household. Whatever the eager young translator of Swedenborg may have thought of the new bishop and his doctrines, the zealous young portraitist saw another opportunity to employ his art. The result is suggested in a passage of a letter from Jacob Duché to William White written March 25, 1786. Duché told his successor at Philadelphia that the letter would be delivered by Samuel Shoemaker, adding, “My Son will send by him a Proof Copy of an Engraving of Bishop Seabury’s Picture, from the Original, for which he sat to him

37 Ibid., 48.
at ye Asylum." Both from the several engravings of this painting and from other reproductions of it, it has come to be one of the better-known of Thomas Duché's works. The original painting now hangs in Trinity College at Hartford, Connecticut. In it the artist has made good use of the flowing episcopal robes and their color to help present a vivid portrait of Seabury.

The greater part of Jacob Duché's letter to White concerned questions of church polity, especially the question of reorganizing the church in America and of obtaining the episcopacy for America. In October, 1786, a general convention of the American church, meeting at Wilmington, Delaware, included the name of William White as one of three whom it recommended for consecration. White had already been chosen as bishop-elect of Pennsylvania. On November 2, 1786, White, together with Samuel Provoost, bishop-elect of New York, sailed for England, which they reached on November 29. Between that date and White's return to America shortly after being consecrated to the episcopacy on February 4, 1787, White spent much time with Jacob Duché, senior, long-time vestryman of Christ Church, Philadelphia, Jacob Duché, junior, White's predecessor as rector of that church, and Thomas Spence Duché, who took advantage of his opportunity to paint a portrait of another American notable. If the artist failed in his ambition to portray the "Councils, Senates, Heroes, Battles" about which he had once dreamed, he nevertheless left portraits of three prominent American churchmen, including Seabury and White, the most distinguished of the early bishops of the Episcopal Church. At this time he also painted Bishop Provoost; the original of this portrait is now in the New-York Historical Society.

The portrait of Bishop White was not completed during White's stay in London, but had to be sent later. In February, 1787, Thomas had to write his sitter that the portrait was still not quite ready to be shipped, though "I sat up three nights last Week" in an effort to

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38 Jacob Duché played an important role in the obtaining of the episcopacy for America by transmitting in a semiofficial manner, in letters to White, the reactions of the English bishops and archbishops to the changes proposed by the Americans in the Book of Common Prayer and to their plan for ecclesiastical government.

39 It was presented to the Society in 1825 by Mr. and Mrs. Cadwallader Colden, son-in-law and daughter of the bishop. A reproduction may be found in the New-York Historical Society Quarterly, XXXI (April, 1947), 93.
finish it. The painter's playfulness and sense of humor led him to tell the bishop:

As . . . you may have raised expectations in Mrs W of having it by this opportunity—Let me request you to stand up before her and make the following Speech—My dear &c as I have had the pleasure of bringing back to you the Original Picture of me wh you always admired, and is allowed to be a speaking Likeness let me beg you to excuse my friend Tom—for having disappointed you this Time in not sending his Copy of it which I promised you from him—&c &c as much more as you please to say—When you have done this, and presented my most affectionate Respects to her and Congratulations on your safe Return and kissed all the Children, which I dare say will not be very disagreeable—you may sit down with a full Assurance that I remain your very faithful friend

and obliged humble Ser

When he next wrote to White on July 27, 1787, Thomas Duche was able to tell “My dear and worthy Bishop” that “I have sent by Willet the picture I promised to Mrs White so that there will be no more Occasion for any fine Speeches.” He went on to say, “If any fault should be found with the Likeness, remember I am not to blame for you gave me but three imperfect sittings of half an hour each, and one was by Lamp Light.” This portrait of Bishop White seems to have been lost; it is not included in any of the lists of White portraits, nor has any other trace of it been found.

At about the same time that he was busy painting Bishops White and Provoost, Duche was also using his brush to celebrate his interest in science. In 1787, George Adams, mathematical instrument maker to George III, published his Essays on the Microscope, including as a frontispiece an engraving of a painting by Thomas S. Duche with the noble title of “Truth Discovering to Time Science Instructing her Children in the Improvements on the Microscope.” The title sufficiently explains the nature of the work: it is obviously an allegory of the sort beloved by the eighteenth century. Truth is of course the central figure, a large and radiant maiden clad in white and shedding rays of light, Time is the conventional old gentleman with the scythe,

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40 White Papers, II, 39. These papers, the property of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, are in the custody of the New-York Historical Society (NYHS).
41 Ibid., 55.
42 This engraving is reproduced as an illustration accompanying William Roberts, “Thomas Spence Duché,” Art in America, VI (October, 1918), 273–274.
and Science sits with her hand resting on a globe, surrounded by those children whom she is presumably instructing. To be sure, one can form little idea of the actual nature of the painting from such an engraving, but its general composition may be said to show a careful study of the problems involved in handling such a group.

From references as early as Mrs. Shoemaker's letter of May 22, 1785, it is evident that young Duché did not enjoy good health or a particularly strong constitution. By the summer of 1788 his condition had become such that a trip to the Continent seemed in order as a restorative. An opportunity was provided by a chance to act as guide or companion to the son of Daniel Coxe of Philadelphia. From Paris young Coxe wrote a glowing account of his friend to his grandfather, who promptly showed the letter to Duché's grandmother, Mrs. Hopkinson. In her turn she eagerly transmitted the gist of the account to her daughter Jane, then visiting her sister and brother-in-law, Dr. and Mrs. Samuel S. Coale, in Baltimore:

... he gives your nephew such a character, that few this side of heaven can deserve, and ... he thinks it is one of the greatest Blessings of God, that he was ever put under his care, that if there was ever perfection on earth, he is perfect, that he is like an angel, and wherever they go young and old, rich and poor, as soon as they know him love him.

Although one must allow for some youthful exuberance and grandmotherly exaggeration, one can discount this statement a great deal and still agree with Mrs. Hopkinson's comment about Jacob and Elizabeth Duché: "I think let their sufferings by sickness or any other misfortuns be ever so great, they are balanced in such a son."

Unfortunately, a letter from Thomas Spence Duché to his grandmother, which she mentioned in her letter to Jane, has been lost, so that a firsthand account of his trip is lacking. A somewhat dubious tradition suggests that he visited at Avignon a so-called society of illuminati, who were actually a group of Swedenborgians. One cannot tell with certainty from a letter which Mrs. Duché wrote her mother on August 6, 1788, whether Avignon was visited by the travelers, so oblique is her reference:

43 Shoemaker Papers, II, 204–205.
44 Redwood Collection, 51.
46 Redwood Collection (typescript), MdHS.
The accounts he gives us of the different places he has been at, are both interesting and entertaining. He very providentially was introduced to the company of none but the genteeldest and best bred people and those very religious; . . . amongst them was a young Nobleman not more than 23 years of age, who had read all the mystic authors and whose life is unexceptionable. In almost all the places our son has passed through, there are religious Societies, which Societies are all to be united to the Society in London, and a constant intercourse by letters to be kept up between them. The Moscow and Avignon Society have been united to the London Society for this some time past.

Whether or not he visited Avignon, Thomas Duché apparently had maintained his interest in the doctrines of Swedenborg. In writing to Bishop White on August 30, 1788, about a month after his son’s return, Jacob Duché remarked:\footnote{White Papers, II, 70, NYHS.}:

My Son is returned from abroad in full Health & Spirits with a Mind highly improved & advanced by close Communion with the Lord, and Conversation, with Characters of high Rank in this World, and faithful hidden Subjects of the Lord’s Kingdom, in the different Countries thro which he has passed. He finds great Openings of this Kingdom every where, unconfined to any religious Sects & Denominations. The Influence spreads amazingly, by imperceptible Degrees, and Men are stript of their Vices, their Evil Tempers, and worldly Propensities in such a still & silent Way: that the “Day of the Lord is truly said to come as a Thief in the Night.”

Again, though some of the excitement may be in the mind of the writer of the letter, there is still a residuum which must be attributed to the traveler himself.

If Thomas Spence Duché returned to England with his health “much better than it has ever been since we left our native land,” as his mother wrote his grandmother, another member of the household was steadily growing weaker. On September 28, 1788, Jacob Duché, senior, died at the age of eighty. His will, proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on October 8, 1788, named his grandson as his residuary legatee. The somewhat easier financial situation in which the family now found itself was undoubtedly one of the reasons which led to Jacob Duché’s resignation of his position at the Asylum on January 1, 1789. The family removed to 63 Sloane Street, which is sometimes referred to as being in “Knightsbridge, near London,” and at other times as in Chelsea.
Elizabeth Duché's description of their new situation indicates that it was indeed a pleasant one, which must have satisfied her son both as an artist and as a somewhat sickly young man\textsuperscript{48}:

\ldots we live as it were in the midst of a beautiful garden—our House is neat & elegant with every conveniency—and we have many beautiful walks near us particularly Chelsea gardens which my Husband has a Key of, so that we can walk in it whenever we please and as it lays along the river side, we have a most beautiful prospect from it.

Removal from the Asylum did not altogether end Thomas Duché's interest in the institution. He had become an annual subscriber on July 24, 1788, and on that same date had been made a member of the Committee, the governing board of the Asylum. His name appears in the minute books until November 19, 1789.\textsuperscript{49} The Asylum still owns an allegorical painting by him, which may best be described in the words of the Gentleman’s Magazine for January, 1796, which said that it “represents Hope delivering two orphan girls in distress to the Genius of the Asylum.” For many years, until the plate was worn out, a small reproduction of this painting adorned the annual reports of the institution.\textsuperscript{50} Duché must have made at least two copies of this painting, since another exists in the collection of Lord Cranworth at Grundisburgh Hall, Woodbridge, Suffolk. This collection contains another allegorical painting by the same artist, which the Gentleman’s Magazine described as “Charity, presenting an emaciated prostitute, in a state of despair, to three reclaimed females at the door of the Magdalen Hospital.”\textsuperscript{51}

Like most Americans in Europe, Thomas Spence Duché was called upon to perform various services for his friends at home. Jacob Duché told William White on August 6, 1789, that “Capt. Smith delivered the two Guineas to my Son from you and he will inform you what has delayed the sending of the Books, which he has now shipped with Capt. Sutton.”\textsuperscript{52} The books themselves, which cannot now be identified, are of little importance, but the account which Thomas Duché

\textsuperscript{48} Redwood Collection, 53.


\textsuperscript{50} Information from Ernest J. Bayley, late secretary to the Royal Female Orphanage, the modern name of the Asylum.

\textsuperscript{51} Gentleman’s Magazine, LXVI (January, 1796), 9; H. Selfe Bennett, “The Story of Two Old Prints,” Art in America, VI (August, 1918), 240-248.

\textsuperscript{52} Dreer Collection, Letters of American Clergymen, III.
gave White of his difficulties in obtaining and sending them gives us the most complete picture we have of the illness of Duché and of the progress of his case:

On the Receipt of your first Letter I went immediately round amongst the booksellers in search of the single volume & desired them to look out for it and send it to me immediately—At the time any vessel was about to sail to Philad I went to them to know their Success but always in vain—I was then taken ill with the Complaint in my breast—and disabled from attending to any business whatever for 6 months—a second attack obliged me to go to France &c where I remained near 6 months more—On my return I found a letter from you desiring me to send the two Vols in case I could not meet with a single one. Tho' no opportunity immediately offered I procured the books—When the Vessels sailed in the Autumn—my whole attention was engrossed by my poor Grandfather who was then on his death bed—After his Death I resumed my Paint again after an Interval of near 16 months—and in two months was taken ill again—obliged to give up the practice of my profession—and continued very sick & infirm till within this month—when the warm weather has in some measure restored me—No opportunity offered of sending the books that I knew of till March last, at which time I was ill—and the family engaged in removing from the Asylum, the books were packed up by mistake and I could not get at them till the Vessels were sailed. This account, which, as far as I can recollect is really true, will I hope remove all impressions of wilful neglect in the business—but to a mind oppressed with trouble and a body reduced and almost worn out by Sickness every power of exertion is weakened and the memory is scarce alive to any but its own concerns. . . . In fact—such has been the State of both Mind and Body for these two years past that except the latter part of the Time I was on ye Continent—till within these few weeks I have done no business of any kind either of writing or Painting but when driven to it by absolute Necessity.

The improvement in his health of which Thomas spoke in this letter seems to have been only temporary. On August 7, 1789, he reminded White that he had promised to write again by Captain Sutton, who was then sailing. "This promise I now fulfil," he wrote, "though with some difficulty, having had a return of the Spitting of Blood, wh always leaves me very weak."54

Indeed, as the year 1789 wore to an end, the whole Duché family seems to have been in poor health. Mrs. Duché wrote her mother on July 20, 1789, White Papers, II, 87, NYHS. The affair of the books had first been mentioned by Duché in a postscript, dated July 28, to his letter to White of July 27, 1787; at that time he mentioned that the second volume of the set was not available separately.

53 July 20, 1789, White Papers, II, 87, NYHS. The affair of the books had first been mentioned by Duché in a postscript, dated July 28, to his letter to White of July 27, 1787; at that time he mentioned that the second volume of the set was not available separately.

54 Ibid., 91.
December 3, 1789, “Since I last wrote to you I have been a long Journey from home. It was thought necessary for my husband Son & myself to try the Bath & Bristol Waters.” A friend of the family had assisted in the project, which would otherwise have been financially impossible. As it was, “We chose to lodge at the Hot Wells rather than in the town of Bristol; for as we could not afford to keep a Carriage the distance was too great to walk it in all weathers.”

Although Mrs. Duché assured her mother that “we are amazingly recovered by the air of both places, but particularly by the Bristol Waters,” the recovery of Thomas Spence Duché was illusory and temporary. Thomas Coombe, onetime assistant to Jacob Duché in Philadelphia, wrote to William White on February 21, 1790, “I saw M't Duché on Monday last. He was well. Of his poor son I wish I could add anything that was comfortable.”

Nothing comfortable could be added about the health of Thomas Spence Duché, then or later. The last chapter of his story may best be told in the words of his father, writing to Dr. Samuel Stringer Coale, husband of his wife’s sister Ann, on April 7, 1790:

I take up my Pen with no small Reluctance, when it must be employed to communicate Tidings to my Friends, that must penetrate their Hearts. On Wednesday last, after a short & rapid Decay of his Lungs, our dear & only Son resigned his Angelic Spirit to the Call of his Lord, & left his poor lifeless Body in my Arms. He had been confined for some weeks with what we thought & called a severe Cold & Fever, & Cough, which, however, terminated at last in a Suppuration of Tubercles, that had long been inflamed in his Lungs. After many Days of exquisite Sufferings, which he bore like a patient Lamb, perfectly in his Senses, & in full Possession of every Power of his Mind, he went off triumphantly to his Native Heaven.

The “last Wednesday” was March 31, 1790. The young man was buried in Lambeth Church yard.

A contemporary comment on Thomas Spence Duché is provided by a notice in the London Times for April 2, 1790:

55 Redwood Collection, 52.
56 White Papers, III, 2, NYHS.
57 Redwood Collection, 54. On this same date Jacob Duché also wrote to his mother-in-law, Mrs. Hopkinson. A typescript of this letter is included in the Redwood Collection, MdHS.
58 The Times (London), Friday, Apr. 2, 1790. This is probably the notice referred to by Jacob Duché in his letter to Mrs. Hopkinson as having been “written by an ingenious gentleman and a great connoisseur in the Arts though no Artist himself.”
On Wednesday afternoon died Mr. Thomas Duche, a young artist of very distinguished merit, who to an uncommon degree of genius, united the strictest purity of moral conduct excellencies that seemed to add dignity to his manners and gracefulness to his appearance, both of which in him were most conspicuous and pleasing.

The death of Mr. Duche is the more to be regretted, because from the elegance and correctness of his mind, he attached himself chiefly to moral and sentimental compositions, subjects hitherto little handled by artists of the English school, and which if treated with ability, could not fail to promote the best purposes of painting.

An infant Saviour, and one or two pieces for public charities, the productions of Mr. Duche's pencil, will long remain monuments of his taste and talents, which promised the greatest perfection in his art, and honour to the master under whom he studied.

Making full allowance for the fact that most of the surviving estimates of Thomas Spence Duché come from his family and its close friends, one must still feel that he was an unusual youth: serious in purpose, yet possessed of humor, and indefatigably curious about the world around him. Cortex rubber, microscopy, and electrical machines alike attracted his interest. The minute books of the Library Company of Philadelphia note that on September 14, 1779, "A petrified Clam was presented by Thomas S. Duche which the Librarian is directed to deposit among the curiosities."

In the fine arts, music also claimed his attention. His uncle, Francis Hopkinson, has been recognized as the first native-born American to become a composer. The nephew's work is somewhat scanty and known only indirectly. During Jacob Duché's chaplaincy of the Asylum, the organist of that institution, W. Gawler, published a book of the hymns and Psalms used there. A second edition was published in 1801 and a third in 1807. In the 1807 edition, at least, Thomas Spence Duché is given credit for the music to Hymn xiv, "On the Excellency of the Bible."

An old manuscript memorandum also ascribes to him the melody for Psalm LXVIII, the bass being attributed to François Hippolite Barthelemon.

69 Psalms and Hymns for the Use of the Chapel of the Asylum for Female Orphans (London, 1807), 46-47. There is a copy of this edition in the Yale University Library; I have not been able to locate any other copy.

60 Charles Higham, "The Rev. Jacob Duché," New Church Magazine, XV (October, 1896), 464. It is interesting that Barthelemon was a nephew of Mrs. Thomas Arne, whose distinguished husband composed the music for Alfred: A Masque, in which Jacob Duché had appeared at the College of Philadelphia in 1757.
The art that most thoroughly attracted Thomas Spence Duché was of course that of painting. In all the other fields in which he showed interest he was scarcely more than an informed amateur; in painting, particularly in portraiture, it is not too much to say that he had already acquired professional competence at the time of his death. Genuine skill and ability may be seen in his portraits, as well as a promise of a greater development to come. To be sure, there is much that is obviously derivative from the English masters of the eighteenth century, and particularly from his own teacher, Benjamin West, but the later portraits show that Duché was leaving the stage of the student. It is clearly probable that had he lived and returned to the United States (as did the rest of his family in 1793), he would have found an honored and distinguished place among American artists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The career of Thomas Spence Duché should not, however, be regarded as merely another story of young genius cut down before its time. In addition to the positive achievements represented by the portraits left to us, there is another value to his story. As the life of Jacob Duché helps to throw light on the political history of the Revolutionary period by showing something of the pressures to which a sensitive man of that age was subjected, so the life of Thomas Spence Duché lets us take a closer look at the artistic, musical, and scientific atmosphere that surrounded a young man of his day.

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