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# A MATTER OF HONOR AT SOUTH CAROLINA COLLEGE, 1822

LOUIS P. TOWLES*

IT WAS CONSIDERABLY AFTER MIDNIGHT IN THE EARLY morning hours of Saturday, May 4, 1822, as revelers, including Carnot Bellinger and Calvin Foster, slowly made their way back to their rooms at South Carolina College. They were not "altogether sober" and consequently made a "great noise" as they reached the campus and gathered a few friends to share the cake and candy they brought with them.[1] Regretfully, the sequence of disturbances soon awakened Dr. Thomas Cooper, the college president, and Lardner Vanuxem, professor of geology and mineralogy.[2] By 1 a.m. the two men had dressed, followed the noise, and arrived at Bellinger's tenement, where a party was in progress.

As the two faculty members made their way up the unlit stairs to the third story, their presence was detected and a hurried consultation by those above agreed to "holding them [Cooper and Vanuxem] off by opposition." A cot was hastily drawn across the stairwell, and Calvin Foster led the way to the barricade, hoisting a chair threateningly above his head, expecting his

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[1]John S. Palmer to Harriet J. Palmer, May 7, 1822, Palmer Family Papers, Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

[2]Thomas Cooper (1759-1839) was born and educated in England, where he studied chemistry and philosophy. At the age of thirty-five (1794) he relocated to the United States, briefly worked for Thomas Jefferson and the early Republican Party, and then became a Pennsylvania state judge (1804-1811). From 1811-1819 he taught chemistry and mineralogy at both Carlisle College and the University of Pennsylvania, before moving to Columbia, S.C., in 1820 to accept a similar position at South Carolina College. Upon the unexpected death of Jonathan Maxcy, first president of South Carolina College, Cooper was chosen by the trustees to become the college's second president. He served in that capacity for thirteen years before retiring to begin still another career as publisher of South Carolina's *Statutes at Large*.

Lardner Vanuxem (1792-1848) was born in Philadelphia and educated at the University of Pennsylvania and the School of Mines in Paris, France. When Cooper assumed the presidency, Vanuxem took the former's place as professor of chemistry and mineralogy for seven years (1820-1827) while he undertook "a thorough examination" of "rocks, minerals, and fossils" of the state of South Carolina. He later performed the same task in Mexico and New York, eventually retiring to a farm near Bristol, Pennsylvania, where he died. Both Cooper and Vanuxem were widely respected by the intellectual community of their time. Maximilian M. Laborde, *History of South Carolina College* (Columbia, S.C.: Peter B. Glass, 1859), pp. 143-149, 436-437; Daniel Hollis, *The University of South Carolina* (Columbia, S.C.: R.L. Bryan, 1951-1956), Vol. I, pp. 75-79.

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friends to assist in holding the two professors at the "head of the stairs." Carnot Bellinger and the others, however, had reconsidered the rash plan and the upcoming confrontation, and had scattered and "concealed themselves," leaving only John S. Palmer, who had arrived moments before, uncommitted.[3] Palmer, who had originally opposed the decision to resist, now rushed to Foster's side, urged him "not to be too rash" and to pull back. Palmer then retired to Bellinger's room, which was now in darkness. Foster, finding himself alone, likewise retreated, releasing the chair as he did so in the direction of the advancing men.[4]

Vanuxem was struck as he deflected the object, but Cooper, now angry, forged ahead, brushed aside the cot, and forced open the door to the room before it could be secured behind Foster. In the darkened room, only two silhouettes were visible. Vanuxem grabbed Palmer and demanded his name and class while Cooper secured Foster. Palmer refused to answer, and Foster admitted only that he was "a citizen." The president now moved toward Palmer, assuming him to be the leader, and demanded his name and class. When the latter once again remained silent, Cooper, clearly very angry, struck the young man with his cane and let loose "with language that would have disgraced a jockey." Palmer and Foster were then dragged into the next room where the light enabled Vanuxem to identify the students.[5]

That morning at 9 a.m. Palmer and Foster were summoned before a called meeting of the faculty where they were suspended until December 1822. For Foster, who by now was known to have thrown the chair, there was no mercy; his expulsion was firm. But for Palmer, who had only held the door due to a "momentary feeling" and had refused to give his name, the verdict was less secure. The faculty suggested that if Palmer could offer extenuating evidence that his impulsive actions were not premeditated, the faculty would be "inclined" to readmit him.[6]

Accordingly, the student body drew up a petition, signed by every student, requesting that their member be readmitted on the grounds of his nearly flawless deportment. On May 7, John S. Palmer petitioned the faculty to request that the "just" but "severe" sentence be withdrawn.

[3]John S. Palmer (1801-1881) was a son of Thomas Palmer and Harriet J. Palmer of St. Stephens Parish. He was prepared for South Carolina College by Charles Stevens at Pineville Academy (1817-1819), and after graduating from South Carolina College in 1822 he continued at New York Medical College (1823-1825). Despite his medical degree he was, like his father before him, a planter and, befitting a person of his class, a justice of the peace, state legislator, and a signer of the Ordinance of Secession. "Student Biographies, 1805-1905," University of South Carolina Archives, McKissick Museum, Columbia, S.C.

[4]Palmer to Palmer, May 7, 1822.

[5]Ibid.

[6]"Faculty Minutes, 1814-1833," South Carolina College, May 4, 6, 7, 9, 1822; Palmer to Palmer, May 7, 1822.

**John S. Palmer (left), photo courtesy of the author, and Thomas Cooper, president of South Carolina College, photo courtesy of South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.**

Citing the "fervour of a young stripling" and the grief that would come to "a most tender and affectionate parent" and friends, he successfully placated the faculty who, including Cooper and Vanuxem, unanimously revoked the earlier suspension.[7] A breach of discipline was seemingly expeditiously handled with firmness in the case of Foster, compassion in regard to Palmer, and forgetfulness when it came to Carnot Bellinger and the others.

Still, things were hardly as congenially and efficiently orchestrated as they seemed. Thomas Cooper was still seething at what he considered a premeditated attack upon his person, and John Palmer, his "feelings ... so severely wounded" by Cooper's caning on the morning of the fourth, followed the hearing on the seventh by demanding satisfaction from Cooper, a request that the president refused. Palmer then threatened to "prosecute him [Cooper] for damages and also to carry him before the trustees."[8] Thus it was that the Palmer case, if it can be so labeled, now entered its second phase, one which would require patience, time, compromise, and even outside mediation to resolve.

Sad to say, this rather bizarre turn of events was not unexpected. The faculty clearly foresaw the result of the president's impolitic action of the fourth as they gathered that morning to judge the disturbance. In anticipation of a future challenge, the disciplinary action and the caning were

[7]Palmer to Palmer, May 7, 1822; "Faculty Minutes, 1814-1833," May 7, 1822.
[8]Palmer to Palmer, May 7, 1822.

separated into two motions with the first acted upon and the second ignored for lack of jurisdiction.[9] (In all likelihood, the desire to avoid the ensuing challenge to Cooper led to Palmer's being quickly and unanimously cleared on May 7, a gambit that failed.)

Clearly there was a problem, or, as events were to prove, many problems, at South Carolina College in the spring of 1822. Cooper, acclaimed by many Carolinians of the prewar South as one of the most able men to serve the early college, was neither a fool seeking a fight nor a man trying to avoid a challenge. Why, then, did his initial reaction to an incident of the moment switch so quickly from alarm to rage; and, still later, why did he refuse to give way when his misjudgment of Palmer was revealed? Why also did John S. Palmer, a quiet, unobtrusive pre-medical student, suddenly decide to challenge anyone, much less the president, and then doggedly pursue this goal through challenge and warrant for nearly two months? To understand the intransigence on both sides, it is necessary to digress briefly to the events and issues preceding May 4.

**IN PART, THE ORIGIN AND STRUCTURE OF SOUTH CAROLINA** College was at fault. It was chartered in 1801 as one of the first schools in the South, but was created by legislators and trustees who had little knowledge of the process they were initiating. The college's two-fold purpose was to educate South Carolina's youth at home and to use education as a tool to pull together the heretofore discordant sections of the state. For these and other laudatory socio-political needs, it was decided that the college should be located in the new state capital, Columbia, which in 1822 was still "a rambling, ill-built, village" of several thousand often-seasonal residents.[10]

Students were to be admitted after passage of a placement exam, sometimes as early as the age of fourteen, to begin their college careers.[11] A

[9]"Faculty Minutes, 1814-1833," May 4, 1822.

[10]Richard J. Calhoun, ed., *Witness to Sorrow: The Antebellum Autobiography of William J. Grayson* (Columbia: Universty of South Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 78, 83. Grayson substantiates the claim that S.C. College brought the people together by stressing that it made South Carolina "one people" and that he made "cordial and enduring friendships... from every part of the state." Calhoun, *Witness to Sorrow*, pp. 78. By the 1820s the new college had also gained something of a monopoly over key state offices, with a majority of governors, chancellors, state judges, and U.S. senators being former graduates. Drew Faust, *James Henry Hammond and The Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), p. 13.

[11]Matriculating students were expected to possess a basic knowledge of English and Latin grammar, writing, arithmetic, and the ability to translate key Latin classics. The college course of study added advanced work in all of the above as well as geography, French, algebra, geometry, natural and moral philosophy, history, belles lettres, and oratory. South Carolina College, "Board of Trustee Minutes," Vol. I, April 29, 1804.

supervised family structure was now replaced by a code of absolute rules, governing, for example, precise times of day for all activities, associations, dress (including the use of black robes for seniors), and even hair length and hats. Freshmen and sophomores were not allowed to visit the adjacent village without permission of the president or the accompaniment of a junior or senior; and "spiritous liquors," firearms and weapons of any kind (and their use), vulgar or obscene language, and any entertaining in the rooms were explicitly forbidden. To "refuse to give evidence when called upon," to combine (unite) against the faculty, or to "refuse to open the door of his room when required," meant suspension or expulsion.[12]

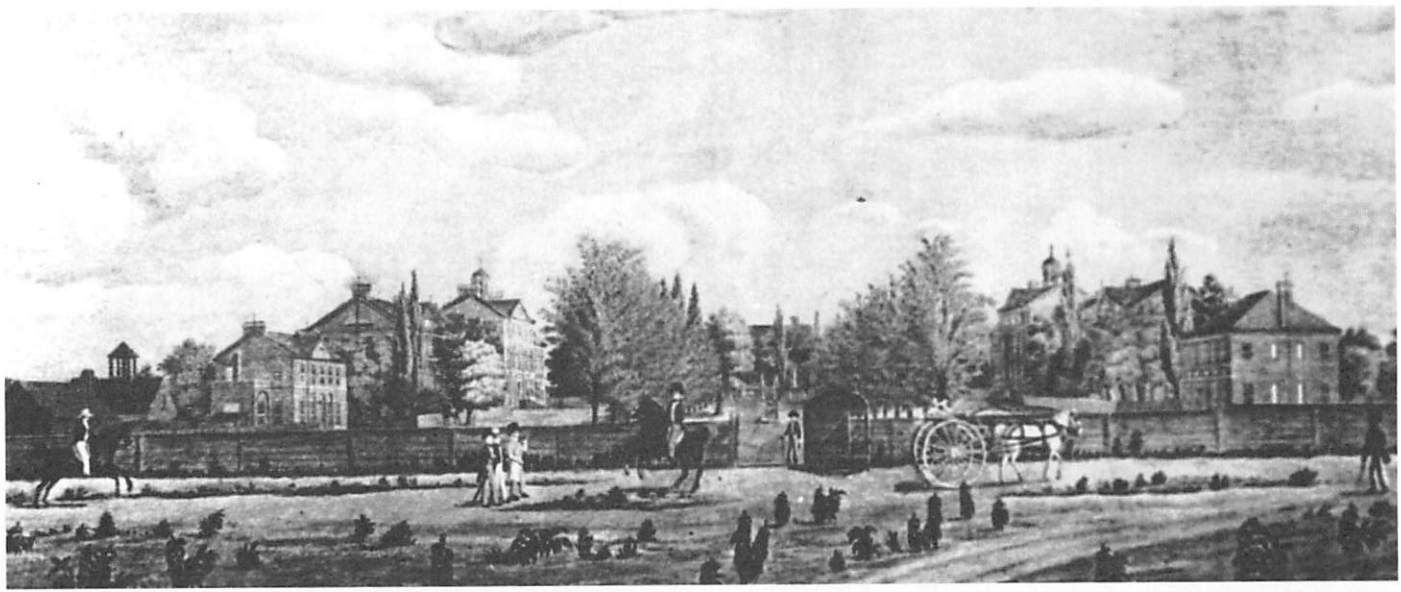
The faculty, five in number, including President Thomas Cooper, who also taught, and two tutors, were to act as managers. In addition to their teaching responsibilities, professors were expected to attend chapel, alternate eating with the students in the dining hall or commons to keep them under control, keep study hall, visit and supervise room cleanliness, and enforce discipline.[13]

The board of trustees, drawn largely from the legislature, had little or nothing to do with the day-to-day administration of the college, but as influential men with family or friends attending the college, they frequently used position and leverage to reverse rulings, especially involving discipline, and to convey either blessings or chastisement to a faculty which they sometimes held in limited esteem. "We do with our professors what we please," remarked one trustee, and the faculty was accordingly very careful to avoid open confrontations with the board.[14] In the final analysis, such disputes usually resulted in trustee victories which further eroded faculty control of the student body. In regards to John S. Palmer, the young man had friends on the board and family in the legislature. Anything but minimal punishment inevitably would be overturned or resented.

However, it was not the rules but absence of their enforcement that most frequently sent mixed signals to young, often immature students. Faculty and tutors were unquestionably overworked and underpaid, and if they ignored any part of their numerous obligations, it was generally the enforcement of rules they disagreed with or found inoperable. Dr. Jonathan

[12]"Board of Trustee Minutes," Vol. I, April 6, June 27, October 30, December 6, 1804.

[13]Ibid., June 27, 1807; George Blackburn, *Narrative of Transactions in South Carolina College During the Last Three Courses* (1814), p. 3; Adrianne Koch, ed., "A Family Crisis: Letters from John Fauderaud Grimke and Thomas Smith Grimke to Henry Grimke, 1818," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 69 (1968), pp. 171-192. Besides Cooper and Vanuxem, other members of the faculty included Robert Henry, professor of logic and moral philosophy, James Wallace, professor of mathematics, and Thomas Park, professor of languages. The tutors were Timothy D. Porter, languages, and William K. Clowney, mathematics.



The South Carolina College, about 1827, from a watercolor signed "T. Ulor." Courtesy of the South Caroliniana Library.

Maxcy, the institution's first president and Cooper's predecessor, privately agreed with his faculty and overlooked many of the most onerous rules, except when the infractions were too obvious.[15] To William J. Grayson, one of the most able of the early South Carolina graduates, Maxcy was a giant of "moral worth, tact and commanding eloquence," but he was also a part of a "defective" system that had few "scholastic aids" and even less discipline and restraint for young students.[16]

> He [the student] sees his professors for an hour or two only every day. There is no social relation between them. The student herds with the boys alone and if he escapes from becoming a bear in his habits he will owe his good fortune to his stars and not at all to the influences of college life.... The raw freshman is subjected to the influences of companions a little older than himself. He is ambitious to emulate the high spirited example of his senior. He makes rapid advances in smoking, chewing, playing billiards, concocting sherry cobblers, gin slings and mint juleps, becomes an adept at whist and "old Sledge" ... to say nothing of more questionable matters and takes degrees in arts and sciences about which his diploma is altogether silent.[17]

For want of "the guidance and restraints of home," students, after "lolling about" bored, often sought evening diversions, referred to by the faculty as disturbances, "improper and disorderly conduct," "braving the censure of the faculty," and riots, depending upon seriousness and number of participants. Pilfering hen roosts, raiding gardens, stealing turkeys, and even destroying picket fences and stairs were "constant practices" by the unknown night prowlers. Firing pistols, howling, drinking, tying cans to the horns of cows or the tails of dogs, and using "insulting language" were courses for the more daring, with group diversions like "slaminades," or tin pan serenades, or "blackrides," in which face-blackened riders, dressed in red coats and holding flaming torches, galloped madly around campus on

[14]Blackburn, *Narrative of Transactions*, p. 14.

[15]Jonathan Maxcy (1768-1820) was a native of Attleborough, Massachusetts. He attended a preparatory academy in Wrenthem, Massachusetts, and graduated from Brown University in 1787 with highest honors. After serving four years as a tutor at Brown and six months at the Providence First Baptist Church as a pastor, he was selected as president of Brown at the age of twenty-four. Eleven years later Maxcy was offered the presidency of Union College, and, with an excellent record at both private schools, was the first choice of South Carolina College in 1804. In the sixteen years that followed, he was considered to be "unequaled" in his ablilites as a teacher and "beloved" by his students. Laborde, *History of South Carolina College*, pp. 107-123.

[16]Calhoun, *Witness to Sorrow*, p. 77.

borrowed faculty mounts and then disappeared into the ranks of gathering students where they were hidden.[18]

The object of these "outbursts of animal spirits" was "the often bootless efforts of the professors to discover the delinquent...."[19] These night games, and they were precisely that, pitted bored and neglected, immature students against overworked and resentful faculty. Of course, it may also be argued on behalf of the students that they had some real grievances, such as the steward's commons (dining room) with its "tough bull meat, or ox flesh, musty rice, rancid butter, and filthy coffee." Since all students not living with family in Columbia were required to eat in the commons, and even faculty admitted to the wretched quality of food there, this became a major, perennial complaint on campus.[20] Food, then, or the lack of quality, may have mustered its share of resentment and frustration, making night games into a more serious matter.

Unknowingly or uncaringly, the trustees and the legislature fanned the flames by seeking stricter discipline to reduce unseemly incidents that brought negative public reaction.[21] With declining enrollments under Cooper, it was a problem when men like William Brearley directed potential students to Princeton College of New Jersey and made it abundantly clear to anyone who would listen or read that he did it "to avoid the infidelities

[17]Ibid., pp. 79-80.

[18]Koch, "A Family Crisis," p. 171; John Franklin Brevard Papers, December 2, 1814, Caroliniana Library; Thomas Cooper to Thomas Jefferson, February 14, 1822, Caroliniana Library; Charles W. Hutson, "The South Carolina College in the Late 50s," *The Sewanee Review Quarterly* XVIII (1910), p. 337. Whenever possible violators were caught and disciplined. On January 24, 1821, Eldred Simkins, a senior, and two others, G.W. Dargan and McMichael, were charged with being "guilty of burning an effigy and creating a riot in campus on Saturday night last and that in consequence of this gross defiance of the college authority" all were expelled and instructed to "quit the bounds of the college before dark...." "Faculty Minutes, 1814-1833," January 24, 1821, and March 12, 1821. Simpkins, the senior, was later readmitted and graduated.

[19]Hutson, "South Carolina College," p. 338.

[20]Brevard Papers, February 28, 1811. On May 15, 1820, Robert Henry, faculty secretary reported "the coffee, as being badly prepared; the bread badly baked; the butter not sweet nor of good quality; also a great want of uniformity in the fare generally supplied." "Faculty Minutes, 1814-1833," May 15, 1820.

[21]The pressure for stricter discipline was a perennial one. Henry Junius Nott, faculty secretary in 1835, wrote George McDuffie, president of the board of trustees, on December 7, reporting his difficulties in making students "submit to the control" of the faculty. Henry J. Nott to George McDuffie, December 7, 1835, Caroliniana Library. Hugh G. Middleton, a junior in 1836, noted to his father that "the faculty are very strict. They are determined to get rid of all the wild young men in College." Hugh G. Middleton to John Middleton, November 12, 1836, Caroliniana Library.

and dissipation of S. Ca. College."[22]

Not all matriculants, however, were idlers. Some, like Hugh Swinton Legare, William A. Bull, William J. Grayson, and James W. Hudson, were highly self-motivated and complained, as did Legare, about the "dunces" who "infested his rooms" and the "diversions within the walls."[23] By his senior year, John S. Palmer, at first long on promises and short on practice, had moved at length toward this group, largely at the behest of two successful elder brothers, Thomas, an 1808 graduate, and Edward, who had finished eleven years later. Thomas, the more influential of the two and John's surrogate guardian since the death of their father in 1810, was increasingly ill and soon to die, and John, now maturing, was striving mightily to please one he had heretofore disappointed. As a result he had not gone to the ball with the other revelers the evening of the third and had only joined them just prior to Cooper's arrival to partake sociably of cake and candy.

Thomas Cooper, for his part, had inherited in June 1820 roughly one hundred students drawn from four classes, freshmen to seniors, all by-products of the Maxcy era. The new president understood the inequalities of the "present system" and the need for a reform, one that would, among other things, eliminate the adversarial relationship between faculty and students and promote "self-government without incessant superintendance."[24]

Yet reform was not a high agenda for the trustees. Cooper was elected provisionally for one year in 1820, and permanently a year later, but only by one vote. Since he lacked Maxcy's persuasive eloquence and popular following, when the board instructed the faculty in June 1821 that "sufficient efforts are not made to enforce the laws of the college in relation to restraints imposed on the students" and enforcement of said laws in the future "is required," he moved to comply.[25]

THE QUEST BEGAN WITH THE OPENING OF A NEW SESSION IN October 1821. By November there was already reaction as students petitioned the faculty that they "had not and would not encourage students to give information nor should they [the faculty] require it of them, except in certain instances of flagrant delinquencies."[26] By Christmas the usual night games had escalated into a quasi-war between the senior and junior classes

[22]William Brearly to John McClean, November 22, 1832, Caroliniana Library.

[23]Mary S. Legare, ed., *Writings of Hugh Swinton Legare* (Charleston, S.C.: Burges and James, 1846), p. xxxiv.

[24]Hollis, *The University of South Carolina*, Vol. I, p. 88; *Board of Trustee Minutes*, Vol. I, April 28, 1823.

[25]"Board of Trustee Minutes," Vol. I, May 3, 1821.

[26]"Faculty Minutes, 1814-1833," November 20, 1821.

and the faculty. The seniors forbade any student to approach any professor for information on pain of social ostracism, while chapel and class cuts proliferated from all class levels, as did evening disturbances.[27]

In early January the faculty retaliated. President Cooper announced that continued absences would result in the decimation of one-tenth of the offending class. In response, the juniors, en masse, absented themselves from their Monday 2 p.m. class, one taught by Cooper. These and further disturbances led to a statement of events being sent to all parents and friends, and the suspension of the entire junior class until each member signed a statement that he would promise to cease all combinations and not "infringe on a single law of College."[28]

While twenty-five juniors were officially suspended, most of them were subsequently readmitted after signing the required oath.[29] The student body, noted Cooper to his friend and mentor, Thomas Jefferson, was very hostile:

> The Professors were threatened, pistols were snapt at them, guns fired near them, Col. John Taylor (formerly of the Senate from this place) was in company with myself [Cooper] burnt in effigy; the windows of my bed room have been repeatedly shattered at various hours of the night and guns fired under my windows....
>
> Republicanism is good; but the "rights of boys, and of girls" are the offspring of Democracy run mad. No Professor of any reputation will stay in an institution where their authority is to be disputed inch by inch, and their lives put in jeopardy if they resist the encroachment of a hot headed set of boys, whom no kindness can conciliate, and who regard all exertions made to promote their improvement as mere matters of duty for which no thanks are due.[30]

Nervously, the faculty stood ready to "appear in a body and endeavor to redress it [violence] and to protect College faculty and buildings if need be." The president, who took much of this personally and who never failed to respond to a challenge, with the aid of local trustees pushed to extend the oath to the seniors and all others, but his less daring faculty was unwilling

[27]Cooper to Jefferson, February 14, 1822.

[28]"Faculty Minutes, 1814-1833," February 7, 1822; "Faculty Letter," February 7, 1822, Caroliniana Library.

[29]*Faculty Letter*, February 7, 1822.

[30]Cooper to Jefferson, February 14, 1822.

to act.[31]

Whatever the reason, the disturbances and the combinations were quashed by March, but a spirit of sullen resentment remained. Given that Calvin Foster was a junior, one of those who had been expelled and then readmitted, and that John S. Palmer was a senior, the likelihood of premeditated action was prominent in Cooper's mind. Repeatedly, on and following May 4, Cooper would stress that "he had his brains almost knocked out" and that the assault was planned, ignoring that it was Lardner Vanuxem who was struck.[32] Beset as he was by previous actions against him and a siege-like mentality, it is easy to understand why the president's temper flared so spectacularly early Saturday morning.[33]

It should also be understood that Thomas Cooper's lack of background hindered his understanding of this matter. Cooper came from a wealthy English family, and only migrated to Pennsylvania in 1794. Thus, he was neither American nor southern, and it was not until 1819, when invited to South Carolina College to teach chemistry, that he was exposed to the southern lifestyle and the concept of honor. To the president, honor meant truthfulness and one's good name and reputation. To his students, conditioned as they were by their upbringing and by the college system of "us versus them," honor was observed by a code of silence in which they avoided telling a known lie or implicating a fellow student, even if the student was guilty. Cooper saw this process as "an insolent cover for falsehood among many of them" and must have viewed John Palmer's failure to answer as a part of the still fresh senior/junior combination. To Thomas Cooper's way of thinking, Palmer, who later recollected no other reason for failure to answer than the hope that he might not be recognized and could slip away, was guilty and received a well-deserved blow.[34]

Yet the most difficult aspect of this case to address was not that of truth,

[31]"Faculty Minutes, 1814-1833," February 5, 1822; Cooper to Jefferson, February 14, 1822.

[32]Thomas Cooper to John S. Palmer, May 13, 1822, Caroliniana Library; James W. Gregg to John S. Palmer, June 24, 1822, Caroliniana Library.

[33]Among the most annoying and cruel of previous pranks was the repeated theft of the wooden steps that the faculty used to enter Rutledge Chapel. Cooper, who "was very clumsy" because he was overweight had to endure a climb up an old ladder under the scrutiny of the assembled students to reach his preassigned place. Laborde, *History of South Carolina College*, pp. 131-134.

[34]Cooper to Jefferson, February 14, 1822; Palmer to Palmer, May 7, 1822. The concept of honor, which bound families and the southern planter class together, required the defense and protection of members of this "in-group" from outsiders, who were held to be inferior and therefore unworthy of equal treatment. South Carolina College faculty would have fit into this latter category. See Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

but of disputed honor. According to the code then existing in the South, to strike Palmer as Cooper did with his cane was viewed as an "unjustifiable outrage," an insult that could be avenged only through the satisfaction of a duel. John S. Palmer, who had not previously fought one, viewed the custom as potentially "perverted" and "inhuman and repugnate" to civil society, but nonetheless believed the process in his case a "necessary commitment."[35]

To have allowed the matter to drop, as Palmer seems to have preferred, was impossible. It would have implied that the president's blow was deserved, and that he was guilty of assault on the faculty, a move that John's brother Thomas, his health now in "reduced state," and other family friends would have accepted as the ruin of John's "good character." Students would then shun him as they did others who failed to guard and protect their good names. It was thus all the more necessary that John S. Palmer "retrieve by the most strenuous efforts of industry" his honor, and do "whatever my friends may have expected."[36]

Cooper, who could not condone duels, repeatedly refused to accept the challenge, and Palmer, who had so recently psyched himself to initiate this action, now in desperation took out a civil warrant. "Satisfaction of some kind," he wrote to his mother, "I must have." On this ground, the president, who had previously served as a judge in Pennsylvania, agreed to continue the fray and responded on May 13 that Palmer was "little entitled to complain of the treatment ... [he] received" and promised to reciprocate

[35]Palmer was aware of the "long talked of" duel between McDuffie and Cummings and the "dangerous" wound that the former had received as well as another deadly encounter that had recently taken place near Augusta. The results of both clearly made him nervous, but to fail to challenge Cooper would discredit his family, himself, and his political future. John S. Palmer to Harriet J. Palmer, June 14, 1822, Caroliniana Library. James Henry Hammond, on the other hand, opportunistically used the process for his advancement in 1830 by goading General James Blair into a challenge. Blair, as expected, backed down while Hammond's honor and career were enhanced. Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, pp. 50-55. Fourten years later, however, Hammond, with a successful governorship behind him and an impending senate appointment before him, was undercut by the same process. He was forced to avoid a duel with his wife's cousin, Wade Hampton II, and to withdraw from politics for over a decade in order to cover a family scandal and preserve at least a part of his honor. Carol Bleser, ed., *Secret and Sacred: The Diaries of James Henry Hammond, a Southern Slaveholder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 120-121.

[36]Palmer to Palmer, May 7, 1822. In early 1822 George McDuffie of Edgefield fought two duels with William Cummings of Augusta as a result of a long-standing quarrel involving their political mentors, John C. Calhoun and William Crawford. As a consequence, McDuffie was dangerously wounded and never fully recovered. *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), Vol. 12, p. 34.

with a warrant for "riot, assault, and battery."[37] The latter was apparently taken out and pursued with a vengeance.

In the meanwhile, John's "so highly esteemed ... brother" Thomas died, and with him, it seems, went most of the young man's resolve to pursue the issue. Fortunately, James R. Gregg, a member of the trustees and Thomas's classmate at South Carolina College in 1808, now undertook to mediate the quarrel. Aided by Edward G. Palmer, John's remaining elder brother and one of Thomas Cooper's favorite pupils, the "unhappy affair" was "burried on both sides" by June 24, 1822, with the mutual dropping of warrants. Cooper, who had since moved on to another challenge, the early dismissal of the sophomore class, agreed to accept that everything that had happened was not premeditated but accidental. He still, however, refused to concede

with school dismissed since June 20, hence his friends no longer on campus, swallowed his pride and agreed to forget the cane blow. Cooper had held his ground and the "disagreeable difference" was finished.[38]

Six months later, December 1822, John S. Palmer graduated with honors, to his surprise, and apparently on good terms with both Cooper and the faculty. South Carolina College, which struggled from crisis to crisis during the Cooper presidency, did not, as Palmer had predicted, "cease to exist"; however, neither did it fulfill its initial intent to reconcile conflicts, at least not with this family.[39] Cooper's victory in the "matter of honor" was not forgotten, and when it came time to choose educational institutions for John S. Palmer's sons, nephews, and cousins, South Carolina College was not considered.[40] "Satisfaction of some kind," he eventually got.

[37]Palmer to Palmer, May 7, 1822; Cooper to Palmer, May 13, 1822.

[38]John S. Palmer to Harriet J. Palmer, June 3, 1822; James W. Gregg to John S. Palmer, June 24, 1822, Caroliniana Library.

[39]John S. Palmer to Harriet J. Palmer, June 14, 1822.

[40]South Carolina College does not figure further in the extended correspondence of John S. Palmer, 1812 to 1881. Palmer's sons and nephews attended Wofford College, the University of Virginia, and the South Carolina Military College.