



ELIZA THORNTON.



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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 Saviour, 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 of God while yet a child. It was his custom also, whenever he could, to pray *with* 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 sur-naming 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 Saviour. 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 general 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 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, but it was the good pleasure of God, ere she was removed from the earth, 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 grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

From this memorable day it seems that her character was changed. She had often heard of Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of sinners, and now she hastened 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. .

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, which soon became seated upon her. On my first visit I found her extremely ill, and confined to her bed. Death had plainly fixed his mark upon her. There was, however, a pleasing serenity in her countenance, and something truly engaging in her aspect.

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.

"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 Saviour, 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.' These 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. 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 will receive you to heaven?"

"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 forward in her manner, though she was ready to answer every question put to her. She appeared 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. 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, but it is not so with me; I think more of my precious soul, and of the happiness of heaven."

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 her in the delightful exercise.

Why does any child or youth reading this narrative fear to die? Alas, *sin* is the cause, and the only cause. The word of God informs us, that

"the sting of death is sin." Your conscience tells you that you have sinned against God, and you can be saved from hell only by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died to save sinners such as you. Eliza felt a sweet persuasion that death had no sting to her, for she had a "good hope" that Christ had washed away all her sins in his own precious atoning blood.

At my next 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. 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. 8:17: "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, 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. 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,
And 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 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 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.