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An Oration Delivered at Norfolk.

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Sen. J. C. Calhoun
ORATION

DELIVERED AT NORFOLK,

AND

CELEBRATION

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

6th JULY, 1801,

BY SERENO PETTIBONE.

Published by Request.

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Sereno Pettibone

found genius, and the most splendid abilities, are objects of but small importance. Men of virtue, and strict integrity, will always act in strict conformity to the principles of rectitude; but an immoral man has no director but his ambition,—no counsellor but the evil propensities of his nature. He who lives in the open practice of vice and immorality, which stamp a stigma upon the human character, will not hesitate to sacrifice his own reputation, the interests of his fellow-citizens, and the welfare of society at large, whenever it will tend to accomplish his vicious and selfish purposes. Since, then, morality and virtue are objects of so great importance to the happiness of society; to encourage and support them becomes a duty incumbent upon every individual citizen. The rapid progress, which many vicious and corrupt practices have, of late, been making in our country, becomes a serious cause of alarm to the friends and well-wishers of our government.

THE vicious amusements of gambling, and horse-racing, in some parts of our country, have of late been considerably prevalent, and are still continuing to increase. The tendency of these amusements is very pernicious to society. They subvert every moral, and every religious principle, and banish all the humane and social affections from the heart. Wherever they prevail, they prove fatal to peace, to order, and to happiness.

BUT these evils, great as they may appear, become comparatively trifling, when contrasted with the more than savage practice of Duelling: They tend only to corrupt the morals and harden the heart; but duelling, in addition to these evils, tends to the destruction of life,—yes, and frequently of the lives of men, useful in many departments of society.—

Wherever duelling has been accounted honorable, many valuable men, but to their reproach be it spoken, have been induced to expose their lives, in an unequal contest, to avoid the malicious sneers of knaves and fools. But is it consistent with reason to suppose, that every thing done by the strong and valiant, is perfectly right, and agreeable to the principles of virtue and strict justice? If so, let us for shame abolish our laws, and transfer the administration of justice from them, to the club and the sword: Let us permit the jarring passions of men, like the troubled waves of the ocean, to regulate themselves. Then will the great end of duelling be accomplished, and jacobinic democracy may hail the arrival of its long expected millenium. But if this is not the case; if strength is not the arbiter of right, nor valor the criterion of justice, let each honest citizen indignantly discard so barbarous a practice, and despise its abettor, though clothed in purple and crowned with laurel.

THE practice of soliciting elections to offices of power and trust, and of attempting to bias the suffrages of the people in this respect, is an evil of great political magnitude. It has been introduced and patronized, by certain restless and disorganizing citizens, with a zeal which sufficiently evidences the malignity of their intentions. A practice more replete with iniquity, and more envenomed and fatal in its effects, never originated from the pandemonium of jacobinism. To accomplish this favorite project of poisoning the morals of the people, of biasing their political sentiments, and of obtaining their suffrages to offices of distinction, all means, however vile, are practised. Flattery, corruption, bribery, and all the low arts of intrigue, have each been successively employed; and under the specious pretext

of enlightening the people, torrents of the vilest calumny have been poured forth, to vilify the first and fairest of our public characters.

Let us, for once, behold the candidate for office; view him haranguing in the streets, in taverns, and in all places of public resort;—view him using every specious art to court popular favour;—see him transforming himself into an ape, a parasite, and a fool;—view him relinquishing his best grounded political sentiments, and sliding easily into the opinions of others,—and where is the freeman, of honor and sensibility, who would not frown indignantly at such proceedings?—True, indeed, these evils do not exist, with all their aggravations, in New-England; but in many parts of our country, where electioneering has reached its acme of perfection, not only these, but still greater evils, are prevalent. There we may behold the shameless candidate, boldly declaiming upon his own superior merits, and soliciting the public confidence, by all the prostitute arts of bribery and corruption. And have we not great reason to dread the prevalence of these evils? Have not these shameful practices, of late, made rapid progress in New-England? Even in Connecticut, hitherto so justly famed for its freedom of elections, have not the heralds of faction been posted to and fro in the State, to revolutionize the people, to prejudice their minds, and to prepare them for elections? Where is the honest and virtuous citizen, who would patronize these base attempts upon his liberty? Where is the enlightened and patriotic American, who does not swell with indignation, at the affront thus offered to his understanding, and blush for the shame and degradation of his country?

THE freedom of elections, is one of the essential

