Title: The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newton, Co. York

Author: Jackson Charles

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THE

PUBLICATIONS

OF THE

SURTEES SOCIETY.

ESTABLISHED IN THE YEAR

M.DCCC.XXIV.

VOL. LXII.

FOR THE YEAR M.DCCC.LXXIII.
THE

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

MRS. ALICE THORNTON,

OF

EAST NEWTON, CO. YORK.

Published for the Society

BY ANDREWS AND CO., DURHAM;
WHITTAKER AND CO., 13 AVE MARIA LANE;
BERNARD QUARITCH, 15 PICCADILLY;
BLACKWOOD AND SONS, EDINBURGH.

1875.
At a Meeting of the Surtees Society, held in Durham Castle, on Tuesday, June 2nd, 1874, Mr. Robinson in the Chair,

It was Ordered, “That the Autobiography of Mrs. Thornton of East Newton should be edited for the Society by Mr. Charles Jackson.”

JAMES Raine,
Secretary.

Mitchell and Hughes, Printers, 24 Wardour Street, London, W.
THE PREFACE.

The autobiography which is now for the first time given to the world through the medium of the Surtees Society, is a specimen of a kind of family history which lies hid, we believe, among the archives of many of our ancient houses; concealed there, partly because it touches upon matters of domestic concern, and partly because, in the opinion of its owner, the trivial subjects or the devotional aspirations which such volumes generally record ought not to be brought out into the full glare of day. We can appreciate this feeling, although we cannot concur with it. Works like the present, from their intrinsic merit, have a right to be considered publici as well as privati juris. Do to them as Archbishop Matthew wrote on the title of one of his favourite tomes, as a hint to its future possessor, Lege, Relege, Perlege.

Alice Wandesford (afterwards Thornton), the author of this volume, was born at Kirklington in the southern part of Richmondshire, in February, 1626-7.* The village of Kirklington lies a few miles to the north of Ripon, in a beautifully undulating country, somewhat low, indeed, as in a basin, but surrounded by rich pastures and woodlands. An ancient church, built in the fourteenth century, is an ornament to the village; and there is a hall, erected in the time of Henry VII., which, although somewhat in decay, has evidently been the residence of a family of distinction and substance. Thither came in the fourteenth century, through an alliance with the heiress of Musters, the

* Page 2.
race of Wandesford, which enriched itself still farther in the days of Henry VIII. by a double marriage into the house of Fulthorpe. This gave them many additional acres, and a new mansion at Hipswell, on the southern bank of the Swale, between Catterick and Richmond. A fragment of the old hall, decorated with the armorial bearings of the Fulthorpes, may still be seen.

Christopher Wand-esford, Mrs. Thornton’s father, was a person of no ordinary character and ability. The filial piety of his daughter drew up a memorial of his life, which seems, unhappily, to have disappeared; not, however, before one of his descendants drew from it a few graphic pictures which make us regret the more the loss of the remainder.* Mr. Wandesford’s portrait, which is still extant, represents a fair, oval-faced man, with a sanguine complexion and auburn hair; a face in contour somewhat resembling that of the unfortunate Charles, and such as Vandyke loved to perpetuate on his canvass. We see a noble gentleman of a very comely presence and bearing, and this Mr. Wandesford undoubtedly was. He had a good estate in spite of his father’s extravagance, and this he considerably augmented without being in any sense penurious. In his domestic virtues he was a model for all. He was a man of strict religious principle and honour, with the keenest sense of what duty and his position demanded. But, more than this; he proved himself a statesman of repute, in an age when statesmen were numerous. The great Earl of Strafford was his cousin, and drew his kinsman, who had been his intimate companion, into that world of politics of which he was so fond. Wandesford accompanied his friend and patron to Ireland, where he became Lord Deputy,

* Written by the Rev. Thomas Comber, and alluded to before. Dr. Whitaker, in his History of Richmondshire, gives a very admirable sketch of Mr. Wandesford’s life and character.
acquiring a noble position and estate. Had his life been pro-
longed, he would in all probability have been rewarded with
a peerage, to which his grandson was raised. He died at an
early age, killed, it was believed, by hard work, and grief at
Strafford’s misfortunes and the evil condition of the realm.

Mr. Wandesford’s wife was Alice, daughter of Sir Hewett
Osborne, whose father, through a romantic adventure,* became
one of the wealthiest citizens of London. Sir Hewett was a
valiant soldier. He increased his estate by marrying a Fleet-
wood, by whom he was the sire of Sir Edward Osborne, vice-
president of the Council in the North, a gentleman of singular
intelligence and wisdom. Sir Edward’s sister became Mr.
Wandesford’s wife. To say that she was worthy of her husband
is but slight praise. On his decease she brought her children
from Ireland into Yorkshire, not without adventures by the
way. For a while they resided at Kirklington; afterwards at
Hipswell, the dowager-house of the family. The home education
of the children had been of the strictest and most exemplary
kind. Father and mother had combined to devote themselves to
their good, and few households, probably, even in those days of
parental care, were so thoroughly imbued with the principles
and practice of religion. Thrice in each day, at six, ten, and
nine o’clock in the evening, the family met together for devot-
tion. The mother assembled her children every morning before
breakfast, hearing them pray, and read or repeat Psalms and
chapters of the Bible, and then they knelt for her blessing.
The tenderness with which her daughter speaks of her† in after
days shews how deeply seated in her heart was the recollection
of her happy childhood. The good father observed them all

* Collins’s Peerage of England, 1812 ed., 253. Hunter’s South Yorkshire,
i., 142.
† Pp. 100—122.
with the keenest and most affectionate solicitude. For the
guidance of his eldest son he wrote down a series of instruc-
tions for his conduct,* which shew that their author was not
only a man of shrewd, worldly wisdom, but a person of the
highest religious excellence as well. The child for whose wel-
fare Mr. Wandesford was so anxious did not live long enough
to carry these exhortations into practice; but the rules which
he laid down for his guidance have always been cherished by
the members of his family as one of their most precious heir-
looms. The example that the father set was not in vain, when
it produced such fruits as the home virtues of his daughters
and the pious munificence of his grandchild, Mary Wandesford
of York.†

The father died, but the mother lived on to carry out his
wishes and continue his affection to their children. It was at
Hipswell that she chiefly resided, and there, for the most part,
Mrs. Thornton grew up to womanhood. She tells us in her
book some of the incidents and adventures of her youth, among
which the death of her eldest brother is most pathetically de-
scribed.‡ Her matrimonial projects and perils are also related.
They terminated in 1651, in a marriage with William Thornton
of East Newton in Ryedale.§ With this portion of Mrs. Thor-
ton's life we are principally concerned.

For more than three centuries the family of Thornton had
occupied a fair position among the minor gentry of the North
Riding of Yorkshire. In the reign of Edward II. a member of
it married an heiress who brought with her the name and estate
of East Newton. West Newton, an old property of the Cholm-
leys, with its ancient chapel and manor-house, lies at a little
distance, in the parish of Oswaldkirk. East Newton is situated

* P. 187.
† See her will, p. 323.
‡ P. 57.
§ Pp. 75—82.