

S1144

Pettibone, Sereno, 1778?-1826.

An Oration Delivered at Norfolk.

Litchfield, [Ct. ], Collier, [ 1801 ]. 20 pp.

MWA copy.

*Sen. J. C. Calhoun*  
ORATION

DELIVERED AT NORFOLK,

AND

CELEBRATION

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

6th JULY, 1801,

---

BY SERENO PETTIBONE.

---

*Published by Request.*

---

LITCHFIELD: PRINTED BY T. COLLIER.

*Sereno Pettibone*



An ORATION,

**T**O celebrate our national Independence, and to be considered, by every citizen, a duty and patriotic duty. To commemorate the names of those innumerable worthies, who conducted the revolution, and achieved our Independence; to live over, in pleasing admiration, the deeds of former days; to inculcate upon the mind those invaluable principles of liberty, which form our shield of defence and our safety; and to point out the various causes, which have produced the present wealth and prosperity of our nation, must ever prove subjects, replete with amusement and instruction. But in the lapse of five and twenty years, since the declaration of our Independence, these have been frequently investigated, by those, whose talents were adequate to the important undertaking. Presumptuous, then, would it be in me, to attempt to throw new light upon subjects already so luminous; and however pleasing it may be to follow the illustrious examples of others, and to reimpres their important sentiments upon your minds; yet I shall leave their delightful themes for the consideration and abilities of some future speaker, and content myself with a slight investigation of some of those subjects, which are more immediately connected with our national prosperity and happiness.

MORALITY and virtue are essential to a republican government. So great is their importance, in a national point of view, that nothing can compensate for their loss. Compared with these, the most pro-

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

supports to a republican government, and constitutes its superior excellence. That disgusting and vain assurance, which impudently solicits your patronage, is not the most deserving of your regard. Those who solicit your suffrages, by the arts of intrigue, will not hesitate to abuse your confidence. Men of virtue and strict integrity, will never descend to such degrading practices. Modest merit courts not promotion: it delights to dwell in the shades of retirement. None but the ambitious and unprincipled, will seek preferment at the expence of honour, virtue, and Independence. Thus it is easy to perceive, if this practice becomes generally prevalent, that worthless and aspiring demagogues might fill every important office of government, while real merit remained unnoticed, in obscurity. It would not, then, be abilities, but wealth and family distinctions, which would ensure preferment; but wealth and family honours can never bestow merit. Worth is not confined to rank or situation: it is often to be found in the poor man's cottage; and wherever it appears, it is no less the duty than the interest of our country to cherish and support it.

THE practice of soliciting for promotion to offices, is a growing evil, which if not timely checked, may prove destructive to our government. The seed which has been sown in our soil, and now begins to shoot up, may be easily eradicated; but should we permit it to grow and flourish, it will soon become a sturdy plant, heavy laden with its destructive fruits. It may then bid defiance to our utmost exertions. Let us, then, lay the axe directly at the root. It is time for us to cease to ape the vices of our neighbours: Sufficient vice have we in our own country, —in our own State,—in our own towns. Let us cherish those steady habits of our fathers, which have

so long preserved our State unshaken, amidst the shocks which have convulsed the world. While we continue strenuously to support, and strictly to adhere to these, we may bid defiance to all the arts, of all the demagogues united.

THE foreign attachments of many of our citizens, afford to our nation a serious cause, for the apprehension of danger. These attachments, to particular foreign nations, by alienating the affections of our citizens from our government, are productive of almost infinite evils to our country. Predilection for any foreign nation, is highly to be reprobated; but when this predilection is exercised towards a nation, abandoned to every vice, and every crime; and towards principles, evidently, assailing the foundations of society, of religion, and of government, our minds are shocked with horror at the fact, and with dismay at the consequences!—Yet such is the blind adoration of many of our citizens, for the French nation, that they view every thing emanating from a French source, with the most tender and affectionate regard. The governments of Marat and Robespierre, of the Directory, and of Buonaparte, have each, successively, proved the subject of their admiration and applause.

FRANCE, in her revolutions, presents to our view, a series of misery and crimes, to which history affords us no parallel. When we survey her citizens, dragging their monarch to an ignominious execution,—when we behold them bursting the prison gates, and devoting thousands of helpless victims to an indiscriminate death,—or when we view them at the mad revel of Thermidor, pillaging and murdering the defenceless inhabitants of Paris, every act appears big with villany and crimes. Whether we survey



her armies as laying waste the fruitful plains of Italy;—or whether we view them as pillaging the Netherlands, or ravaging the provinces of Germany,—or whether we behold them as climbing the rugged Alps, and storming the bulwarks of Switzerland,—we still behold the same successive scenes of horror, rapine, and murder.—Every step is marked with blood, and covered with desolation!

AND is France less remarkable for criminality in her internal relations? The following is a portrait of her interior, drawn by a Frenchman high in office and respectability:—

“ A WAR of a new species, an intestine, an unfair,  
 “ a deceitful war, perplexes and threatens the con-  
 “ querors of Europe. Crimes, hitherto unheard of,  
 “ strike us with horror, by the cruel solemnity of the  
 “ act, and by the dark machinations of the plot;—  
 “ the high-ways are infested with robbers, formed  
 “ into regiments;—the safety of every citizen is  
 “ gone,—public faith outraged,—the most sacred  
 “ asylums impudently violated;—the magistrates are  
 “ proscribed, and marked out for the poinard;—the  
 “ purchasers of national domains persecuted, and  
 “ tortured, as thieves who conceal their booty;—  
 “ the founders, the columns of the republic, pub-  
 “ licly pointed at, and publicly devoted to death;—  
 “ a general deluge of passions, and of vice, prevails  
 “ through the land;—all social intercourse is ob-  
 “ structed, trade is embarrassed, property insecure;  
 “ the order of society is in fine assaulted in its center,  
 “ by a criminality which is more powerful, more ex-  
 “ tended, and more active, than words can express.  
 “ Such is the picture of France.”\* And for a more

B

\* Speech of Dumourier in the French tribunate.

complicated picture of horror, we may, in vain, look through the annals of history. Every conception seems turned on murder, every act appears big with death.—To expiate her iniquities, or to cleanse her from the multitude of her sins, “Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.”—*Liberty*, which in other nations has proved the harbinger of peace and happiness, has here been converted into a *flaming sword*, scattering misery and death in every direction.—It has literally stood forth,

“ *A monster;*  
 “ *Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,*  
 “ *And shook a dreadful dirk.*”

Tho’ on its front were inscribed, in letters of gold, **LIBERTY, EQUALITY**, and the **RIGHTS** of **MAN**; yet on its rear were written, in characters of blood, **HORROR, CONFUSION**, and **DEATH**. Who, then, among us, can be so weak, so blindly attached to foreign manners, and foreign crimes, as to support and palliate such unparalleled wickedness. However strange this may appear, it is not more strange than true. There are many, very many I fear, in this country, who not only admire, and attempt to justify the conduct of France, in all her changes, and in all her abominations; but would, were it possible, compel our nation to adopt her manners, and imitate her crimes. But let such be reminded, that he who attempts to justify iniquity, is himself a transgressor, and must sooner or later render an account, before the tribunal of an impartial Judge.

Those inhabitants of our country, who are so servilely attached to foreign nations, are our most

dangerous enemies. They will never hesitate to sacrifice their own interest, the interest of their country, and the peace and happiness of society, whenever it will tend to gratify the rapacity, or promote the lustful or ambitious designs, of their foreign connexions. Should any one be disposed to deny the truth of this assertion, I will point to a fact which shall stare him in the face.—When France, confident with victories, and relying upon a party in our country, absolutely devoted to her interests, insolently demanded of our nation a tribute, as the price of peace; and when irritated by a refusal, she pointed to Venice and Genoa, and bid us take warning, by their example, and expect their fate if we persisted in our “obstinacy;” were there not then found, in our country, men, high in office, base enough to palliate her conduct, and to counsel a compliance with her infamous demands? Can we suppose, then, that men who would so far degrade their national character to support the pretensions of a foreign nation, would hesitate to practise any means, however iniquitous, to forward her rapacious and ambitious designs.

CAN any honest citizen, candidly and conscientiously, be instrumental in the election of such men, to offices of power and trust? Can any one suppose that public property, or public concerns, would be safe in such hands? Yst we find many such men in our country, who consider themselves qualified for the first offices of government, assuming the specious appellations of “Patriots,” and “supporters of the republic,” boldly soliciting the public patronage and public confidence. But every honest, and every virtuous citizen, we trust, will exert his endeavours, that they may be disappointed in their expectations, and be left to mourn their folly and weakness, while experiencing the contempt and indignation of an injured and insulted people.

Thus I have endeavoured, briefly, to point out some of the principal evils which are prevalent in our country,—evils which tend to the subversion of all order, and of all government. Wherever they prevail in a republican government, we may safely predict, that its dissolution is at hand, and that the era of despotism is not far distant. They destroy all the moral and political benefits, which men derive from society. Gambling and duelling corrupt the morals of the inhabitants. Obtaining promotions to offices by bribery and corruption, destroys the freedom of elections; while a servile attachment to foreign nations, introduces disorder and confusion into society, and weakens and unstrings all the nerves of government.

THESE evils tend, likewise, to the subversion of the principles of Education, and of Religion; and as these are the great fundamental principles of all good government, too much attention cannot be paid to their support, and encouragement.

EDUCATION refines the taste, ennobles, and expands the mind, raises it above those contracted notions, which influence the conduct of the uncultivated barbarian, animates it with a laudable desire to promote the public good, and stimulates it to those noble and dignified pursuits, which so highly exalt the human character.

THE Education of youth, becomes then, a subject big with important consequences; every sentiment which is then instamped upon the mind, and every habit which is then acquired, become leading traits in the future character of the man. Habits are then easily acquired, examples are then readily imitated, and sentiments are then easily impressed on the mind.

In a political point of view, it becomes, therefore, a subject incalculably important. If our youth are permitted to associate with the immoral and disorderly part of our citizens; if they are permitted to copy the manners, and imbibe the sentiments, of the gambler, the debauchee, and the duellist, they will infallibly imitate their examples to do evil, and rapidly follow their footsteps, in the road to ruin: But if, on the contrary, the principles of morality and virtue are early impressed on their minds,—if these are confirmed by the wise precepts of a virtuous education,—they will despise the vices, and shun the society, of those infamous and abandoned characters.—If they are taught to esteem the freedom of elections as essential to our government, they will discard, with indignation, the man, who, by soliciting their suffrages, would thus insult their understandings; and if the principles of virtue and patriotism are early inculcated, and impressed upon their minds, they will sedulously refrain from those servile foreign attachments, which ever prove so extensively pernicious to all republican governments.

SINCE, then, education is a subject of such vast importance, it becomes a duty, highly incumbent upon every patriotic citizen, to encourage and support it.—An enlightened and virtuous yeomanry are the ornament of a nation. In war they form its bulwark for defence, and in peace they are its pride and support: Hence they become the most important part of community. If they are virtuous and enlightened, their government will remain prosperous and happy; but if they are vicious and uninformed, it may be easily subverted and destroyed. It is undoubtedly to be attributed to the enlightened and virtuous state of her citizens, that Connecticut has been able, so long unceasingly, and undeviatingly,

