

Mr. Derbigny is a native of France, whence he removed to the U. States, and thence to Louisiana, during the time of the Spanish colonial government, under which he was for some time an interpreter. For a station of this kind he is especially well qualified, from his intimate knowledge of the French, Spanish and English languages; and accordingly he filled it during the short term of rule exercised by Laussat, the prefect of the French Republic, and in the early part of our subsequent possession. Mr. Derbigny has always stood high in the confidence of his fellow citizens; and in 18 when the then territory of Orleans became dissolved with the grade of *raiment* in which she was placed, and made a claim to state sovereignty under the Louisiana treaty, he was selected, with two other respectable citizens, to enforce it with the general government. The failure of that attempt was said to have soured him a little with our institutions; and this dissatisfaction, I believe, expressed in his pamphlet, after his return from Washington. Mr. Derbigny is by profession, a lawyer; and his standing was highly respectable at the bar, from which he was translated a few years ago to the bench of our highest law tribunal, where he is still seated. Respectable by his learning and his talents; irreproachable as a judge, engaging, courteous, and dignified in his manners; and, in all the relations of private life, estimable and exemplary. Mr. Derbigny is still wanting in qualities highly important, if not essential, in the chief magistrate of our state. Imbibing his first political notions in the school of the French revolution, their reaction in that of a petty colonial despotism was too violent—enthusiasm was overcome, and something of the zeal of the republican principle abated. Since the establishment of our government, Mr. Derbigny has not been in political life. His prepossessions in favor of the natives of his own country, are strong, and his dispositions towards Americans, with whom he has few relations of intimacy, are not understood to be cordial or friendly. This is a sufficient disqualification, if others did not exist.

The next candidate, in the order of my remarks to you, is Mr. J. N. Destrehan. He was born in Spain, but came early to Louisiana, where he is generally supposed to be a native. Mr. Destrehan has now arrived at a very advanced age, having passed, if without applause, without censure, through a life of quiet seclusion. Industrious, persevering and judicious as a planter, he has attained to the possession of great wealth, in the expenditure of which, however, he is said to display no peculiar liberality. He was joined with Mr. Derbigny to the commission which, in 1804, claimed admission for the territory of Orleans into the Union. In 1811, Mr. Destrehan was chosen to the convention which formed our constitution; and in that body, stood high with the American members for liberality of sentiment and correctness of principle, especially on the question of the annexation of Florida, in which the more violent French members were hostile to that measure, but which he advocated with ability and effect. His conduct on that occasion entitles him to the *gratitude* of the American community: but here the expression of approbation should end—Mr. Destrehan is not the person whom they should choose for their governor. With better dispositions, as I believe, towards his American fellow citizens than Mr. Derbigny, he is much less qualified than that gentleman to discharge the duties of the trust which he solicits. His age, his want of knowledge of our institutions, and of their operations—his unfitness, in short, “to fly with his own wings,” all pronounce him unqualified to hold the helm of state. The merits of these two candidates are variously considered by their respective French supporters. But however they may differ now, one thing is pretty certain, that they will not differ always. There will be a union of sentiment in favor of the one or the other on the day of election:—but in favor of which of the gentlemen, is as yet perhaps uncertain.

In Louisiana, the French and their descendants are as distinguished for skill and management in elections, as the parent state has been conspicuous in Europe for diplomatic sagacity, since the time of Lewis

XIII; when the great clerical statesmen, Richelieu and Mazarine, engrafted the subtlety of St. Peters on the refinement of Versailles. Thus since the division, of which I have already spoken, into French and Americans arose, the former have on all occasions, when necessary, united and succeeded, while the latter have generally divided and failed.

In accordance with this suicidal habit of the Americans, you perceive them contending with one another now, and although the odds are greatly on one side, yet the weaker party is their defection, which I believe will be to the last, is likely to ruin the general cause, without a reasonable hope of benefitting its own.

This weaker party has seceded to join the standard of Mr. A. L. Duncan, a gentleman who has many respectable personal adherents, but no popularity, personal or political, in the state.

It is very lately indeed that my credulity, as to Mr. Duncan's being seriously a candidate, has been overcome. Hostile to every thing French and Creole, in appearance and in name; a federalist on the broadest principles; opposed, in all his habits of political thinking, speaking, and acting, to the great body of our citizens of every description; without having rendered public services; without being generally known; and without a standing likely to inspire a sudden and miraculous confidence, but the contrary; I thought it little less than a mockery that Mr. Duncan could expect the highest trust to be reposed in him by the same public, the same people who had so often denied him their confidence, when solicited for situations of the lowest comparative importance. This is not the first time that this gentleman has been a candidate for office, and his modes of seeking public stations seem inverse to general rules, and are at once new and amazing.

Does he seek humble and lowly offices, and they are denied to him, he immediately solicits one that is high and important: this being refused, he immediately demands the highest and the most important: should that be withheld, his ambition will swell beyond the limits of our narrow state.

“Why, man, he will bestride the narrow world
“Like a Colossus; and we petty men
“Walk under his huge legs, and peep about,”

Sancho, the proverbialist, has said of discontented solicitors: “Give an inch, and they will ask an ell:”—here the rule is reversed—*refuse* an inch and they ask the whole.

You have read of the magician in “*Caliph Vathek*,” who cried an article through the streets for sale at *one hundred sequins*, not apparently worth more than fifty; the next day he advanced to 200—the second to 300—and so on, until he asked 500 for his merchandise—then a purchaser was found, who thought himself lucky in buying so early, as the seller was determined to advance 100 sequins a day until he effected a sale. You can apply the tale, and if you were from the *East* you might find a moral in it.

Mr. Duncan is a native of the State of Pennsylvania, and arrived in Louisiana soon after our possession. Since that time he has pursued his profession with great assiduity. As a lawyer, he has practised with more success than eminence, for he is by no means distinguished at the bar as an advocate, nor remarkable among his brethren for the depth or variety of his learning.

But with great *tact* as a practitioner, with habits of business early formed, and a strict attention to the interests of his clients, he has justly arrived to an extensive and lucrative practice.

His friends speak of him in the papers as generous and wealthy. This I am not disposed to question; I wish neither to do injustice to the feelings of his heart, nor to injure his credit. But the manner in which these subjects have been brought forward by his friends, casts shadows upon the disinterestedness of his generosity, and proves that in recommending him to public confidence, proper subjects of praise and eulogy are wanting. The most injudicious advocate knows, that the possession of wealth, often adventitious, and the granting of personal favors, often not the result of benevolence, are not the basis of political confidence, and that however they may contribute to make a man comfortable and useful in private life, they are insufficient to establish his claims to public favor.

Negatively, then, admitting all that Mr. Duncan's friends say of him to be true, he is by no means the person who ought to be chosen for the high and responsible station of Governor. But when we consider, *affirmatively*, the objections to him, this unfitness becomes of such magnitude, as to awaken our surprize and apprehension when these objections are examined in their details as connected with the proceedings at New-Orleans in relation to Burr's conspiracy, and his trial at Richmond—as they relate to Mr. Duncan's agency in closing the doors of our state Legislature, when a volunteer aid of General Jackson, (giving him full credit for his services, from his sentiments in council on the night of the 23d of December, 1814, to his advice relative to the trial of Louallier)—when too they are examined in relation to the patriotic cause of Mexico, it may appear that Mr. Duncan is not the safest depository of the liberties of a free people. It may perhaps be necessary that I should make these topics the subject of a future letter—in the meantime I shall proceed to a more grateful theme, and in my next consider the merits of Mr. Robertson, who is the candidate of my choice, and I hope will be that of our fellow citizens.