

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02096-1 - The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newton,
Co. York

Alice Thornton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF
MRS. ALICE THORNTON.

A PREFACE TO THE BOOKE.

FOR as much as it is the dutie of every true Christian to remember and take notice of Allmighty God our Heavenly Father's gracious acts of Providence over them, and mercifull dealings with them, even from the wombe, untill the grave burie them in silence, as also to keepe perticuler remembrances of His favours, both spirituall and temporall, together with His remarkable deliverances of their soules and bodies, with a true and unfeined gratitude to His glorious Majestie for them all: I therefore, His creature and unworthy handmaide, who have not tasted (only) of the droppings of His dew, but has bin showred plentifully upon my head with the contineued streames of goodness, doe most humbly desire to furnish my heart with the deepe thoughts and apprehensions and sincere meditations of and thankfullnesse for His free grace, love, mercys, and inconceivable goodness to me His poore creature, even from my first beginning; and, with a most cordiall and sincere heart, thankfully doe returne Him the glory of all; first—

For my birth and baptizme in the name of the most Holy Trinitye; my strict education in the true faith of the Lord Jesus Christ by my deare and pieous parents, through whoes

B

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02096-1 - The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newton,
Co. York

Alice Thornton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

2

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF

caire and precepts I had the principles of grace and religion instill'd into me with my milke. Therefore shall I begin with the first mention of my deliverances that presents itselfe under the notion of my first knowledge and remembrance which are most worthy of perpetuall memorie, and which I hope shall not end with this life, but spring up in my soule to an eternity of haleluias of praise and thankesgivings to the Blessed Trinitie for ever. Amen. Amen.

Alice Wandesford, the fifth childe of Christopher Wandesforde, Esq., late Lord Deputy of Ireland, was borne at Kirklington in the county of Yorke the thirteenth day of February, beeing on a Munday, about two of the clock in the afternoone, in the yeare 1626; baptized the next day. The wittnesses were Mr. Lassells,* minister of Kirklington, Mrs. Anne Norton, and Mrs. Best (i., 5).

* Roger Lassells was rector of Kirklington from May 19, 1590, until he died. In the parish-register of Kirklington there is this entry about him—

“Mr. Roger Lascells, person of Kirklington, aged 73 yeares compleate, and having continued a most relligious and faithfull pastor ther the space of 40 yeares, departed this life Juley the 21st, and was interred the 22nd.

In perpetuam ejusdem memoriam epitaphium.

Scripta Sacrata probant, æterna memoria justi est.

Vives ore hominum vivus in arce Dei.

Anglice.

The just's remembrance lasts for aye, so saith the worde,
Then live with men thou ever, whoe livest with the Lorde.

Dixit Radulphus Cotesius.

Mrs. Anne Norton was Anne Wandesford, wife of Mauger Norton of Clowbeck and St. Nicholas, near Richmond.

Mrs. Best was probably, Olive Mallory, wife of Thomas Best of Middleton Quernhow, M.P. for Ripon 1615.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02096-1 - The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newton,
Co. York

Alice Thornton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

MRS. ALICE THORNTON.

3

KIRKLINGTON, 1629.*

Uppon my deliverance from death by a fall when I was three years old, when I cutt a great wound in my forehead of above an inch long.

My father and mother liveing at Kirklington† where I was borne, and my brother Christopher‡ allso, the same maide-servant attended uppon him, and was his day nurse (Sara Tomlinson), which kept me affter I was weaned, beeing likewise both nurrsed by one wett nurse (though uppon haveinge a fresh milke, she had a childe betwixt the nurrsing my brother and myselfe; and haveing bin very good and cairefull of the first child, my parents saw it fitt she should nurrs the second child, too, discharging that duty soe well to me). I heard it observed that I was both a strong and healthfull childe all a long, never haveing had either the ricketts or any other disease, for which I most humbly and heartily give thankes to the God of my salvation, which still had His gracious eye of Providence over me both at my birth, when my deare mother§ brought me forth in great perrill of her life, she beeing weake uppon the birth of all her children, haveing had seaven in all, four sons and three daughters. Yett the Lord gave me a sound healthfull body, streight limbes, and of a resonable understanding, praised be His glorious name for ever! Yett has His goodness bin more extended to me in this and all other preservations that I might not forgett His mercys for ever; and that hath many ways of the extent of His favours to young infants in there deliverances from death and destruction in this world, besides that of sicknesses and weakness of body, for if His Divine

* 'A recollection of memmorable accidents and passages forgotten to be entred into my booke. This must be placed in the first place.' (Vol. i., 286).

† A parish in the Union of Bedale, North Riding of Yorkshire. See account of it, with pedigree of the Wandesfords in *Whitaker's History of Richmondshire*. (Vol. ii., pp. 139—164.

‡ A notice of the family of Mrs. Thornton will be found in the Preface or Appendix.

§ Alice, daughter of Sir Hewett Osborne, of Kiveton, co. York, knight.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02096-1 - The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newton,
Co. York

Alice Thornton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Providence did not send His angeles to keepe and guard little children, they could not continue nor be preserved from all evill accidents and casualtyes incident to that feble and weake estate of infants and childehoods. For although there innocency be not capable of offending others, yett that innocency and harmlessness is not able to defend them from injurious dealings from evill persons, neglects and brutishness of nurrses, and cairelessness of others, not to mention those infinitt hazards of overlaying, and badness of there food and evil milk ; added to the dreadfull malice of Satan, who doth by all meines endeavour to destroy mankinde, setts on worke all his engines against us by more designes then we can see or be capable to understand. Therefore am I for ever bound to blesse the etternall name of God, who hath sent His guardian angell to watch over me and mine for my good preservation ever since I was borne. The number of His miraculous deliverances are past finding out, yett will I call to mind what I can, that He might receive the glory of all.

There was now a most great preservation to me when I was but a little childe, and was following my maide, Sara Tomlinson, who caired my brother Christopher in her armes, and I tooke hold of her cote. My weake hand, beeing but about three yers old, could not goe soe fast after her, but I stumbled against the thrachhold and fell upon the corner-stone of the harth in the chamber called the passage chamber, which leads to my deare mother's bed-chamber. At which time I broke the scull of my forehead in the very top against the said rowbe so greivously about an inch long, in soe much that the skin of the braine was seene, and in great danger of death, beeing like to have bled to death, it beeing soe desperate a wound. But by the Providence of God, and my deare mother's skill and caire of me, she did make a perfect cure, only a great scarre still remaines, and will never be gon, to putt me in fresh mind of my great obligations to and deliverance of Almighty God for my life. How hath my forgettfull soule lett this mercy slip out of mind, and not remembred to give the Lord His praises due to His name! Butt now, O my soule, returne thy

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02096-1 - The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newton,
Co. York

Alice Thornton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

MRS. ALICE THORNTON.

5

solemne thankes and praises to this great and gracious God, Who hath had mercy and compassion both on thee when thou wast a poore weake infant, and brought thee to these yeares through infinitt more dangers. To the Lord my God, therefore, doe I poure out my soule in humble gratitude for this great preservation in the beginning of my daies, beseeching Him to accept of me now His hand-maide both to serve Him and praise Him for ever ; and with all my might doe I sing praises to His glorious name, Who hath had the same pittie and compassion, both as a tender and deare parent and gardian. O lett Thy Providence still goe along with me all my daies, and that Thy angell gardians may defend me with Thy sheild to preserve me from precipic or falls or dislocation incident to this life, who now growes in my later age even almost a child in strength. Leave me not nor forsake me, who has non to depend on but Thee the Lord of mercys, Who hath made and upholden me ever since I was borne. Bring me into that state of innocency of soule, by a conversion truly into that state of grace, that I may freely beare Thy trialls and beleive Thy promises, that through them I may at the last be conducted into the land of etternal rest, there to sing and praise Thy holy glorious name and holy Trinity for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.

Another Deliverance (i., 8).

The second deliverance of that kinde was in the yeare 1630, when I was left at Richmond under the caire and deare love of my beloved aunt Norton,* uppon my father and mother's goeing to London. It pleased God to bring me into a very dangerous weakenesse and sicknesse, uppon an accident of a surfit, by eating some beefe which was not well boiled ; this

* Anne, wife of Mauger Norton, of Clowbeck, and St. Nicholas, near Richmond, co. York, Esq., sister of her father. At the time of the Visitation in 1665, Mr. Norton was residing at the latter place, which is a picturesque old house perched on the hill to the north-east of the town of Richmond. It is doubtful whether he was even the tenant of it in 1630.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02096-1 - The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newton,
Co. York

Alice Thornton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

causing an extreame vomitting, whoes violence drove me into great feauer, and that into the meassellss, and both brought me so low and weake that my aunt and Sarah Tomlinson (our maide) almost dispaired of my life. But it pleased the Lord my God in great mercy to heare the hearty praiera and requests of my aunt for me, that I was spaired from death at that time, and by His blessing uppon the use of good meanes was recovered of my health perfectly againe. Oh, that I may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord, beeing a comfort to my deare parents and relations. And that I may dedicate my childehood, youth, middle and old age (if He shall spaire me so long) to His service and praise, yea, even to my live's end, and that for my Saviour's sake alone, the Alpha and Omega. Amen. I was about five yeares old then.

A Preservation in the Smale-Pox, 1631 (i., 9).

Beeing removed to London by my father's order, with my brother Christopher, I fell into the smale pox, haveing taken them of him. Both of us was sent into Kent, where we lodged at one Mr. Baxter's, beeing kindly usd with much caire in that house; and by the blessing of God I recovered very soone, nor was I very ill at that time. I therefore will praise the Lord our God for my preservation, that did not suffer that disesease to rage or indanger my life, but raised me soone again. O set forth His goodnesse for ever. Amen.

The first dawning of God's Spirit in my heart, London, 1631 (i., 10).

After this it pleased God to come into my soule by some beames of His mercy, in putting good thoughts into my mind, to consider His great and miraculous power in the creation of the heavens, the earth, and all the hosts of them. I was moved to this meditation upon the reading of the dailie psalmes for the months, happening that day to be Psalm cxlvii.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02096-1 - The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newton,
Co. York

Alice Thornton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

MRS. ALICE THORNTON.

7

v. 4th:—"He counteth the starres and calleth them all by their names." From whence there came into my heart a forceable consideration of the incomprehencable power and infinite majestie of Almighty God, Who by His wisdome made all things in heaven and earth, beeing above all His creatures in the world; knoweing what is in man, and searching all their waies; seeing my heart and thoughts, and knew allso that I was but a childe both in age and understanding, and not able to doe any thing that was good, which strooke me into a deepe feare and great awe of His glorious majestie, least I should offend Him at any time by sin against Him or my parents, and He would punish all sinnes, were they never so many as the starres; yet He was as well able to keepe an account and punish for them as to tell the starres and give them names. This, with other the like meditations of His omnipotency and greatness, and that He out of His love made man, did so move my heart that it caused in me a sincere love to Him for His goodnesse to me, His poore creature, whom my Creator had made to serve Him heere, and to take us up to heaven when we die, and crowne us with glory. Giveing Him my hearty thanks for His great and perticuler love and favour to me, a little childe, in giveing understanding and reason to know there is a God that ruleth in heaven and earth, and doeth whatever He will, and to reward them that serves Him truly with joy in heaven that should never end. Amen.

A Deliverance from a Fire in London, 1631 (i., 11).

There was a great fire in the next house to ours in St. Martin's Lane in London, which burned a part of our house, beeing neare to have burnt it downe, but through the caire of our servants it was prevented. This was don at night, when my father and mother was att Court; but wee were preserved that time of fright at my Lady Levestone's house, being caried by Sara, our maide. This fire seemed to me as if the day of judgment was come, causing much feare and trembling; yet

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02096-1 - The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newton,
Co. York

Alice Thornton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

we were all delivered from perishing, though my father had much losse. But blessed be the Lord my God, Who gave us not over to perish by this fire, but preserved our persons from evill at that time.

My Mother's going into Ireland, 1632 (i., 12).

It pleased God to give my deare mother, my two younger brothers, and my selfe a safe passage into Ireland about the yeare 1632, my father being there a yeare before, and my eldest brother George. In which place I injoyed great easinesse and comfort dureing my honoured father's life, having the fortunate opportunity in that time, and after when I staid there, of the best education that kingdome could afford, haueing the advantage of societie in the sweet and chaste company of the Earle of Strafford's daughter, the most virtuous Lady Anne,* and the Lady Arbella Wentworth,† learning those qualities with them which my father ordered, namlie,—the French language, to write and speake the same; singing; dancing; plaieing on the lute and theorboe; learning such other accomplishments of working silkes, gummework, sweetmeats, and other sutable huswifery, as, by my mother's vertuous provision and caire, she brought me up in what was fitt for her qualitie and my father's childe. But above all things, I accounted it my cheifest happinesse wherein I was trained in those pious, holy, and religious instructions, examples, admonitions, teachings, reproofes, and godly education, tending to the welfaire and eternall happinesse and salvation of my poore soule, which I receaved from both my honoured father and mother, with the examples of their chaste and sober, wise and prudent conversations in all things of this world. For which

* Lady Anne Wentworth, born Oct., 1627; m. 24 Nov., 1654, to Edward Watson, 2nd Baron Rockingham, grandfather of Thomas, Marquess of Rockingham.

† Lady Arabella Wentworth, born Oct., 1630; m. Justin Macarty, son of Donagh, Earl of Clancarty, and died s. p.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02096-1 - The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newton,
Co. York

Alice Thornton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

things, and infinitely more opportunitys of good to my well-being than I can expresse, I render my utmost capacity, etc. Therefore doe I most humbly and heartily acknowledg my bounden duty of thankes and praise to the great God of heaven and earth, from whence comes every good and perfect gift, Who is the author and finisher of our faith, that He has put such good things into my honoured parents' hearts to bring us up in the feare of the Lord. Next, I humbly acknowledge my faithfull thankes and gratitude to my deare and honoured parents for their love, care, affection, and sedulity over me from my birth till this present, and for their good performances towards my education in all things. Begging of God to give me the grace of the meanes, as well as the meanes of His grace afforded me, that so I may walke in all holie and strict obedience, in Thy lawes and their precepts, according to all the goodnesses of God and theirs, performing my cordiall duty to them in all godlynesse and honesty, obeying my parents in the Lord to the end of my life. Amen.

A great Deliverance from Drowning in Ireland by a Fall out of the Coach as my Mother and us Children was going to Kildare, riding by the Coach, October 6th, 1636 (i., 288).

As my deare mother (my honoured father rideing by the coach), mysele, and brothers George, Christopher, and John was going in the coach to see Kildare, after my father bought it, there was a narrow place we were to passe, by a river side. Joseph Browning beeing the coachman—a very carefull man—yett could not avoy that way, being none other to take; but for seeing the apparent danger of falling, by Providence he rather chose to throw the coach on the right hand towards the dry land, uppon a banke side, which did hurt some of us, than to fall on the left hand, there beeing a great river close by the coach, which, if we had gon down on that side, it had bin impossible we could have bin saved, any of us, but all in the coach and horses had bin utterly lost and perished in that

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02096-1 - The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newton,
Co. York

Alice Thornton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

deepe river. My father did ride on horsebacke, but by reason of the narrow way could not make any assistance, nor his men, to helpe us in that danger, but was much affreyed att the sudaine accident. But when he saw the coach fell from the river did much rejoyce, and glorified God with us for all preservations.

A great deliverance from a Second Fall att Sir Robert Meridethe, in Dublin, in Ireland, 1637 (i., 290).

My Lady Anne Wentworth and Lady Arbella, with cozen Anne Hutton,* Mrs. Anne Loftus,† and my selfe, beeing invited to dinner to Sir Robert Meridethe to dine, the ladies ussing the costome to swing by the armes for recreation, and being good to exercize the body of children in growing, it was ordered by my Lady Straford they should doe it moderately, and found good in it, soe that they used to swing each other gently to that purpose. They would make me, beeing a young girle, doe the same with them; and I did soe, and could hold very well by the armes as they did, and had never gott noe hurt by it, I blesse God, but found it did me good. But att this time, very unfortunately, some of the young ladies bid one of the pages (calld Don de Lan), a French boy, that he should swing me, being stronger than they, and they weary with play. But I cryed out, desireing them not to bid him, but could not gett off soe soone from him, and deliver my selfe from danger, before he had came to me. He immediately pushed me soe violently from him with all his force, as I was swinging by my armes, that I was not able to hold my hands on the swing, soe that he throwed me downe upon the chamber bords. I fell downe upon my face, fell to the grownd, and light with such a violent force with all my weight on my chinn-bone upward,

* One of the family of Hutton, of Marske, who was connected with Mrs Thornton through the Bowes's.

† Probably a daughter of Sir Adam Loftus, Lord Chancellor of Ireland, 1619, created Viscount Ely, 1622.