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The Tvvo Last Speeches of Thomas Wentvorth, Late Earle of Strafford, and Deaputy of Ireland. the One in the Tower, the Other of the Scaffold on Tower-Hill, May the 12th. 1641

Strafford, Thomas Wentworth, Earl of, 1593-1641

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THE
TWO LAST SPEECHES OF
Thomas Wentworth,
Late *EARLE of Strafford*, and Deaputy of
IRELAND.

The one in the Tower, the other on the
SCAFFOLD on Tower-Hill,
May the 12th. 1641.



London Printed, 1641.

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His speech in the Tower to the Lords, before he went to execution.

Right Honourable, and the rest, you are now come to convey me to my death, I am willing to dye, which is a thing no more than all our Predecessors have done, and a debt that our Posterity must in their due time discharge, which since it can be no way avoyded, it ought the lesse to be feared; for that which is common to all, ought not to be intollerable to any: It is the Law of Nature, the tribute of the flesh, a remedy from all worldly cares and troubles; and to the truly penitent, a perfect path to blessednesse. And there is but one death, though severall wayes unto it: mine is not naturall; but enforced by the Law and Iustice: It hath beene said that the Lawes vex only the meaner sort of people, but the mightie are able to withstand them: it is not so with mee, for to the Law I submit my selfe, and confesse that I receive nothing but justice: for he that politickly intendeth good to a Common weale, may be called a just man, but he that practiseth either for his owne profit, or any other sinister ends, may bee well termed a delinquent person; neither is delay in punishment any privledge for pardon. And moreover, I ingenuously confesse with *Cicero*, That the death of the bad is the safety of the good that be alive.

Let no man trust either in the favour of his Prince, the friendship and consanguinity of his Peeres, much lesse in his owne wisdom and knowledge, of which I ingenuously confesse I have beene too confident. Kings, as they are men before God, so they are Gods before men, and I may say with a great man once in this Kingdome, *Had I strived to obey my God as faithfully, as I sought to honour my King diligently, I had stood, and not fallen.* Most happie and fortunate is that Prince, who is as much for his justice feared, as for his goodnesse beloved: For the greater that Princes are in power above other, the more they ought in vertue to excell other; and such is the Royall Sovereigne whom I late served.

For my Peeres, the correspondence that I had with them during my prosperity, was to me very delightfull and pleasing, and here they have commiserated my ruine, I have plentifully found, who (for the most generous of them) I may boldly say, though they have detested the fact, yet they have pitied the person delinquent; the first in their loyaltie, the last in their Chastity: ingenuously confessing, that never any sub-
ject,

fect, or Peere of my rank, had ever that helpe of Counsell, that benefit of time, or a more free and legall tryall than I have had: in the like wherof, none of my precessors hath had so much favour from his Prince, so much sufferance from the people; in which I comprehend the understanding Commons, not the many headed monster, Multitude: But I have offended, am sentenced, and must now suffer.

And for my too much confidence in my supposed wisdom and knowledge, therein have bin the most deceived: for he is wise to himselfe, that knowes by others faults to correct his owne offences: to be truly wise is to be Secretaries to our selves; for it is mere folly to reveale our intimate thoughts to strangers: wisdom is the most precious Gem with which the mind can bee adorned, and learning the most famous thing for which a man ought to be esteemed, and true wisdom teacheth us to do well, as to speake well: in the first I have failed, for *the wisdom of man is foolishnesse with God.*

For knowledge, it is a thing indifferent both to good and evill, but the best knowledge is for a man to know himselfe; hee that doth so shall esteeme of himselfe but little, for he considereth from whence he came, and wherto he must go, he regardeth not the vain pleasures of this life, he exalteth God, and strives to live in his feare; but he that knoweth not himselfe, is wilfull in his owne wayes, unprofitable in his life, unfortunate in his death, and so am I. But the reason why I sought to attaine unto it, was this: I have read that he that knoweth not that which he ought to know, is a Bruit beast amongst men; he that knoweth more than he ought to know, is a man amongst beasts: but he that knoweth all that may be known, is a God amongst men. To this I much aspired, in this I much failed; *Vanity of vanities, all is but vanity.*

I have heard the people clamour and cry out, saying, That through my occasion the times are bad, I wish that when I am dead they may proove better: most true it is, that there is at this time a great storme impending (God in his mercy avert it.) And since it is my particular lot, like *Jonah*, to be cast into the sea, I shall thinke my life well spent, to appease Gods wrath, and satisfie the peoples malice.

O what is eloquence more than aire? fashioned with an articulate and distinct sound, when it is a speciall vertue to speake little and well, and silence is oft the best oratory; for fooles in their dumbnesse may be accounted wise: It hath power to make a good matter seeme bad, and a bad cause appeare good: but mine was to me unprofitable, and like the Cypresse trees, which are great and tall, but altogether without fruit.

What is honour? but the first step to disquietnesse, and power is still

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waited on by envie, neither hath it any priviledge against infamy. It is held to be the chiefe part of honour, for a man to joyne to his office and calling, curtesie and affability, commiseration and pity: for thereby he draweth to him with a kind of compulsion, the hearts of the multitude. But that was the least part of my study, which now makes me call to mind, that the greater the persons are in authoritie, the sooner they are catcht in any delinquency, and their smallest crimes are thought to be Capitall, the smallest spot seems great in the finest linnen, and the least flaw is soonest found in the richest Diamond. But high and Noble spirits finding themselves wounded, grieve not so much at their own paine and perplexitie, as at the derision and scoffs of their enemy: but for mine own part, though I might have many in my life, I hope to find none in my death.

Amongst other things which pollute and contaminate the minds of great spirits, there is none more heinous than Ambition, which is seldom accompanied with Avarice: Such to possesse their ends, care not to violate the Lawes of Religion, and Reason, and to breake the bonds of Modesty and equity, with the nearest tyes of Consanguinity, and Amity; of which as I have bin guilty, so I crave at Gods hands forgiveness. It is a Maxime in Philosophy, that ambitious men can be never good Counsellours to Princes; the desire of having more is common to great Lords, and a desire of Rule a great cause of their Ruine.

My Lords, I am now the hopelesse President, may I be to you all an happy example: For Ambition devoureth gold, and drinketh bloud, and climbeth so high by other mens heads, that at the length in the fall it breaketh its own neck: therefore it is better to live in humble content, than in high care and trouble: For more precious is want with honesty, than wealth with infamy: For what are we but meere Vapours, which in a serene Element ascend high, and upon an insatiable, like Smoake vanish into nothing: or like ships without Pilots, tost up and downe upon the Seas by contrary winds and tempests. But the good husbandman thinkes better of those eares of Corne, which bow down, and grow crooked, than those which are straight and upright, because he is assured to finde more store of graine in the one than in the other. This all men know, yet of this, how few make use: The defect whereof must be now my paine: may my suffering prove to others profit.

For what hath now the favour of my Prince, the familiarity with my Peeres, the volubility of a tongue, the strength of my memory, my learning, or knowledge, my honours, or Offices, my power, and potency, my riches, and treasure, (all these the speciall gifts, both of Nature, and Fortune) what have all these profited me? Blessings I acknowledge.

knowledge, though by God bestowed upon man, yet not all of them together upon many: yet by the Divine providence, the most of them met in me: of which had I made happy use, I might still have flourisht, who now am forc'd immaturly to fall.

I now could wish, (but that *utinam* is too late) that God with his outward goodnes towards me had so commixed his inward grace, that I had chused the *medium* path, neither inclining to the right hand, nor deviating to the left; but like *Icarus* with my waxen wings, fearing by too low a flight to moysten them with the Waves: I soared too high, and too neare the Sun, by which they being melted; I ayming at the highest, am precipitated to the lowest: and am made a wretched prey to the Waters: But I who before built my house upon the sand, have now settled my hopes upon the Rock my Saviour: by whose only merits my sole trust is, that whatsoever becomes of my body, yet in this bosome my soule may be Sanctuaried.

Nimrod would have built a Tower to reach up to Heaven, and cald it *Babel*; but God turned it to the confusion of Languages, and dissipation of the people. *Pharaoh* kept the Children of *Israel* in Bondage and after having freed them, in his great pride would have made them his prey; but God gave them a dry and miraculous passage, and *Pharaoh* and his host a watry Sepulcher. *Belshazzar* feasted his Princes and Prostitutes, who drunke healths in the Vessels taken from the Temple, but the hand of God writ upon the wall, *Mene. Tekel. Phoras*, and that night before morning was both his kingdome and life taken from him: Thus God lets men goe on a great while in their owne devices, but in the end it proves their owne ruine and destruction, never suffering them to effect their desired purposes: therefore let none presume upon his power, glory in his greatnesse, or be too confident in his riches: These things were written for our Instruction, of which the living may make use, the dying cannot; but wit and unfruitfull wisdom are the next neighbours to folly.

There can bee no greater vanity in the world, than to esteeme the world, which regardeth no man; and to make slight account of God who greatly respecteth all men; and there can be no greater folly in man, than by much Travell to increase his goods, and pamper his body, and in the interim with vaine delights and pleasures, to lose his soule. It is a great folly in any man to attempt a bad beginning, in hope of good ending; and to make that proper to one, which was before common to all, is meere indiscretion, and the beginning of discord, which I positively wish may end in this my punishment.

O how small a proportion of earth will containe my body, when

my high minde could not be confined within the spacious compasse of two Kingdoms? But my houre draweth on, and I conclude with the Psalmist, not ayming at any one man in particular, but speaking for all in generall: *How long will you Judges be corrupted? how long will yee cease to give true Judgement? &c.* Blessed is the man that doth not walke in the Councell of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornfull, therefore they shall not stand in the Iudgement, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous, &c.

About the houre of 12. a Clocke the aforesaid Lord of *Strafford* was conveyed to the Scaffold on Tower-Hill, where was a Court of Guard made by the severall Companies of Souldiers of the City of *London*, and the hamlets of the Tower on each side as he passed to the Scaffold: before marched the Marshalls men to make way, then the Sheriffes of *Londons* Officers with their Halberds; after them the Kings Guard, or warders of the Tower; Next came one of his Gentlemen, bare headed, in mourning Habit, the Lord *Strafford* following him clad in blacke cloath, with divers others in the same habit, which were his attendance; then the Lord Bishop of *Armagh*, and other good Divines; with the Sheriffes of *London*, and divers honourable parsonages.

when he came to the Scaffold, he there shewed himselfe on each side in full view to all people, and made this short speech, with as much alacrity of Spirit, as a mortall man could expresse, viz.



The E A R L E of Straffords last Speech on the Scaffold.

MY Lord Primate of *Ireland*, (and my Lords, and the rest of these Gentlemen) it is a very great comfort for me to have your Lordship by mee this day, in regard I have beene knowne to you along time, I should be very glad to obtaine so much silence, as to be heard a few words, but I doubt I shall not, my Lord. I come hither by the good will and pleasure of Almighty God, to pay that last debt I owe unto sinne, which is death, and by the blessing of that God to rise againe through the merits of Christ Iesus to eternall glory: I wish I had beene private, that I might have beene heard, my Lord, if I might be so much beholding to you, that I might use a few words, I should take it for a very great courtesie: my Lord, I come hither to submit to that judgement which hath past against me, I doe it with a very quiet and contented mind, I doe freely forgive all the world, a forgiveness that is not spoken from the teeth outward



The trueſt relation of the Earle of
 Saraffonds Speech on the Scaffold on

Tower-hill before he was belicaded,

May 12. 1641.

*Together with his deportment before and at the end of
 his execution.*

MY Lord Primate of Ireland, and my
 Lords, and the rest of these noble
 Gentlemen, It is a great comfort to
 me to have your Lordships by me this
 day, because I have beene knowne to
 you a long time, and I now desire to be heard a few
 words:

I come here my Lords to pay my last debt to
 sinne, which is death; and through the mercies of
 God, to rise againe in eternall glory.

My Lords, if I may use a few words, I shall take
 it as a great courtesie from you: I am come here my
 Lords, to submit to the judgement that is passed a-
 gainst me, I doe it with a very quiet and contented
 mind; I do freely forgive all the world, a forgiveness
 not from the teeth outwards (as they say) but from
 my heart; I speak it in the presence of Almighty
 God, before whom I stand, that there is not a dis-
 A 2 pleasing

pleasing thought that ariseth in me against any man; I thanke God, I say truly, my conscience bears me witness, that in all the honour I had to serve his Majesty, I had not any intention in my heart, but did aime at the joint and individuall prosperity of the King and his people, although it be my ill hap to be misconstrued: I am not the first man that hath suffered in this kinde, it is a common portion that befalls men in this life, righteous judgement shall be hereafter; here we are subject to errors and misjudging one another.

One thing I desire that I might be heard, and do hope that for Christian charities sake I shall bee beleaved: That I was so farre from being against Parliaments, that I alwaies I did thinke Parliaments in England to be the happy constitutions of the Kingdome and Nation, and the best meanes under God, to make the King and his people happy: As for my death I doe heere acquit all the world; and beseech God to forgive them: In particular, I am very glad his Majesty conceives me not meriting so severe and heavy a punishment, as the utmost execution of this sentence, I doe infinitely reioice in it, and in the mercy of his, and doe beseech God to returne to him the same, that he may finde mercy when hee hath most need of it. I wish this Kingdome all prosperity and happinesse in the world; I did it living, and now dying it is my wish.

And I professe heartily, and do humbly recommend it to you, and wish that every man would lay

lay his hand on his heart, and consider seriously, whether the beginning of the peoples happinesse should be written in letters of blood. I feare they are in a wrong way: I desire Almighty God, that no one drop of my blood rise up in judgement against them, I have but one word more, and that is for my Religion.

My Lo: I doe professe my selfe seriously; faithfully, and truly, to bee an obedient sonne of the Church of England: in that Church I was borne and bred, in that Religion I have lived, and now in that I dye; prosperity and happinesse be ever to it.

It hath beene said I was inclined to Popery: if it be an objection worth the answering, let me say truly from my heart, that since the time that I was 21. yeares of age, unto this day, going on 49. years, I never had thought or doubt of the truth of this Religion, nor had ever any the boldnesse to suggest to me the contrary (to my best remembrance,) & so being reconciled to the mercies of Christ Iesus my Saviour, into whose bosome I hope shortly to be gathered, to enjoy eternall happinesse, which shall never have end. I desire heartily to be forgiven of every man, if any rash or unadvised word hath passed, and desire all your prayers; and so my Lo: farewell, and farewell all things in this world.

The Lord strengthen my faith, and give me confidence and assurance in the merits of Christ Iesus, I trust in God wee shall all meete to live eternally in heaven, and receive the accomplishment of

all happinesse; where every teare shall bee wiped from our eies, and sad thought from our hearts: And so God blesse this Kingdome, and Jesus have mercy on my soule.

Then turning himselfe about, hee saluted all the Noblemen, and tooke a solemne leave of all considerable persons on the Scaffold, giving them his hand:

And after that hee said, Gentlemen, I would say my prayers, and I intreat you all to pray with mee, and for me; then his Chaplaine laid the booke of Common praier upon the chaire before him as hee kneeled downe, on which hee praied almost a quarter of an houre; then hee praied as long or longer without a booke, and ended with the Lords praier; then standing up he spies his brother Sir *George Wentworth*, and calls him to him, and saith, brother we must part, remember me to my sister, and to my wife, and carry my blessing to my eldest sonne, and charge him from me, that hee feare God and continue an obedient sonne of the Church of England, and that he should approve himselfe a faithfull subject to the King, and tell him that he should not have any private grudge or revenge towards any concerning me, and bid him beware that he medle not with Church livings, for that will prove a moth & canker to him in his estate, and wish him to content himself to be a servant to his country, as a Justice of peace in his Countie, and not aiming at higher preferments; carry my blessing also to my daughters *Anne* and *Arrabella*,

outward (as they say) but from the heart; I speake it in the presence of Almighty God, before whom I stand, that there is not so much as a displeasing thought in me arising to any creature, I thanke God, I may say truly, and my conscience beares me witness, that in all my services, since I have had the honour to serve his Majesty in any employement, I never had any thing in my heart, but the joynt and individuall prosperity of King and people; if it have beene my hap to be misconstrued, it is the common proportion of us all, while we are in this life, the righteous Iudgement is hereafter; here we are subject to errour, and apt to be mis-judged one of another; there is one thing I desire to cleere my selfe of, and I am very confident, I speake with so much clearnesse, that I hope I shall have your Christian charity in the beleefe of it, I did alwaies ever thinke the Parliaments of England, were the happiest Constitutions, that any Kingdome, or any Nation lived under, and under God the meanes of making King and people happy, so far have I beene from being against Parliaments; for my death I here acquit all the world, and pray God heartily to forgive them: and in particular, my Lord Primate, I am very glad that his Majesty is pleased to conceive me, not meriting so severe and heavy a punishment as the utmost execution of this sentence; I am very glad, and infinitely rejoyce in this mercy of his, and beseech God to turne it to him, that he may find mercy when he hath most need of it; I wish this kingdome all the prosperity and happinesse in the world; I did it living, and now dying it is my wish, I doe now professe it from my heart, and doe most humbly recommend it unto every man here, and wish every man to lay his hand upon his heart, and consider seriously whither the beginning of the happinesse of a people should be written in letters of blood, I feare you are in a wrong way, and I desire Almighty God that no one drop of my blood may rise up in Iudgement against you.

My Lord of *Armagh*, I professe my selfe a Protestant, and a true and obedient Son to the *Church of England*, to that *Church* wherein I was borne and wherein I was bred; *prosperity and happinesse be ever to it*: and whereas it hath beene said that I have enclin'd to *Poperie*, if it be an objection worth answering, let me say truly, that from the time since I was one and twenty yeares of age, till this houre, now going upon nine and forty, I never had thought in my heart, to doubt of the truth of my *Religion*, nor to my best memory durst any ever profer it any kind whatsoever; and so being reconciled to the mercies of *Christ Iesus* my *Saviour*, into whose bosome I hope shortly to be gathered, to enjoy those eternall happinesse that shall never have end. I desire heartily the forgiveness of every man, both for any rash or unadvised word or deede,
and

and desire your prayers; And so my Lords farewel, farewell all things of this world, Lord strengthen my faith; give me confidence and assurance in the meritts of Christ Iesus. I desire you that you would be silent, and joyne in Prayers with me, and for me; and I trust in God that we shall all meet, and live eternally in Heaven, there to receive the accomplishment of al happinesse, where every teare shall be wiped from our eyes, and every sad thought from our hearts: And so God blesse this Kingdom and Iesus have mercy upon my Soule.



FINIS.

