

**AN ORATION ON THE LIFE, CHARACTER
AND SERVICES OF JOHN CALDWELL
CALHOUN: DELIVERED ON THE 21ST
NOV., 1850, IN CHARLESTON, S. C., AT
THE REQUEST OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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J. H. HAMMOND

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E. H. D.

AN ORATION

ON THE

LIFE, CHARACTER AND SERVICES

OF

JOHN CALDWELL CALHOUN:

DELIVERED

ON THE 21ST NOV., 1850, IN CHARLESTON, S. C.,

AT THE REQUEST OF THE CITY COUNCIL.

BY
James
J. H. HAMMOND.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

CHARLESTON, Nov. 23d, 1850.

HON. JAMES H. HAMMOND.

Dear Sir:—As a special committee in behalf of the City Council of Charleston, we have the honor to enclose you a copy of the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted at a meeting of the City Council, held on the 23d inst., to wit:

Resolved, That the City Council of Charleston having been highly gratified at the very able eulogium, delivered on the 21st inst., by the Hon. James H. Hammond, upon the life, character, and services, of the late Hon. JOHN C. CALHOUN, hereby tender this expression of their thanks for the same, and respectfully request a copy thereof, for publication.

Resolved, That a committee on behalf of Council, be appointed, to carry out the objects of the above resolution."

Earnestly hoping for your concurrence with this request of the City Council, and with assurances of the highest regard,

We have the honor to be,

Dear Sir,

Very Respectfully,

Your obed't serv'ts,

WM. KIRKWOOD,
W. ALSTON HAYNE, } *Committee.*
JAMES M. EASON.

CHARLESTON HOTEL, Nov. 23d, 1850.

Gentlemen:—I return my sincere thanks, through you to the City Council for the kind expression of their satisfaction with my oration, delivered on the 21st inst., at their request. I am, perhaps, better aware than they are of its numerous defects. But, such as it is, I surrender to their disposal, in the hope that they, and the public will view it as not pretending to be anything more than imperfect tribute to truth and to Mr. Calhoun.

I have the honor to be,

Most Respectfully,

Your obed't serv't.,

J. H. HAMMOND.

Messrs. Wm. Kirkwood, W. A. Hayne, James M. Eason.

ORATION.

Faith is an instinct of the human heart. Its strongest, its purest and its noblest instinct—the parent of love and of hope. In all ages and every where, mankind have acknowledged, adored and put their trust in the great Creator and Ruler of the Universe. And descending from the invisible and infinite, to the visible and finite, they have entertained the same sentiments, differing only, in degree, for those of their own species, who have received from heaven an extraordinary endowment of intellect and virtue. The Ancient Heathen deified them. By the early Christians they were enrolled among the Saints. It is a shallow and a base philosophy which can see superstition only, in such customs, and fails to recognize the workings of a profound veneration for the attributes of God, as manifested through his favorite Creations. A better knowledge of the bounds which separate the natural from the supernatural, has taught us in our day to limit our homage, but still it is a deep and pure wisdom which counsels us to submit ourselves, in no grudging spirit, to the guidance of those great Minds that have been appointed to shed light and truth upon the world.

To the honor and praise of South-Carolina it may be said that she has always recognized her prophets, and believed their inspiration. She has aided and sustained them in the performance of their missions, with a

warm and steady confidence, and she has been faithful to their memory. Her loyal reverence for real greatness has ever been a deep,—I might say a religious sentiment,—untinged with superstition, but as profound as it is magnanimous and just.

For no one of her many noble sons has Providence permitted her to evince for so long a period her admiration, her affection and her confidence: for no one has she herself endured such trials: no one has she ever consigned to his last resting place in her bereaved bosom amid such deep and universal grief as him whose life and services we have assembled this day to commemorate. For more than forty years the name of CALHOUN has never been pronounced in South-Carolina without awakening a sensation. For nearly the same period it has been equally familiar and fraught with as deep an interest to every citizen of this wide-spread Union. Few of us here present cannot remember the era when we heard it first. We have grown up from childhood under its mighty influence, and we feel that a spell was broken, a tie of life was sundered forever when it ceased to be a living sound.

The Man is now no more. He has closed his career with us, to begin another in a better world. But what he did and what he said while here, still live, and will live forever in their consequences;—as immortal as the Spirit which has returned to God. How he performed his part on earth it is ours now to consider. And drying our unavailing tears, and burying, for the moment, in the deepest recesses of our bosoms, the love and reverence we bore him, it is our duty to analyse his life with the strict impartiality of a distant posterity; and to bring the thoughts and actions he left behind him

to the great standard of eternal Truth, that we may render complete justice to him, and gather for ourselves and our children the full measure of the lessons which he taught. The living man scorned fulsome adulation: and his living Spirit, if permitted to hover over us now, and to hear our voices and perceive the pulsations of our hearts, will accept no offering that cannot bear the scrutiny of Time and the pure test of Truth.

Mr. CALHOUN was born in the backwoods of South-Carolina, near the close of the Revolutionary War. His early nurture was in the wilderness, and during the heroic age of the Republic. In youth he imbibed but a scant portion of the lore of books, but his converse with the volume of Nature was unlimited: and in the field and forest, by the stream and by the fire-side, he was in constant intercourse with those rough but high-strung men, who had challenged oppression at its first step, and were fresh from the battles in which they had won their liberties with their swords. His father, too, was a wise and strong man. For thirty years in the councils of the State, he was as familiar with the strifes of politics, as of arms. In his rude way he penetrated to fundamentals: discovered that the true foundation of government is the welfare of the governed; denounced its excessive action; and opposed the constitution of the Union because it placed the power of laying taxes in the hands of those who did not pay them. Amid such men and such scenes, there was little opportunity for what is commonly called education for the young CALHOUN. But it may be doubted whether, having acquired the use of letters and figures, and been thus furnished with the two great keys of knowledge, there could have been a much bet-

ter training for the future Statesman. Pericles and Alexander were, perhaps, taught but little more by Anaxagoras and Aristotle, than CALHOUN learned from his few books, from nature and such men. In this School he learned to think, which is a vast achievement. And he was furnished with high and noble themes for thought, by those whose partial knowledge of facts led them to discuss chiefly essential principles, to eliminate fundamental truths, and to build on them those lofty theories to which the exigencies of the times gave birth. And thus he was taught, not only the sum and substance of elementary education, but was imbued with that practical philosophy, according to which human affairs are in the main conducted. It is true that thousands have received the same lessons and profited nothing. But we know that seed sown by the wayside and among stones and thorns, is gathered by the birds or is withered or choked up; and it is only when it falls on good ground that it springs up and produces fifty and an hundred fold. It is idle to deny the natural diversity of human intellects. It was due, after all, to the rich soil of CALHOUN'S mind that these noble seed took root, and bore abundantly such precious fruit.

It was not until he had passed his eighteenth year that he seriously embarked in the pursuit of Scholastic learning, and the event proved—as perhaps it would in most cases—that no time had been really lost. Perhaps it seldom happens that the bud of the mind is sufficiently matured before this age, to expand naturally and absorb with benefit the direct rays of knowledge, so bright, so piercing and so stimulating. The tender petals eagerly opened at too early a period,

often wither and die under the overpowering light. At eighteen Mr. CALHOUN went to the Academy: at twenty to College: at twenty-two he graduated at Yale: at twenty-five he was admitted to the Bar: at twenty-six he was elected to the Legislature: at twenty-eight to Congress. Thus, though he apparently started late, he nevertheless arrived at the goal far in advance of most of those who reach it. But when he went to the Academy he did not dream over books, any more than he did afterwards over the affairs of life. He had learned before, what many never learn—to think: and to think closely—to the purpose—searching for the principle. Having acquired this mighty power—for it is a power, and the greatest of all—when he did start in his career, he strode onward like a conqueror. Difficulties were mere exercises. Vallies rose in his path and mountains sunk down to a level. First at School: first at College: he rose at once to the front rank at the Bar and in the Legislature: and was assigned a most distinguished position the moment he took his seat in Congress. His course was a stream of light. Men of all classes recognized its brilliancy, and hailed him, not as a meteor, but as a new star risen in the heavens, which had floated without effort into its appointed orbit, and promised long to shed the brightest and most beneficent beams upon the world.

What, we may properly ask, was the secret of this rapid and wonderful success? How was it that this young man, coming but a few years before from the wilderness, late in youth, without knowledge of books, unknown himself, and destitute of powerful friends, should in so short a time, not only win his way into the Great Council of the Confederacy, but be at once con-