

The last WORDS and Dying SPEECH of LEVI AMES,

Who was Executed at BOSTON, on Thursday the 21st Day of October, 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.

I 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 executed. My prevailing sin, and that for which I am soon to suffer death, was *Theft*; to practice which I began early and pursued it constantly; except at certain intervals when my conscience made me uneasy, and I resolved 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 facing 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 counsel, 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 fell 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 mother, which opened a wide door to temptation, and helped on my ruin; for being insolent in temper, and having no honest way of supporting myself, I robbed others of their property.

About this time I stole a gun *from Josiah 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 twenty and thirty dollars from another person, whose name I have forgot. I broke open the shop of *Mr. Joses Cutler*, of *Groton*, and took from him a good piece of broad-cloth, a quantity of milk mits, and several pieces of silk handkerchiefs. I also stole a quantity of money from *Jonathan Hammond*, of *Watson*, and a hat from *James Dix*, Esq; of the same place; and when in goal at *Cambridge*, I stole a silver spoon which was brought from *Mr. Deane*, a gold-keeper, for me to eat with. I robbed the *Rev. Mr. Clark* of *Lexington*, of a tankard, twelve tea spoons, one large ditto, a pepper-box, and two pair of sugar tongs. I also stole from *Mr. Keith* at *Natick*, two coats and jackets, with which I dressed myself when I came to *Boston*. I gave *John Battle* twenty dollars to make up the matter with *Mr. Keith*, being part of the money I stole from *Mr. Hammond* of *Watson*. I stole ten or eleven dollars from *Mr. Symonds* of *Lexington*, whose son in law *Mr. Merwin*, 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 thro' 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 *Leeson's* tavern in *Watson*; 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 twisted a paltock and entered the cellar of a Minister's house at *Marlborough*, I then went up the cellar stairs, lighted a candle in order to get some victuals. I have several times taken sundry articles out of lines, hedges, fences, bushes, apple-trees, grass, &c. but cannot recollect the owners. *Thos. Cook* and I stole two great coats and fold 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 *Jesse Lawrence*. I stole an ax out of a cart and hid it in a stone wall between *Mr. Marten* and *Bygon*, (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 fill it when I came back. I broke open the house of *Mr. Rice* in *Marlborough*, on the Lords day, while the people were gone to public worship, having been advertised to by *Daniel Cook*, when we were in *Concord*; I was taken in the house, and returned the things to the owner.

Some time after I fell in with *Thos. Cook* who told me he had seven shillings he hid, viz. a tankard, a number of table spoons, and a silver ditto; these he dug up while I was with him; we were a way from that place and hid them in a stone wall, near close to the sign of the bull on *Marlborough* road, but he 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 knew 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 in my fervours, 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 unless I would be one of the party. He said he declared that he should go with *swords and pistols*. Upon this I absolutely refused, because I never thought of murdering any man, in the midst of all my scene 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 I stole a silver tankard at *Leeson's* Tavern in *Boston*, and a paltock at *Leeson's* Tavern in *Boston*, and a paltock at *Leeson's* Tavern in *Boston*.

eat and drank and went off without paying. A few evenings after, I returned shovelled up the window, and put in my hand and stole a box with a johanannes, some small change, a pair of knee buckles, and three buttons, for which I was apprehended, and sent to the jail, returned the goods, was punished and set at liberty. The same night as above I took a horse out of *Killingly*, 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 baskets, and spent them.

As for *Atwood*, 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. *Atwood* 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. Dick'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 told him to him before. I told him I knew where there was some, and if he would go with me, we would get it; so which he consented. We then went to *Marlborough*, and found it hid in a stone wall. We kept it about us till next Morning. He told me he knew of a Vendue master in *Boston*, 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 we had slept, we went to a joiner's shop, into which I entered and took out three chisels; 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 *Atwood* with my assistance climbed up to the window, and entered the house, and opened the door for me; we then went together to the desk, which we broke open with the chisels. *Atwood* pulled out the first drawer, and said 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 *Atwood* took were equally divided, tho' the gold which *Atwood* 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 *Weymouth*, and advised me to go over the ferry, promising to meet me at *Portsmouth* the Wednesday following at the house to which he was taken. I then went again to *Boston* to see if any of my clothes were done, which I had bespoke; on Saturday I was taken by *Mr. Bicker*, and committed to goal, and *Atwood* 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 filled 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 so if I also forgive from my lips *Josiah Atwood*, who swore on my trial that he 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 did 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 in *Boston* neck with some stolen goods under my arm, when my conscience terribly smote me, and I tho't I should surely die there, if I did not leave off this course of life. What I then fixed, 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, thro' the awful sentence of DEATH, was put 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 view of Hell and the Grave, that I was very much terrified indeed—I then took to heart my first prayer in order to draw my sorrow. But this would not do—I felt that off and took to reading my bible; my conscience became so uneasy, that I could have no rest, O! I 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 life. I was encouraged 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 were 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 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. 30. 25, 27. *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put upon 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; and I tho't that as I knew God could not lie, if I would not believe this, I would believe nothing; my mind at once felt easy. I now saw that I had sinned against God all my life with as much envy, as ever I killed a snake; 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 soul rest on him as my only hope of salvation. Since which I have found peace of mind, anger against myself for sin, and a desire to be made holy. At times the sorrows of death seem to be removed; at other times I am full of fears lest I should decline 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 well to prevent temptation. And by no means to use small locks on the outside, one or which I have twisted with ease when tempted to steal. Alas! how many have been seduced at night, which have often proved a snare to me. Travellers I advise to secure their saddle bags, boots, &c. in the chambers where they lodge.

2. Parents and masters I entreat who have any concern for the connection with children, to have an eye over their actions; and to take special care for their pious and immortal souls.

3. All Persons whether old or young, who may see these lines, I hope 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; I guess 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, earnestly pray to God for strength to resist the temptation, as well as for repentance for your past sins.

The youth more especially I would solemnly caution against the vices to which they are most inclined.—Such as *bad company*, 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 against the first temptation to *disobedience to parents*. Had I regarded the many kind intreaties and reproaches 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 inclined, and which at this day prevails to the ruin of many. For when a youth hath gained away all his money, he will be tempted even to steal from his master or parents, in order to get 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 *preparation of the Lord's day, and of public worship*. Oh! 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. That one request more to mankind from the borders of the grave, compliance with which is earnestly desired by a poor dying mortal; which is, 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 unbecomingly death, who could prevent my wickedness, and have trodden so 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 put upon me, to convince me of my unhappy situation, of my lost and undone condition by nature, of my aggravations 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 be good people both of town and country, who, I have reason to think, have offered up many prayers at the throne of grace for me. I also thank *Mr. Dorr*, the goal-keeper and his family, who have been very kind to me during my confinement in Goal.

And now may I, *Josiah Christ* forgive me, the worst of sinners, as he did the thief on the cross, if he does not, I am forever undone, in soul and body!

Attest, *Josiah Christ*, *Levi Ames*.