

33980

Lanman, James, 1767-1841.

An Oration Pronounced on the Twenty-Second Anniversary of American Independence.

Norwich, Ct., Trumbull, 1798. 22 pp.

NYHS copy.

A N
ORATION,
PRONOUNCED
ON THE
Twenty-Second Anniversary
OF
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,
BEFORE THE
CITIZENS OF NORWICH.

By JAMES LANMAN, Esquire

Our independence is the general property of the citizen; not to defend is to relinquish;— And who is so senseless as to renounce his share in a common benefit, unless he hopes to profit by a new division of the spoil?

NORWICH: [Crown]
PRINTED BY THOMAS H. BEARD,

JULY 5, 1778.



You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together ; the independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint councils, and joint efforts, of common dangers, sufferings and successes.

Washington's farewell Address.





AN ORATION.

WHEN a great nation, impatient of the slow progress of its infancy, or indignant at the oppressive arm of power, imposing restraints on its natural rights, rises to rank itself, among the empires of the world; an object is exhibited to mankind, worthy its admiration and applause. In such a scene, the good find scope for the anticipations of benevolence, while the great exult in the hope, of spreading a field of glory, wide, and rich with the deeds of ambition. The day we commemorate ushered into birth, a glorious event. One, which animated, not only the sage philosopher, and the enterprising

Statesman, but which spread a jubilee of joy, as far as civilization and science had announced its existence, or furnished the means of appreciating its value. It was seen, how fruitless were the mild obedience of virtuous citizens, and the firm fidelity of the children of freedom, to quell the passion for power, which prompted the claims made upon our country. How fruitless the love of peace and industrious tranquillity, to check and control the pride of usurpation. In exchange for the birth-right of our forefathers and their latest posterity, in their own native land, where nature invited a receipt of her choicest productions, and held happiness out, as the sure reward of industry and virtue, were offered, unconditional servitude or death. It would not have been wonderful, if the hopeless prospect from opposition, joined with that love of peace which is the offspring of industry, had yielded, to an an-

cient powerful and imperious nation, a
bloodless victory over the future millions
of our countrymen. The impudence of
power is too often triumphant, while the
meekness of honest merit, surrenders at
discretion a force, which resistance would
have rendered respectable. But it was not
for those whose ancestors had fled for free-
dom to the deep recesses of an American
wilderness, to balance in such an alterna-
tive. Poor in the manufactured means of
hostility; untaught in the wiles and arti-
fices, which worldly experience furnish-
es; though strong in that spirit, which
springs from a deep sense of injury, the
bloody banner was unfurled by America.
Persuaded she could not mistake the de-
signs of her unnatural parent, she bravely
unmasked her resolution. On this day
disrobed herself forever of the allegiance
she had borne, and asserted her independ-
ence. On this day my fellow citizens,

to commemorate a period, when our people were armed in the land of their nativity, not for conquest of riches or territory, nor the glaring glitter of military glory; but to defend their own altars, and the tombs of the dead, against an unprovoked aggressor. The gauntlet was taken up. The sword left its scabbard. A thick cloud rose, and spread over our country, for seven long years it's sombre shade. All Europe waited with anxious expectation, on the portentous event. The time would fail me to recount the distressing scenes which attended this period. Painful would be the task, to replunge into the bosom of the father, a recollection of the dagger, which pierced the bleeding vitals of his only son. How oft has he wept at his memory! How severe has been the conflict in his breast, between the fire of patriotism, and the tender stream of parental affliction! Do our villages wrapt in

flames, or our cities in the dust, require a record to perpetuate their remembrance! Will not the stones of Valley-Forge, red from the bare and bleeding feet of our marching regiments, be more lasting memorials, than even the faithful page of history itself! How many mothers still pine with anguish, while memory paints the famine which reduced their infant offspring! How many wives still mourn the partners of their youth, who fell the virtuous victims to their country's cause! How many and dreadful are the events which crowd on the imagination, from the first blood which bedewed the plain at Lexington, to the brilliant triumph at York Town and Gloucester! These were the rich price of our national independence. Such the sufferings which purchased our freedom. Scarcely recovered from the struggles, with which the revolution convulsed us, behold another storm

lowers in fury over our devoted heads !
In a day which tried men's souls, France
was once our friend. Whether excited
by the rival jealousy incident to neigh-
boring nations ; her ancient resentment
against Britain ; or a more generous mo-
tive, it is not necessary to decide. She
smoothed the rugged walk of war. She
divided with us, the dread burden of mar-
tial service. How painful is it to the
mind, to contrast this view, with our pre-
sent relation to that powerful empire.
Animated with a passion for Liberty which
she caught in our revolution, we have
seen her rise indignant against the despot-
ism which enslaved her ; raise the Bastille,
at whose sight Liberty herself trembled ;
dash from his throne the monarch she a-
dored ; and exterminate at a stroke the
royal blood. We have seen constitution
piled upon constitution, revolutions, coun-
ter revolutions, massacres and proscrip-

tions, banishment and assassinations, blended in one dreadful mass of undistinguished horror. By an unnatural perversion of the order of Justice, conviction preceding trial; and death itself inflicted on the innocent by the guilty, without even the solemn mockery of arraignment. The tender ties of domestic life given to the wind. Private virtue abandoned as hypocrisy, and fit only to amuse the weak. Religion itself made a crime. And the sacred temples of its worship, robbed, to decorate scenes of most profligate paganism.

These things are on long record. Tho' it is hoped for the honor of humanity, that virtuous posterity will hardly credit the monstrous detail. Inflated with wild ideas of liberty, and conscious of great internal strength, through the reciprocal aids of intrigue and force, France has im-

posed on most of its neighbors, involuntary freedom. At once the most polished and populous country in Europe, what government has escaped the shocks of its fraud or its force! What people remain unimpressed, with a sentiment of its design, to make its dominion broad as the earth, and extensive as the ocean. Were cases demanded of its *unsolicited benevolence, its inhuman tenderness, its fraternal tyranny*; how easy might be named the Batavian Republic, Geneva, Venice, Genoa, and Switzerland! A country hitherto dear to America, from a sympathy excited by a similarity in its fortunes! Dear too, as the strongest asylum of European freedom. How ardently was it hoped, that when expelled from the plains, the strong holds and fastnesses of thy mountains, would have lent her a lasting retreat! These countries, and others which might be named, have laid aside their sover:gn-

ty, and on the bended knees of submission, accepted a tenancy at will, from the mercy of France. But why look abroad for testimonies of her haughtiness and violence? What wave of the Atlantic is not a swift witness, of her illegal capture of our vessels, and spoliation of our trade! What harbor on our coast, whose languishing commerce, does not mourn for injuries which she has inflicted! What goal in our country, does not contain some wretched bankrupt, an innocent victim of the perfidy of France! And do we merit this, on terms of national faith and justice? A stroke of the eye, at the conduct of our people and government, will readily evince.

When the European world became convulsed, by the engagement of France in the cause of reforming her government; and the avowal of principles which

were unfriendly to its royal cabinets; it was easy to be perceived, that a coalition would form against her. That neutrality and inaction against *her*, would be deemed treason against *mankind*. The first republican minister therefore who visited these western shores, announced to our government, both his wishes and sentiments on the attitude it should assume. Accustomed to view in France the friend of our country, and the guardian angel of our independence, an interest was felt in her fortunes, unusual to nations in amity. Though it was an event of great hazard, a neutral stand was taken. And the American Executive accredited with open arms the agent of the new Republic. Taught by experience the numerous necessities which wait on a revolution, what haste was not exerted to anticipate (to the republic) the debt due to France, as a means of her relief! Our rich granaries

and stalls were poured into her ports, to feed her furnishing armies. The starving exiles of her islands, hunted from their homes, were fattened on our national bounty. Fidelity to our engagements with France, has in every act of administration appeared dear to the heart of the Executive. This fidelity, in his instructions to ministers abroad, he has charged them never to impair. Nor has it ever been held secondary to any national object, however great or alluring. Have the people of these states been forgetful of the duties which cordiality and confidence inspire! Witness the peals of general joy, which rang on the arrival of the first ambassador from the Republic. Witness the silent patience with which they have borne the delay, to satisfy their immense and uncontroverted claims upon the government of France. These are the considerations, in violation of which, she still requites us, with outrage, calumny

and contempt. Spurns from her threshold, the successive ministers of reconciliation, and tramples under feet the pacific messages of explanation and esteem. Were she in our condition, what conduct might have been expected from her? It is deemed needless to describe the energy of resentment, with which *she* would have met such accumulated insults.

Faithful to the trust reposed in them by their fellow citizens, steady in view of those obligations, which humanity and justice impose on every nation; behold the wisdom and vigilance of our councils! With what solemn zeal, have they pursued an adjustment of the existing difference with France! How long, and how patiently have their ministers besieged the cabinet of Paris! How painful the neglect, how degrading the contempt, which has persecuted their respectable mission.

But my friends, there is a point at which forbearance should cease, and importunity becomes criminal. Thither we are arrived. The Rubicon is now behind us. It is not for me to prescribe to others opinions on facts. But when it is perceived, that every act of sovereignty in our government gives offence to France, the strongest circumstances urge on the mind a belief, that our *Independence* is obnoxious to her. And that nothing short of its dereliction, will satiate her rapacious ambition. The Executive chair, is not filled by the candidate of *her* choice. The sentiments held in his official communications, are not such as *she* would have prompted. Our Envoys Extraordinary bore characters different from those of *her* election. But even with *these she* would in *her* clemency have condescended to treat, provided (like ter tenants who bear rent to their landlord) they had offered the tribute of millions as the price of

an audience. A sovereign free and independent people are told, "You have dared in a surreptitious and secret manner, to negotiate a treaty with a foreign nation, without the privity and consultation of the French cabinet." It was done without leave! Without a sovereign right for the purpose, and it shall not be operative.—The *SINE QUA NON* of all her hopes and measures toward this country, is, the pepper corn of acknowledgment. In whatever drapery she may clothe her complaints, with whatever sophistry conceal her pretensions; every other consideration with her is at present of minor importance, compared with that of humbling our dignity, to yield her a power, paramount our own.

If we do not mistake her designs. If in this transient glance on the relations of our country, we see plainly, that France has assigned to us a place, in her chart of the re-

duction and division of empires. If she has matured her measures to dismember America. If she has aided our advancement to independence and glory, in order more effectually, to dash us to the dust. What then is our duty? Where is the inheritance for which our ancestors contended, and which is endeared to the sons, by the blood of their fathers! Poor is the consolation of a choice of tyrants. It was not to become the Helotes and vassals of a new master, claiming a right of imparting liberty to mankind, that Americans have burst the chains of foreign bondage. Remember my friends, this inheritance is sacred. Forget not the rich price of its purchase. Your honor, your fortunes, your lives, and all that is dear to you, by a solemn appeal to heaven, on the day we celebrate, were once for all, pledged for its guarantee. Unborn pos-

terity will demand it at your hands, unimpaired, by the ravages of usurpation. In its defence, the sleeping heroes who poured the vital stream, to secure it, will from the earth where they fell, inspire the soul to duty and to glory.—Remember—
The VENERABLE WARRIOR OF MOUNT VERNON, whose sword long drawn in his country's service, is now hung in his hall. Frequent he reviews its deeds, and the lambent flame of glory which still hangs on its point. He still beholds the embattled plains where its victories laurel'd his temples. And when the nerves of his arm shall be unstrung by age, the ancient patriot will oft cast his eye upon the faithful weapon, while the purple tide of blood in his bosom, glows with reverend rage at the wrongs of his insulted country. Reflect on his services, his character, his counsel, and his solemn legacy to mankind, when the curtain was

closed on the last scene of his public labors. Their recollection, will be an antidote, to cheer the heart, and rouse the desponding spirit.*

Having long since counted the cost of submission, it is found, that no computation can equal its evils. To yield tamely to unjust demands, or to compound with a foreign power for one half of our rights, is at the same time to merit and endure, the fate of slaves. This I trust is a fate, which will never be assigned to America. Death in all its horrors, is clad in birthday robes, compared with slavery. Let

* Note. Since the above was written, General Washington has been appointed to be Lieutenant General and Commander in Chief, of the armies of the United States. Real patriotism will again assemble around his standard, the Yeomanry of our country; where courage, confidence, patience and fidelity will ensure them a meed of immortal fame, with the
DEFENDER OF AMERICA.

every friend to his country, rally around its standard. Let its virtuous, firm, and independent administration, while it diffuses happiness at home, be the strong buckler to guard us against our foes abroad. Let our confidence in its integrity, inkindle daily as danger approximates. Sanction the laws by an obedience, equally prompt and cordial. Discountenance a spirit of disunion, that spirit which is an element of perdition. Let us guard our own rights, by soundly informing ourselves, in what they consist, and protecting the government in securing them to us. Discourage those who calumniate and revile the legal authorities. Teach them, with the energy of a soul devoted to its country, that the speculative errors of our own government, (if such existed) have no relation to the outrages of France. Fraught with danger from without, the present crisis is ill adapted to the criti-

eisms of extreme jealousy of our government. Such things, embolden and multiply those enemies which lurk in the vitals of America. Bear on the mind, that the successes of France in Europe, have been uniformly composed of force, co-operating with her own treasonable arts and address among her foes.

Unhappily we have much reason to fear, this favorite system, is in progress even in our own country. Where it reflects light on the purposes she contemplates, while it paves the way to facilitate their completion. Oppose to it, virtue, vigilance, decision and fidelity. These will exterminate from among us, this fore and distressing enemy which rankles at the heart ; and learn that insidious nation, that it is not among this enlightened people, she will find the means to dupe them into their own destruction.

Thus, being united in sentiment and interest, we shall acquire under God, the control of our own fortunes, and none shall make us afraid. Then,

“ Blow ye winds,”

“ Ye waves ! ye thunders roll your tempest on !”

“ Shake, ye old pillows of the marble sky !”

“ Till all its orbs, and all its worlds of fire,”

“ Be loosened from their seats ; yet still serene,”

We'd look “ unconquer'd down upon the wreck,”

“ And ever stronger as the storms advance,”

“ Firm through the closing ruin hold our way,”

And bid the “ fathers of our country, hail”

The glorious day, which saw Columbia FREE.

F I N I S.