

Note to Her Father, Memorial for Sir John Brydges, and Tower Inscriptions

Lady Jane Grey

Anglican · Reformation · Meditation

STROMATA 17

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INTRODUCTION

Written in the days before her execution in February 1554, these three fragments are nearly all that survives of Jane Grey's prison voice — a sixteen-year-old queen of nine days, condemned for a crown she had not sought. The note to her father (himself awaiting the block) consoles rather than reproaches; the memorial to her jailer turns a courtesy into a sermon on mortality; the Latin couplets, reportedly scratched into the Tower wall with a pin, compress Protestant resignation into epigram. Read these slowly: they are the composed last words of a young woman who had been taught to meet death by writing well about it.

#A note to her father, in a manual of prayers.# The Lord comfort your grace, and that in his word wherein all creatures only are to be comforted. And though it hath pleased God to take away two of your children: yet think not, I most humbly beseech your grace, that you have lost them; but trust that we, by leaving this mortal life, have won an immortal life. And I, for my part, as I have honoured your grace in this life, will pray for you in another life.

Your grace's humble daughter,

Jane Dudley.

#A memorial written by Jane Dudley at the request of Sir John Brydges, the Lieutenant of the Tower.#

Forasmuch as you have desired so simple a woman to write in so worthy a book, good master Lieutenant, therefore I shall as a friend desire you, and as a christian require you, to call upon God, to incline your heart to his laws, to quicken you in his way, and not to take the word of truth utterly out of your mouth. Live still to die, that by death you may purchase eternal life; and remember how the end of Methuselah, which as we read in the scriptures, was the longest liver that was of a man, died at the last. For, as the Preacher sayeth, there is a time to be born, and a time to die; and the day of death is better than the day of our birth.

Yours, as the Lord knoweth, as a friend,

Jane Dudley.

#Lines said to have been written by Jane Grey on the walls of her apartment in the Tower, with a pin.#

Non aliena putes homini quae obtingere possunt, Sors hodierna mihi, cras erit ila tibi!

Which has been translated:

To mortals' common fate thy mind resign, My lot today, tomorrow may be thine.

Deo juvante, nil nocet livor malus; Et non juvante, nil juvat labor gravis: Post tenebras, spero lucem.

Which has been translated:

Whilst God assists us, envy bites in vain, If God forsake us, fruitless all our pain — I hope for light after the darkness.

Source: <https://archive.org/details/memoirsremainsof00grey/page/5/mode/2up>

These texts are drawn from *Memoirs and Remains of Lady Jane Grey*, a compilation of her letters, prayers, disputations, and scaffold writings. The Internet Archive copy used here is available at <https://archive.org/details/memoirsremainsof00grey>. The compilation was first published in the nineteenth century; the letters to Bullinger were originally in Latin and appear here in English translation (translator unattributed in this edition). The translations are themselves pre-1900 and are public domain. Original spelling has been lightly modernised in places by the nineteenth-century editors; the texts are otherwise presented as found. No independent transcription has been made against manuscript sources.

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