

The last WORDS
and dying Speech of

Levi Ames,

Executed at Boston, Octo.
21, 1773, for Burglary.

Taken from his own Mouth, and published at his Desire, as a solemn Warning to all, more particularly young People.

There is a Way that seemeth right unto a Man, but the End thereof are the Ways of Death. Prov. 14. 12.

LEVI AMES, aged twenty-one years, was born in Groton, in New-England, of a credible family, my father's name was Jacob Ames, who died when I was but two years old. I am the first of the family who was ever disgraced. My prevailing sin, and that for which I am soon to suffer death was *Thieving*; to practice which I began early and pursued it constantly; except at certain intervals when my conscience made me uneasy, and I resolv'd to do so no more.

My first thefts were small. I began this awful practice by stealing a couple of eggs, then a jack knife, after that some chalk. But being detected and reproved for the crime, I thought to repent and reform; but found myself powerfully urged to repeat this wickedness, by the temptations of the devil; with which I again complied. My tender Mother seeing me take such horrid courses, and dreading the consequences, often entreated and pleaded with me to turn from my evil ways, and I as often assured her that I would. Had I followed her good advice and council, I should never have come to this shameful and untimely end. But I am now made to feel the anger of God against me, for my disobedience to my parent! God will not let disobedient children pass unpunished.

Having got from under my mother's eye, I still went on in my old way of stealing; and not being permitted to live with the person I chose to live with, I ran away from my master, which opened a wide door to temptation, & helped on my ruin; for being indolent in temper, and having no honest way of supporting myself, I robbed others of their property.

About this time I stole a gun at Woburn, from *Jehiah Richardson*, and a large silver spoon from one *Mr. Howard* of the same town. I then broke open the shop of *Mr. Edward Hammond*, in the county of Plymouth, and took out a piece of broad-cloth, and some money. I stole between 20 and 30 dollars from another person, whose name I have forgot. I broke open the shop of *Mr. Jonas Cutler*, of Groton, and took from him a good piece of broad-cloth, a quantity of silk mitts, and several pieces of silk handkerchiefs. I also stole a quantity of money from *Jonathan Hammond* of *Walham*, and a hat from *Jonas Dix*, Esq; of the same place; and when in goal at Cambridge, I stole a silver spoon which was brought from *Mr. Bradish* the goal-keeper for me to eat with. I robbed the *Rev. Mr. Clark* of *Lexington*, of a tankard, twelve tea spoons, one large tin, a proper box, and two pair of sugar tongs. I also stole from *Mr. Knib* at *Natick*, two coats and jackets, with which I dressed myself when I came to *Boston*; I gave *John Buttle* 20 dollars to make up the matter with *Mr. Knib*, being part of the money I stole from *Mr. Hammond* of *Walham*. I stole ten or eleven dollars from *Mr. Symonds* of *Lexington* whose son in law, *Mr. Meriam*, while I was in prison, informed me where the money was and how to get it, but he never received any of it; I supposed he gave me this information through envy against his father in law, thro' whose means he was then confined for debt. I stole a pair of silver buckles, and a pair of turned pumps out of a pair of fiddle bags at *Leason's* tavern in *Waltham*; the buckles were marked *L. D.* which I delivered to a man at *Marlborough*, a blacksmith, to make up with him for some stockings I took from him; his name I do not remember. I visited a padlock and entered the cellar of a *Minister's* house at *Marlborough*, I then went up the cellar stairs, where I made in order to get some victuals. I then took some taken (sundry) articles off of linen, hedges, fences, butters, apple-trees, grafts, &c. but cannot recollect the names. The Cook and I stole two great coats and sold them. I have left three shirts and several pair of stockings at *Scipio Burnam's* at *Newbury-Port*; I then went by the name of *Isaac Lawrence*. I stole an axe out of a cart and hid it in a stone wall between *Watertown* and *Boston*, (the night before I took the money from *Mr. Hammond*) in *Little Cambridge*, near to *Mr. Dana's* tavern, there I left it with a design to sell it when I came back. I broke open the house of *Mr. Rice* in *Marlborough*, on the Lord's day, while the people were gone to public worship, having been advised to it by *Daniel Cook*, when we were in *Concord Goal*; was taken in the house, and returned the things to the Owner.

Some time last fall I stole *The Cook* who told me he had seven pounds of plate hid, viz. a tankard, a number of table spoons, and a soup ditto; these he dug up while I was with him; we carried them away from that place and hid them in a stone wall, near a house, close to the sign of the bull on *Princeton* road, but he never informed me where he got them, or how he came by them; he offered me half if I would dispose of them, but I was afraid to do it.

Last Year an Irishman who called his name *Thomas Smith*, of middle stature, much marked with the small-pox, told me that he was of a watch which was taken from his excellency some time ago; and I suspected that he was the person who stole it, because he said he knew the governor's house well: He also assured me that his excellency had a considerable quantity of money in the house, and asked me to go with him to get it. I denied, knowing that the governor had many servants, which I urged as a reason why I would not join him. He said he had one to assist him, whose name he would not tell me, but I would be one of the party. He farther declared that he should go well armed with swords and pistols. Upon this I absolutely refused, because I never thought of murdering any man, in the midst of all my scenes of thieving. He thought to prevail on me by telling me that there was a chest of dollars in the house, but I would not go with them.

In the same month (June) I lodged at a tavern in *Killingsley*, or *Pemphrey* in *Concord* government, on the Lord's day, where I sat and drank and went off without paying. A few evenings after I returned, shovled up the window, and put in my hand and stole a box with a japhane, some small change, a pair of knee buckles, and sleeve buttons, for which

I was apprehended, confided the fact, returned the goods, was punished and set at liberty. The same night as above I took a horse out of *Killingsley*, and rode him down to the county of *Worcester*, where I broke a shop open about day-light, and took a quantity of coppers, and a remnant of satin: The owners have got them again. I also robbed a baker at *Rhode-Island* of a quantity of coppers which I found in three bakers, and spent them.

As for *Arwood*, in company with whom I committed that theft for which I am soon to die, my acquaintance with him began in the following manner—I was standing at a countryman's cart, in the market at *Boston*, asking the price of a turkey; *Arwood* came up to me, and we fell into conversation, he asked me to walk with him to *Beacon-Hill*, which I did—We asked each other about the place of resort. I told him that I lodged at *Capt. Dickey's*. He said his money was all spent except one copper, which he had in a snuff-box. I asked him where he belonged? He said he was born in an Island in the West-Indies, and that his parents lived in *Rhode-Island*. I asked him where he had been? he told me that he lately came from *Portsmouth*. I told him that since he had no money, if he would go with me to my lodgings, I would give him some dinner—I asked him what he would do with some silver plate, if he had any to dispose of? He told me he knew of a goldsmith who would take it, because he had sold some to him before. I told him I knew where there was some, and if he would go with me, we would get it; to which he consented. We then went to *Menotomy*, and found it hid in a stone wall. We kept it about us till next Morning. He told me he knew of a *Vendee* master in *Bylen*, with whom he had lived, who had a large sum of money by him, and if I would join him, we would get it. I asked who it was; he said *Mr. Bicker*. We accordingly agreed to steal it. At night, after he had slept, we went to a joiner's shop, into which I entered and took out three chizels; we then went to *Mr. Bicker's* House, and on the way were hailed by a watchman, to whom we answered *Friends*. Having come to *Mr. Bicker's* house we found a front chamber window open; we pulled off our shoes, and *John Arwood* with my assistance climbed up to the window, and entered the house, and opened the doors for me; we then went together to the desk, which we took open with the chizels. *Arwood* pulled out the first drawer, and told there was small change in it, which was all he could find. As he was going away, I pulled out another drawer, in which I found a bag of silver coin.—After that we came out, and went to fox-hill, near the powder-house, there we hid the plate, which we had kept in our pockets while we were at supper, and when we entered *Mr. Bicker's* house. The small change in silver, which *Arwood* took were equally divided, tho' the gold which *Arwood* had then secreted I knew nothing of, nor did he ever give me any of it. Before sunset I saw him at *Mr. Bell's*, when he informed me that a warrant was out for me; he went with me to *Winifred*, and advised me to go over the ferry, promising to meet me at *Portsmouth* the Wednesday following at the house in which he was taken. I returned again to *Boston* to see if any of the cloths were done, which I had bespoke; on Saturday I was taken by *Mr. Bicker* and committed to goal, and saw *Arwood* no more till I saw him in the prison yard after he was apprehended.

Thus have I given an account of that shocking manner in which I have siled up a short life, and of which I am now ashamed. May God forgive me my dreadful wickedness committed both against him, and many worthy men, of whom also I would ask forgiveness, it being not in my power to make restitution, which if it was I would readily do it. I also forgive from my heart *Joseph Arwood*, who swore on my trial that I entered the house of *Mr. Bicker* first, and let him in, when he knows in his conscience, that he entered first and let me in. I die in charity with all mankind. But though I lived such a wicked life, it was not without some severe checks of conscience. For after I had stolen, I have been so distressed at times, as to be obliged to go back, and throw the stolen goods at the door, or into the yard, that the Owners might have them again.—And not long before I was taken for this last robbery, I passed the gallows on *Boston* with some stolen goods under my arm, when my conscience terr'd me, and I tho't I should surely die there, if I did not leave off the course of life. What I then feared, is now come upon me.

Having thus given an account of my dreadful life of wickedness, I would also mention the manner in which I have conducted, and my mind has been exercised during my confinement in goal, since the awful sentence of DEATH was pass'd upon me.

At first I had secret hopes of escape; that I should by some means get out of prison. When I saw that it was impossible, I endeavoured to reconcile myself as well as I could. My conscience made me uneasy. I thought I had been so wicked that I should certainly go to Hell.—And when I considered how short my time was, I knew I could not do good works to go to Heaven. To Hell then I was sure I should go.—And I seemed to have such an awful sight of Hell and the Grave that I was very much terrified indeed—I then took to drinking strong liquor in order to drown my sorrow. But this would not do.—I left that off and took to reading my bible; my conscience became so uneasy, that I could have no rest, O! a wounded conscience who can bear? I tried to pray; but it came into my mind that the prayers of the wicked would not be heard. Yet I could not help crying for mercy. I was at times ready to despair of the mercy of God. But the ministers who visited me, assured me that the blood of Christ was sufficient to cleanse me from all sin, which gave me a little encouragement to go on crying to God.—

I now began to understand something of that law of God which I had broken, as condemning me for the wickedness of my heart as well as life—I saw that I was undone, that my heart and life was bad beyond all account. I saw that if God should damn me a thousand times he would be just, and I should have nothing to say. In this condition I was a week before the time first fixed for my execution—The loss of body and soul made me tremble; though I could not freely tell all that I felt to all who came to see me. I thought that if I should be executed in this condition, I must be dragged like a bullock to the slaughter.

But God's name be blessed forever; that on Friday evening, the 8th instant I turned over a little book which was put into my hands, in which I saw, *Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will pour out my spirit upon you, &c.* This at once surprised me. I knew that I wanted this new heart; and could not help looking on this as God's gracious promise to me. I tho't that as I knew God could not lie, if I would not believe this, I would be deceiving myself: my mind at once felt easy. I now saw that I had sinned against God all my life with as much enmity, as ever I killed a flock, which I always hated.

After this I had, and now have such a view of the way of salvation by Christ, that I felt and do feel my full return from him as my only hope of salvation. Since which I have found grace of him, and anger against myself for sin, and a desire to be made better. At times the terrors of death seem to be removed; at other times I am full of fears lest I should deceive myself. Yet I cannot but hope that Christ has freely pardoned me. On him I desire to rest, living and dying; and to give him all the praise.

And now as a dying man I mention the following things, viz.

1. To keep your doors and windows shut on evenings, and secured to prevent temptation. And by no means use small locks on the outside one of which I have trusted with ease when tempted to steal. Also not to leave linen or cloth out at night, which have often proved a snare to me. Travellers take care to secure their fiddle bags, boots, &c. in chambers where they lodge.

2. Parents and masters I entreat who have any concern for, or affection with children, to have an eye over their actions; and to use special care for their precious and immortal souls.

3. All persons whether old or young, who may see this paper, speak as it were by a poor, dying, sinful man, now bound in chains, and who has but a short space of time before he must launch into an endless eternity. Guard against every temptation to sin. If at any time you are tempted to do any thing like the poor soul who now speaks to you, pray to God for strength to resist the temptation, and for repentance for your past sins.

The y with more especially I would solemnly caution against the sins which they are most inclin'd.—Such as bad Women, who have undone many, and by whom I also have suffered much; the unlawful intercourse with them I have found by sad experience, leading to almost every sin.—I also warn them to guard against the first temptation to disobedience to parents. Had I regarded the many kind intreaties and reproofs of my tender Mother, I had never come to this shameful and untimely death.

Profane cursing and swearing I also bear my dying testimony against, as a horrid sin, and very provoking to God.

Nor must I omit to mention gaming, to which young people are much inclin'd, and which at this day prevails to the ruin of many. For when a youth hath gam'd away all his money, he will be tempted even to steal from his mother or parents, in order to get at it again. Besides, this sin leads to drunkenness, another dreadful vice.

There is one sin more that I must warn all persons against, and that is, a profanation of the Lord's day, and of public worship. O! how many such days have I despised, and while others have been engaged in serving God, I have been employed in wickedness, which I now confess with grief of heart.

4. I have one request more to make from the borders of the grave, a compliance with which earnestly desired by a poor dying mortal. I would be, That no person, old or young, would ever reflect on my poor dear Mother, or Brother, or any of my relations, on account of my shameful and untimely death, who could not prevent my wickedness, and have trouble too much to be borne, by the life I have lived, and the death I am to die.

I desire sincerely to thank all the good ministers of the town, who have taken great pains with me ever since the sentence of death was pass'd upon me, to convince me of my unhappy situation, of my lost and undone condition by nature, of my aggravating sins by practice, and of the infinitely free rich grace and mercy of God, only thro' the merits and mediation of my dear Saviour Jesus Christ. I also thank all the good people both of town and country, who, I have reason to think, have offered many prayers at the throne of grace for me. I also thank *Mr. Otis*, the goal-keeper and his family, who have all been very kind to me during my confinement in goal.

And now may Jesus Christ forgive me, the worst of sinners, as he did the thief on the cross, if he does not, I am forever undone in just of God. Amen, *JOSEPH OTIS*, Deft. Goal-Keeper.

Levi Ames.