

Speech to Sir William Jones upon his being called to be Lord Chief Justice of Ireland (1617)

Francis Bacon

Transcript

Norfolk Record Office, RYE 20, Item 3, ff. 1r-2r

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S[i]r Francis Bacon Lord Keeper of the great Seale of England, his speech to S[i]r William Iones Cheife Justice of the Kinges Bench in Ireland./

S[i]r William Iones The Kinges most excellent Maiesty being truly informed of yo[u]r sufficiencie every way, hath called yow by his writt now returned to the state and degree of a Sergeant at lawe, but not to stay there, but being so qualified, to serve him as his cheife Iustice of his kinges Bench in Ireland, And therefore, that which I shall say to yow must be applyed, not to yo[u]r sergeantes place, which yow take, but in passage, but to that great place, where you are to settle, And because I will not spend tyme to the delay of the busines of causes and hearinges, I will lead yow the short iourney by examples, and not the long by preceptes./

The place, that yow shall serve in hath byn fortunate to be well served in fower successions before yow, doe but take vnto yow the constancy and integrity of S[i]r Robert Gardiner, the gravity, temper and discrec[i]on of S[i]r James Lee, the quicknes industry and dispatch of S[i]r Humfry Winch, the care and affection to the co[m]mon wealth, and the prudent and politique administration of S[i]r John Denham, and yow shall need no other lessons. They were all Lincolns Inne men, as yow are: yow may have knowne then as well in their beginniges, as in their advancementes. But because yow are not to be their onely Cheife Iustice but a Counsellor of Estate, I will putt yow in mynde of the great worke now in hand, that yow may doe accordingly vnto it./

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Ireland is the last ex filijs Europe, which hath come in, and hath byn reclaymed from desolation, and a desert in many places to population and plantation, and from salvage and barbarous customes to humanity and civility. This is the kinges worke in cheife: It is his garland of heroicall vertue and felicity denyed to his progenitors, and reserved to his tymes. The worke is not yet conducted to p[er]fection, but it is in fayre advance, and this I will say confidently, That if God blesse that kingdome with peace and Iustice no vsurer is so sure in seven yeares space to double his principall with interest and interest, as that kingdome is within the same tyme to double the rest and principall thereof, yea and p[er]happs to treble it, So as that kingdome which once within theis twenty yeares wise men were wont to doubt, whether they should wish it to be in a Poole, is like now almost to become a garden and a younger sister to great Brittain, And therefore yow must sett downe with yo[u]rselfe not onely to be a iust governor, and a good cheife Iustice, as if it were in England, but vnder the King and the deputy, you are to be a maister builder and maister planter and Reducer of Ireland: To which end I will trouble you at this tyme but with three directions./

1: The first is, that yow have an especiall care of the three plantac[i]ons, That of the North, which is in part acted, that of wixford, which is now in distraction, and that of long Efford

and Kellam, which is now in Survey. And take this from mee, That the bane of a plantation is, when the vndertakers

or planters

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or planters make such hast to a little Mechanicall present profitt, as disturbeth the whole frame and noblenes of the worke for the tyme to come, Therefore hold them to their covenantes and the true ordinances of a plantation./

2: The second is, That yow be carefull of the kinges Revennewe due, and by little and little constitute him a good demesne, which hitherto is little or none, and the kinges case is ~~hardest~~ wilbe hardest, when every mans land shalbe improved in value with increase manyfold, the king shalbe tyed, to his drye rent./

3: My last direction, though first in weight is, that you doe all good indeavors to proceed resolutely and constantly and yet with due temperance and equallity in matters of Religion, least Ireland civill be worse to vs then Ireland savage./

After S[i]r William Iones his speech My Lord said./

I had forgott one thing, which was this, yow may take exceeding great comfort, that yow shall serve with such a deputy, one that I thinck is a man ordeyned of God to doe great good to that kingdome, And this I thinck good to speake vnto yow, That the true temper of a cheife Iustice towards a deputy is neither servilely to second him, nor factiously to oppose him./

Other manuscript witnesses

- Alnwick Castle, MS 526, ff. 5r–7v
- British Library, Additional MS 22591, ff. 259v–260r
- British Library, Harley MS 1576, ff. 81r–v
- British Library, Harley MS 39, ff. 282r–283r
- British Library, Sloane MS 3522, ff. 28v–31r
- Beinecke Library, Osborn Shelves Gordounstoun Box 5, ff. 62r–64r
- Beinecke Library, Osborn fb59
- Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.a.206, ff. 23r–24v
- Northamptonshire Record Office, FH83, ff. 7v–9v
- Senate House, University of London, MS 20, ff. 193v–195v
- Senate House, University of London, MS 300, ff. 65x–79x
- Woburn Abbey, MS 192, pp133–136

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<https://mpese.ac.uk/t/BaconSpeechJonesv2.html>