



THE  
LIFE AND DEATH  
OF  
ELIZA THORNTON.



PUBLISHED BY THE  
American Tract Society,  
*No. 144 Nassau St.*  
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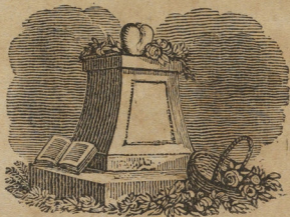
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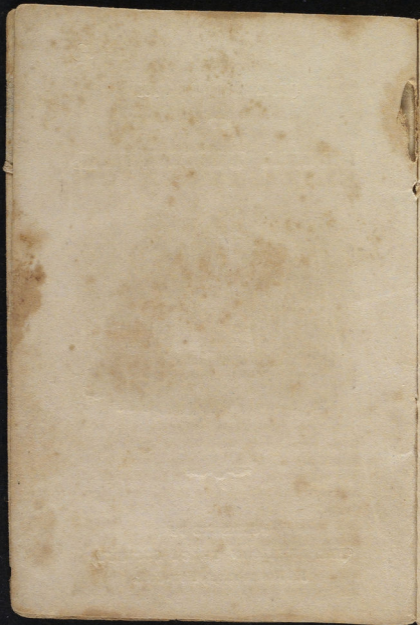
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PART I.

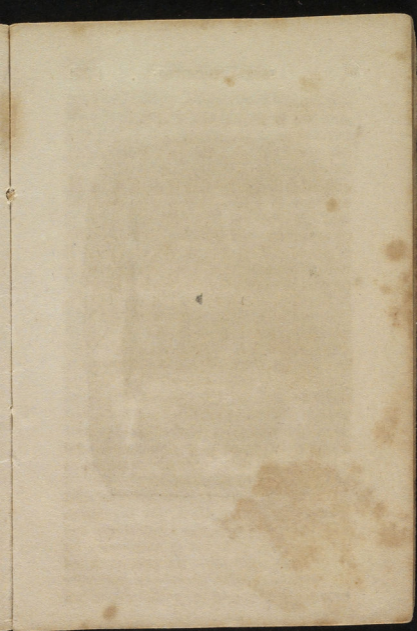
A FEW particulars concerning a child, who was lately numbered among the followers of the Redeemer in this world, but who now rests in his bosom in the heavenly world, I beg leave here to record.

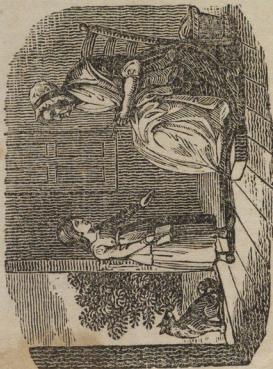
I particularly solicit the attention of those children, into whose hands this little Tract may fall. You have often been exhorted, my young friends, to seek the Redeemer early, and told that he will

suffer even *little children* to come to him; and that in him alone real happiness is to be found. Here you have an account of a little girl who *did* seek him; whom he received graciously and loved freely; and who found, by experience, the truth of what you have been told, that the ways of real religion only are ways of pleasantness, and that her paths are paths of peace. It is hoped you will read it with great attention, and earnest prayer to God that you may be made like her.

ELIZA THORNTON was the child of a poor but pious man, who resides not very far from the neighborhood in which Providence has fixed my abode. Her mother died when she was but little more than a twelvemonth old; so that she had not the privilege God has so kindly granted to many of my little readers—the tender love of a mother who longs to see them holy and happy, and who feels for them such anxious care as I am not able to describe.

This loss, however, was in a great degree made up to Eliza; for her father happily found a tender, motherly, and pious woman, under whose care he placed her, and who, it appears, acted the part of a mother to her, earnestly seeking to promote the good both of her







soul and body. Often did this good woman seriously talk to her about her soul, tell her of her danger as a sinner, her need of a Savior, and entreat her to devote herself to him early. Eliza remembered her admonitions with gratitude, after she was made a subject of divine grace, though at the time they were given, she appears to have paid little or no regard to them.

She had also a father who felt the most anxious desire for her real happiness. Though she did not reside under his roof, he took every opportunity he could find of conversing with her on the state of her soul, and entreating her to "remember her Creator in the days of her youth." Earnestly did he pray that she might, like little Samuel, be called to God while yet a child. It was his custom also, whenever he could, to pray *with* her as well as for her, and make her a witness of his earnest desire and wrestling prayer, that Christ might be her friend and portion. Christian parents may observe in his conduct, in this respect, an example well worthy of their imitation. Do they earnestly desire that "the Spirit of the Lord may be poured out upon their seed, and his blessing on their offspring;" that their children may "spring up as

among the grass, and as willows by the water-courses;" early saying, "I am the Lord's;" "subscribing with their hands unto the Lord, and surnaming themselves by the name of Israel?" Let them not be slack in pleading the promises God has given them for their encouragement; let them not keep silence, nor give the Most High rest, till he grants them the desire of their hearts. Let this also be frequently done in the presence of the children; for they are not likely soon to forget the importance and agonizing supplications of their parents for the salvation of their souls. Let every other means be also diligently used to bring them early to the Savior. Conversion is the work of God alone, but duty is yours; nor have you any scriptural ground to expect the promised blessing, in the neglect of the divinely appointed means.

Little Eliza, it appears, from the account of her father, was always of a meek and quiet disposition. Before she was changed by the grace of God, her demeanor was mild and pleasant, her conduct regular and orderly. Many of you, my dear young friends, are probably like her in this respect. You do not, perhaps, profane God's name, nor break

his Sabbaths. You do not keep company with wicked children; you in ge-



neral speak the truth; you are diligent in attention to your learning; and your behavior, on the whole, is praiseworthy. All this is very pleasing; but if you have nothing more, you will after all be found wicked children. You may have all this, and yet not love and serve the Lord Jesus. The word of God declares that none but those that are really born again can enter into heaven. The stony heart must be taken away, and the heart of flesh given; you must hate the things you used to love, and love the things you used to hate; you must be completely changed in heart and life; or where Christ is, you can never be.

The child of whom I write was about nine years old, when it pleased God to

call her by his grace. The good woman under whose care she was placed, had a little girl of her own, somewhat younger than Eliza, who, it appears, early sought the Lord. She was however soon transplanted to the celestial paradise, having been afflicted with a consumptive disorder, which early removed her from this wicked world. But though her stay on earth was short, it was the good pleasure of God, ere she was taken, to make the words which dropped from her lips, the means, in his hands, of the conversion of the child whose history is before us.

The evening before she died, she said to her mother, in the presence of Eliza,



“Mother, I am afraid Eliza is a very wicked girl.” The mother replied, “Why do you think thus?” She answered, “I am afraid she *never prays!* Oh! do pray!” said she, addressing herself to the child. These words, at the time they were uttered, made a considerable impression on Eliza’s mind; but when she arose in the morning, and found that her young companion had died in the night, the affecting providence so fixed them on her heart, that she saw her own character as she had never seen it before.

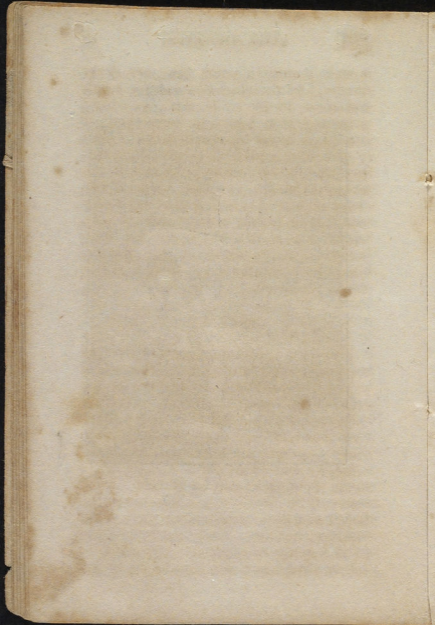
Now she was convinced that she was both a prayerless and graceless child, and that her condition in the sight of God was truly dreadful. She therefore began to cry to him to have mercy upon her. The first thing she prayed for, it appears, was, that God would “create a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within her;” for she was now convinced her heart was deceitful, and desperately wicked. She then entreated God that neither she nor her brother might be suffered to “bring down their father’s gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.” From this memorable day, it seems, she was a completely changed character. She had often heard of Jesus Christ as the only Savior of sinners, and now she hasten-

ed to him, cast herself upon him as a guilty, helpless child, and found by sweet experience, that "his blood cleanseth from all sin;" that "he is able to save, to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him."

She wished much to tell her father and her friends around her, what God had done for her soul; but could not find courage to relate it to any one, till she was laid upon a bed of sickness. Her conduct after this was indeed peculiarly dutiful and pleasing; but as mildness and quietness had always marked her deportment, the change wrought in her was not so visible as it otherwise would have been. God, however, was witness of the wonderful alteration his grace had made in her, and graciously marked her as one of his own children.

Have *you*, my little readers, ever begun to pray to God in reality? Have you ever begged of him to create a clean heart in *you*? You tell me that you say your prayers every night and morning: so probably did little Eliza long before the memorable day of which you have been reading, when she began to pray to God from her heart. All good children are praying children—children who cry from the heart for mercy, knowing that,







though young in years, they are great sinners, and therefore deserve the wrath and curse of God. If, then, you have never felt your hearts to be wicked; if you have never earnestly cried to God to save your souls from everlasting burnings, and to wash away your sins in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus; if you every night and morning only carelessly repeat some prayer which you have been taught, it is plain that you are not numbered with the lambs of the Savior, whom he "gathers in his arms, and carries in his bosom."

#### PART II.

The very youthful subjects of religion are frequently removed from this world of wo before they have arrived at the close of the years of childhood. We are delighted in beholding the efficacy of divine grace, in their early devotedness to God: but they often are not long exhibited to our view, for God hastens to make them up among his jewels. How many little children are already numbered with the church triumphant! What pleasing instances have often occurred of the dying triumphs of little ones, in whom God has been pleased to reveal

his Son! Among such instances little Eliza may be numbered.

It was but little more than three years that this dear child lived to God in this world. In her twelfth year, symptoms of consumption were discovered in her. She had been the subject of a violent cold for some time; but no danger was apprehended, till she one day, after a fit of coughing, discharged from her stomach a considerable quantity of blood; from which time her weakness gradually increased, till she finished her mortal course.



She had nearly arrived at the last stage of her disorder before the commencement of my acquaintance with her. A member of the church with which I am

connected, wished to obtain for her the visits and relief of the Sick Society belonging to our place of worship. As this could not be effected, owing to her residence being beyond the boundaries of the visits of the society, I resolved to visit her myself, being told that she was a most interesting child, and that she was very glad to see any christian friend who would call and converse with her on the things of God.

The next day I accordingly visited her abode. I found her extremely ill, and entirely confined to her bed. Death had plainly fixed his mark upon her body. There was, however, a pleasing serenity in her countenance, and something truly engaging in the whole of her aspect. She appeared much pleased to see me, telling me that I was not a stranger to her, for that she had occasionally heard the joyful tidings of salvation from my lips.

After a few inquiries respecting her disorder, I opened the kind of conversation into which I more particularly wished to enter, in the following way:—  
“Where, think you, my dear, your soul would go, if it should please God to take you from this world by the affliction he has laid upon you?”

"To heaven, sir, I hope," she replied in the most meek and striking manner.

"But where do you deserve to go, my child?"

"To hell, sir."

"What makes you hope then that you shall go to heaven?"

"Because Jesus Christ died for poor sinners."

"Are you then a sinner?"

"Yes, sir, a very great one."

"How long is it, my dear, since you first felt yourself a sinner?"

"About three years, sir."

She then gave me an account of the manner in which it had pleased God to convince her of her ruined condition, and her need of a Savior, as before related.

"How kind and gracious is it in Jesus Christ that he will receive little children like you!"

"Yes, sir, he has said, 'they that seek him early shall find him.' Those words have often very much encouraged me."

"That text, my child, has been a great encouragement to many; to some, who are now in glory."

"I know it, sir; it was to that little girl I have been speaking of."

"And do you, indeed, my dear, love the Lord Jesus?"

"I hope, sir, I do."

"Do you love him as much as you wish to love him?"

"Oh no, sir, I would love him more."

"Would you prefer being raised up again from this bed of sickness, to being removed from this world, if God were your choice?"

"I think, sir, I would rather depart."

"What think you should you find in heaven that would make you completely happy, were you taken thither?"

"I should be with the Lord, sir, and away from this world of sin, where there is nothing to make me wish to stay."

Her father, approaching the bed, said, "I have offered many prayers, both for this child and her brother; and I hope God has answered me in her."

"Oh! my poor brother!" cried the child, "I am afraid he never prays."

"Well, my dear," said I, "you must pray for him. Who can tell what God may do for him?"

"I do, sir; but, as I tell him, he must pray for himself, or my prayers will never prove a blessing to him."

Throughout this conversation, there was nothing at all forward in her manner, though she was very ready to answer every question put to her. She appear-

ed much affected in all she said, and, though young in years, to possess the dignity and firmness of an established Christian.

Having spoken to her a little further on the importance of genuine religion, and exhorted her to examine herself, and see to it that she was a Christian indeed, I closed my visit with prayer, for which she appeared peculiarly thankful; and promising, if possible, to see her again soon, I returned home with sensations of delight, that I had been privileged to witness an instance of the efficacy of divine grace in one so young. May every child who reads this narrative, be in like manner a subject of its power, and a partaker of its blessings!

In the course of a few days I renewed my visit. Though so small a space of time had intervened, I found her much weaker than before. On this occasion, I took with me a child who constantly attends my catechetical instructions, in the hope that the solemn and affecting scene would deeply impress her mind. Eliza wished seriously to admonish this little girl on the concerns of her soul, but said she was not able; indeed she labored hard for breath, and it was with great difficulty that she could speak at all.

I asked her if she still continued without fear of death, now that she seemed so near the solemn moment of her entrance into the eternal world.

“Oh, yes!” replied she. “Many, I know, are afraid of the grave, and do not like the thoughts of their bodies being devoured by the worms; but it is not so with me—I think more of my precious soul, and of the happiness of heaven.”

“I saw she was unable to converse, and therefore refrained from putting many questions to her: to those, however, which I did put, she replied in a very satisfactory manner. I found it truly pleasing and edifying to be with her. Her body was fast sinking to the grave, but her soul was ripening for glory. I felt a conviction that she would quickly sing the song of Moses and the Lamb on Mount Sion, and humbly hoped I should one day join with her in the delightful exercise.

As I returned home, I dropped such hints to my little companion on what we had seen and heard, as I hoped would impress upon her mind a sense of the importance of early devoting herself to God. On the mind of each of my little readers would I wish to produce the same impression. Who of *you* resembles

little Eliza? Who of *you*, like her, can think of death without fear, because you have a well-grounded hope in Jesus Christ? You, perhaps, tremble at the thought of entering into the world of spirits. You turn pale at the sight of the coffin—the shroud—the dark and gloomy tomb. You cannot bear to be put in mind of your approaching dissolution. But what is it, my dear young friends, which makes you so afraid of dying? Ah! it is sin! The word of God informs you that “the sting of death is sin.” Your consciences remind you that you have broken the holy law of God. You know that, though you are young, you are sinful, and so not fit to appear at the



bar of the infinitely holy and glorious



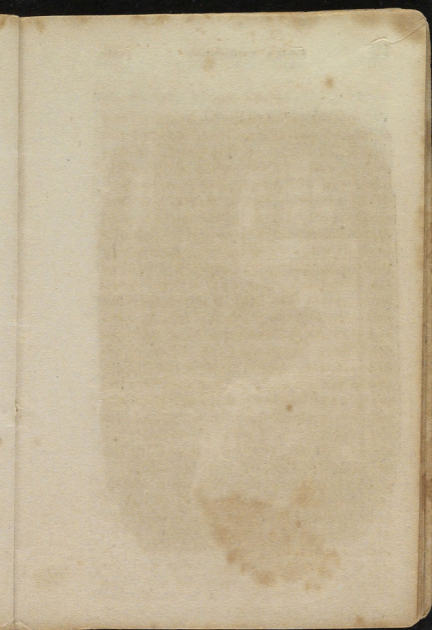
Jehovah. Hence you are afraid, and desire to live; though perhaps you have no dislike to sin itself, but cannot bear to think of enduring the pains of hell, which you know it deserves.

But Eliza felt a sweet persuasion that death had no sting to her, for she had a "good hope" that Jesus Christ died to atone for her sins, and that his precious blood had cleansed her from all guilt. *That* Jesus who saved *her*, is able also to save *you*. His blood can take away your sins as well as hers. He will not reject any that apply to him. Go, then, dear children, to this gracious Savior; cast your helpless souls upon him, and earnestly entreat him to save you. Believing in him, you will have no reason to be afraid of dying, but, like little Eliza, you may think it a mercy to be early removed from this world of wo.

## PART III.

“A great multitude, which no man can number,” are said to stand around the throne of God and the Lamb, in the heavenly world, “clothed with white robes, and having palms in their hands.” Their condition in this world was very diversified. Some, though not many of them, were “rich and noble” on the earth; others, were among ‘the poor of this world, but rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom’ which God has promised to them that love him. Some were what men account barbarians; others, connected with the most civilized and polished nations. Some were old and gray-headed when called to enter on their heavenly inheritance; others only in the morning of life—nay, some of them only babes and sucklings, who could but lisp the praises of the Lamb. From this latter class we have taken the case of little Eliza, as one not undeserving attention.

At my second interview with this interesting child, she appeared to me so near her end that I had no expectation of again seeing her in the body. I had indeed refrained from visiting her a few days, supposing that her spirit was dismissed from its tabernacle of clay, and





had already joined the heavenly choir in celebrating the praises of Jesus. In about a week, I was, however, informed that she was still living, and particularly wished to see me once more in this world. The following day I accordingly hastened to her abode. She was now in as reduced a state as she could be and live; her countenance bearing the most evident symptoms of the speedy approach of dissolution.

She was not able to speak to me in a tone sufficiently loud to be understood by me. Through a woman attending her, who was able to catch her meaning, she conveyed to me her wish that I should improve her death in an address to children, from Prov. viii. 17: "I love them that love me; and they that seek me early shall find me;" the words which she had found so peculiarly encouraging herself.

Having promised to comply with her wish, I spoke to her seriously on the importance of eternal things, and upon her happy state, if she was indeed a believer in the Son of God. I asked her whether she still felt a persuasion of her interest in Jesus, and was happy in her soul, now that she had come to the very entrance of the valley of the shadow of death.

She gave me to understand, in reply,

that she was filled with joy and peace. A "mortal paleness" was indeed "on her cheek," but it was manifest that it was connected with "glory in her soul."

When I had prayed with her, I once more solemnly bade her farewell.

Grasping my hand with an earnestness which indicated the affection of her soul, she, with an unexpected exertion, loudly and distinctly said, "*Farewell, till we meet to part no more.*"

I replied in the same words, and departed, never again to see her face in this world, and deeply impressed with the solemnity of the scene.

On the evening of the following day, she was gently dismissed from the vale of tears. Her father has furnished me with the following account of the closing scene.

"Speaking of her sufferings, she said they were not worth naming, when compared with those of Christ. The day before she died, I was talking to her on the need of being built on a sure foundation; when she looked at me with great earnestness and said, 'Do you doubt of my safety, father?'

"She appeared to the very last not to have the least dread of death, but was in a sweet frame of mind, so as to render

her condition even enviable. She often cried out, 'Oh! why so long in coming? Happy child! happy child! I shall soon be singing hallelujahs;' adding, 'A mortal paleness on my cheek, but glory in my soul!'

"A little before she departed, she said, in a very low tone, 'I am going.'

"I replied, 'Yes, my dear, you will now soon be at home.'

"Asking her how she felt her mind now, whether Christ was still precious, she replied, 'Yes,' in a tone of voice as though she was in full health. Just before her departure, she lifted up her little withered arms to her head, but quickly dropped them, never to rise again; as though she would say, 'Farewell! all is well!' and then sweetly fell asleep in Jesus."

Her death was on Tuesday, March 25, 1817.

Agreeably to her request, I improved her death in a discourse to children, from the words she had named, on Friday, April 4. The place was crowded with little ones, who appeared remarkably serious and attentive. I trust it will be found that the Lord has, in some instances, blessed the word, and that thus the death of one has proved instrumental in producing the spiritual life of many.

Such, my dear young friends, was the triumphant death of ELIZA THORNTON.



Thus did she live to the glory of the Savior, and thus did she die happy in his embrace! One thing in particular do I wish to press upon your attention, namely, that though you may be *very* young, you are by no means secure from the stroke of death. I have already laid before you the solemn fact which makes you afraid of death. You tremble at it, because you know you are sinners. But you may possibly suppose you have no need yet to think about the concerns of your soul, because you are in the morning of life and have many days before



you. But think of Eliza. She had attained only the age of twelve. What if she, like you, had said, it is time enough yet to begin to seek the Lord: I am young, and need not be afraid of dying! Ah! had not *she* "remembered her Creator in the days of *her* youth" she would never have remembered him at all.

Are *you* sure you shall live? And are *you* sure that *your* winding-sheet has not already passed the loom, and waits rolled up in yonder shop ready to be cut off?

Take a walk into church-yards—measure graves, read the inscriptions on tomb-stones, and then tell me whether young children are exempt from death.



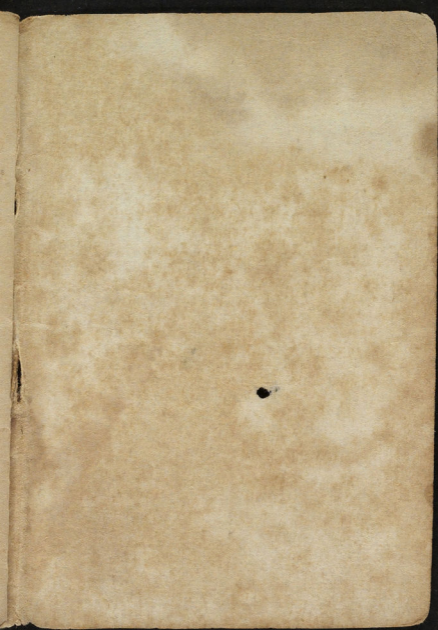
Nor do you know how *suddenly* you may be called from this world. Should God see fit to cut you off in the years of childhood, he may not afflict you as he did little Eliza, with a lingering disorder, but may take you away with a stroke. And how dreadful will your case be, if death should come upon you suddenly, and find you without an interest in Jesus Christ; not washed in his precious blood, not clothed in his glorious righteousness!

Oh! awake, dear children, and flee to Jesus Christ; you have not a moment to lose. "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near." "*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation." "Seek then first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other needful things will be added unto you."

When blooming youth is snatch'd away  
By death's resistless hand,  
Our hearts the mournful tribute pay  
Which pity must demand.

While pity prompts the rising sigh,  
O may this truth, imprest  
With awful power—*I too must die*—  
Sink deep in every breast.

O let us fly, to Jesus fly,  
Whose powerful arm can save;  
Then shall our hopes ascend on high,  
And triumph o'er the grave.



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