

'MY WIFE WAS VERY UNQUIET AND UNCHARITABLE ALSO. GOD FORGIVE HER!'
FIRST PERSON ACCOUNTS OF WOMEN'S LIVES DURING THE CIVIL WAR

by Peter Gaunt

There are few surviving contemporary or near contemporary first person narratives of the lives and lived experiences of women during the civil war written by the subjects themselves. In a patriarchal age, during a period when male literacy was almost certainly much higher than female literacy, and at a time when, with a few rare and well known exceptions, their gender prevented women becoming combatants or involving themselves directly in the fighting, it is understandable that the roll-call of extant personal accounts of war-time experiences, whether in the form of diaries and journals, autobiographies and memoirs, descriptions of life on campaign and substantial caches of correspondence, is dominated by male authors. As might be expected, there are few, if any, female equivalents of the accounts of active soldiers of the likes of Richard Atkyns, Oliver Cromwell, Richard Symonds and Nehemiah Wharton, and, at a time when female religious figures and preachers were only just emerging amongst the radical sects, of ministers and war-time army chaplains such as Ralph Josselin, Adam Martindale and John Shaw. But equally, surviving civilian narratives are dominated by male authors and generally reflect a male perspective.

However, through close reading just a few of those male accounts can provide a somewhat fuller impression and more rounded picture of women, generally wives, during the war, while the very small number of extant first person war-time accounts written directly by women are precious and valuable in providing a largely unmediated female perspective; some of them deserve to be better known. This short paper assesses a modest selection of both types of surviving first person accounts of the war years. The opening section explores a clutch written by male authors and reflects upon the limited or in a few cases somewhat more expansive views they can provide of war-time marital relationships and of the lives of women. The second section moves on to examine some accounts written by women themselves, closing with a brace of female sources which deserve to be better known.

In the main, women's war-time lives are viewed in a shadowy and mediated form, portrayed as bit-players in masculine and male-dominated accounts and in the often quite brief and passing references to wives, daughters and other female family members found in the letters, diaries and journals of male authors. For example, the war-time writings of Nehemiah Wallington, a godly London wood-turner and avid diarist, abound with news and observations relating to the conflict, in the main drawn from reports appearing in the London-based newspapers, interspersed with his own agonised searches for godliness and for signs of the Lord's support for himself, his family and the parliamentary war effort, which he strongly supported, as well as his interpretations of God's

providences and divine will, as seen in a range of military and non-military occurrences. News of parliamentary defeats and set-backs caused him particular worry, such as ‘the very sad news out of the north parts that the country is almost overrun with those cruel enemies of God’ in summer 1643, prompting a frantic search for biblical parallels from which he might draw comfort. The initial reports of a great parliamentary defeat at Edgehill the previous autumn and of 20,000 dead ‘caused to be in me many distempered thoughts in so much that I could not keep the day with comfort as I thought to have done’, but he was cheered by later and more accurate reports of the outcome – ‘praised be God...Oh I cannot relate the particulars of the great mercy of God to us in this fight but I hope hereafter I shall for the 23 of October 1642 should never be forgotten, in so much that his excellency [the Earl of Essex] said that he never saw less of man in anything nor more of God’.

Wallington was much given to self-reflection, to intense and internalised searching for reassurance that he was leading a godly life and was following the Lord’s path, but while he was also clearly a loving husband and father and cared deeply about his wife and children, his substantial war-time writings tell us little about the female members of his family. In one fairly typical example, Wallington noted that in Easter week 1643 his wife and daughter urged him to have a day out with them in Peckham, but although he knew he would have ‘much delight to take my pleasure in walkeing in the fresh aire with my deare ones’, he refused to join them as he felt it would be inconsistent with ‘the sadnesse of the times’ and his pledge to ‘deny myself of my own outward comforts’, feeling it better ‘to be in the house of morning then in the house of laughter’. His wife, Grace, their surviving daughter Sarah, in her teens by the time of the civil war, who married a fellow wood-turner in 1647, and his wife’s widowed sister-in-law, Sarah Rampaigne, also living with them in London at this time, are generally accorded no more than passing comments of this type in Wallington’s war-time writings.¹

Another Londoner, the lawyer and diarist John Greene, who spent most of the war years in the City, though with occasional jaunts into the countryside, recorded in his account, often interleaved within printed almanacs, a wide range of personal and family events and experiences during that period. One of the high points was his marriage, in spring 1643, just as the first full campaigning season of the civil war was unfolding. After a ten-day trip to visit his bride’s family on the south coast, during which he viewed Portsmouth and Chichester, he was back in London by 14 April.

¹ D. Booy ed., *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington, 1618-1654* (Aldershot, 2007); the quotations are from pp. 174, 188, 195, 198. See also P.S. Seaver, *Wallington’s World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (London, 1985) and P.S. Seaver, ‘Wallington, Nehemiah (1598–1658)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [hereafter *ODNB*] (Oxford, 2004).

On the 17th he went to Spring Gardens and bought wedding clothes and ‘On the 24th of this April I was married, by Dr Jermyn, to my wife Mary Jermyn, eldest daughter of Phillip Jermyn, sergeant-at-law. The wedding was kept at my father’s house in Old Jewry very privately, none but brothers and sisters and a friend or two were at it. My wife expected an ague on Sunday and Tuesday and that was the reason it was done on Monday, the Wednesday after being fast day. On Tuesday, the day after my wedding, we went to The Mermaid in Bread Street to dance and be merry, where music met us’. Greene carefully recorded the births and also the deaths of various children in his family, not least the birth and baptism of his own first three children between spring 1644 and early summer 1646, the excited father noting their development and progress, especially the appearance of teeth.

Despite his new wife and growing close family, more mundane and masculine experiences personal to him and to other male members of his immediate family continued to dominate his diary, including sermons he had attended and heard, his losses at cards, his own and his father’s assessments for various taxes and impositions, the settling of bills with his apothecary and others, his observations about the weather, his study of astronomy – in 1643 he and his brother-in-law began to ‘learn astronomy and the use of the globes’ – and bouts of minor ill-health. Thus he reported that he was ‘extreme weary and ill’ the day after playing tennis, while at another point ‘my teeth ache, not very much, only my gums sore and my face swelled very much, so I stir not out in very cold weather’, though eventually he had to call in a doctor who ‘let my gums bleed, put something in my ears and gave me somewhat to snuff up in my nose’, but ‘I think he did but little good [for] my face was swelled 3 or 4 days after’. These entries are interspersed with reports on the progress of the civil war and Greene reflected upon the general military experience and the state of the war each year from 1643 onwards at the start or close of his annual account, repeatedly noting the heavy and negative impact of the ‘unhappy’ and ‘bitter’ conflict and the sufferings and burdens it had brought; he also noted down specific war-related events occurring in the course of each year, a mixture of national news, including the outcomes of specific civil war battles and sieges, and key political developments. As a lawyer, he ruefully recorded the dwindling amount of legal business and court activity in the capital. But once again, despite the richness and strong human interest of his diary, striking a generally more worldly and secular tone than Wallington, and despite a keen and evident interest in his family, Greene’s entries do not give much insight in the war-time life and experiences of his new wife.²

² E.M. Symonds, ‘The Diary of John Greene (1635-57)’, *English Historical Review*, 43 (1928); the quotations are from pp. 391, 598, 599, 601, 602. See also B. Coates, ‘Greene, John (1606-1659)’, *ODNB*.

Contrasting impressions of their relationships with their wives during and immediately after the main civil war can be found in the surviving accounts of Sir John Oglander and Adam Eyre. Oglander, a landowner on the Isle of Wight with a long record of governmental and parliamentary service and of local office both there and in neighbouring Hampshire, was too old to take up arms and fight – he was in his late fifties when the civil war broke out – but he made no secret of his royalist sympathies. As such and in consequence of parliamentary control of the island throughout the war and of his refusal to serve under such control, he was viewed with suspicion and repeatedly arrested and harassed. He spent part of 1643 and most of 1644 either a close prisoner or under looser house arrest in London and he did not secure his liberty and permission to return home until 1645. Hitherto his wife Frances, whom he had married in 1606, had made only fleeting and passing appearances in his commonplace book, a collection of notes, observations and records of events intended mainly to enlighten and to instruct his successors and later generations of Oglanders, which Sir John had begun keeping in his early manhood, during the reign of James I. But there is every sign that the marriage had been happy and close. Sir John's feelings for Frances suddenly burst out in his commonplace book in summer 1644, when his arrest and detention in London meant that he was unable to see and to attend her during a serious and, as it turned out, final and fatal illness. In an entry, part of which does appear to be inscribed in now much-faded blood, he wrote that 'my poor wife, overheating her blood in procuring my liberty [from close imprisonment], got the smallpox and died, making me a worse prisoner than before. O my poor wife, with my blood I write it. Thy death has made me most miserable. Indeed, greater grief and sorrow could not have befallen any man. No man can conceive the loss, but he that hath had a good and careful loving wife'. Thereafter, even once he was back on the island and at liberty, the entries in his commonplace book amounted to an extended tale of woe, left bereft by the deaths of his wife and of many other members of his family, embittered by the lowly origins and rapacious greed of the new parliamentary officials running the island and their oppressive taxes and, more generally, disillusioned with the sad state and misgovernment of the Isle of Wight in the wake of 'our unnatural wars' In a somewhat brighter moment, at some point probably in the late 1640s and a few years before his own death, Oglander reflected on his healthy financial position. 'Had I not God's blessing and a lawful, industrious wife, I could never have done it', he mused. 'I could never have done it without a most careful wife who was no spender, never wore a silk gown but for her credit when she went abroad [i.e. in public], and never to please herself. She was up every day before me and oversaw all the outhouses: she would not trust her maid with

directions but would wet her shoes to see it done herself'. He hoped that his heirs and descendants would do as well and would find such suitable and thriftily industrious wives.³

Adam Eyre was a parliamentarian officer and administrator and a minor landowner in the Penistone area of southern Yorkshire. He apparently kept a war-time journal, now lost, but his 'Dyurnall' of the immediate post-war period, a more or less daily account of his life between January 1647 and January 1649 – though it becomes a bit scrappy and with some gaps towards the end – does survive. It blends brief entries about his life at home, the state of the weather and his health, his interests and pastimes – at one point he accompanied a friend 'to see a match played at the football between Penistone and Thurlestone; but the crowd hindered the sport, so that nothing was done, and so we came home again', though playing bowls, taking tobacco, dicing and drinking, sometimes to excess, were more typical of Eyre's social life – with records of his travels and of his income and expenses on church and civil business in his home area, together with occasional business trips to London, a lengthy journey for which he always made careful preparation and which made him uneasy. But amidst all this, Eyre's journal also throws interesting and, for a male account, unusually full light on his relationship with his wife Susanna, the daughter of a neighbouring small landowner, whom he had married at the beginning of the decade. By this stage there were very evident tensions within the marriage. On 20 May 1647 they disagreed over a potential property purchase when she refused to lend or give him £200, but in early June there was a more serious falling out, when 'my wife began, after her old manner, to braule and revile mee for wishing her only to weare such apparrell as was decent and comly, and accused mee for treading on her sore foote, with curses and othes; which to my knowledge I touched not; neverthelesse she continued in that extacy till noone; and at dinner I told her I purposed never to com in bed with her till she tooke more notice of what I formerly had sayd to her, which I pray God give mee grace to observe'. An entry of late June closes with the brief comment that 'This night my wife was worse in words than ever', while in late July Eyre recorded that 'This day I stayd at home all day, by reason my wife was not willing to let mee goe to bowles at Bolsterstone'. One night in early August he was woken or could not get to sleep because his wife was being troubled by her bad foot, and lying awake 'sundry wicked worldly thoughts came in my head, and, namely, a question whether I should live with my wife or noe, if she continued so wicked as shee is; whereupon I ris and prayed to God to direct mee a right'. Trouble rumbled on through the month. On the 11th, having spent much of day out on business, including getting a haircut and buying his wife some

³ F. Bamford, *A Royalist's Notebook. The Commonplace Book of Sir John Oglander, Knight, of Numwell* (London, 1936); the quotations are from pp. 107, 240-41. See also J.M. Rigg revised S. Kelsey, 'Oglander, Sir John (1585-1655)', *ODNB*.

tobacco, 'at night [his wife] kept ye yates shut, and sayd shee would be master of the house for that night'.

Over the following week Eyre wrote several times about his 'sore temptation' – presumably further thoughts of leaving his wife or maybe of committing adultery. After a quieter interlude, Eyre returned home in early October to find himself locked out of the house and his wife refusing to open it, so he had to break his way in. Apparently drinking quite heavily as autumn progressed and noting several falls from his horse, by late December some sort of crisis was reached. After attending church on Sunday the 19th, 'my wife was very unquiet and uncharitable also. God forgive her!', while around the Christmas period several entries record Eyre's determination to mend his ways, to spend less time and money in the alehouse and to resolve 'never hereafter to stay out in the night, which God Allmighty give mee grace to observe, even for His mercy's sake'. Reform and reconciliation were cemented on 1 January 1648, and in the wake of a great storm which seemed to have shaken Eyre as much as it did his house, he made it up with his wife, asking her to 'forebeare to tell mee of what is past' and promising 'to become a good husband to her for ye tyme to come, and shee promised mee likewise shee would doe what I wished her in anything, save in setting her hand to papers...Now I pray God that both shee and I may leave of all our old and foolish contentions, and joyne together in His service without all fraud, malice, or hypocrisie...'. Although Eyre failed always to maintain the high moral and godly standards he had set himself, several times in the course of 1648 seeking the Lord's forgiveness for occasions of drunkenness, with just a single further spat – on 11 October, when his wife refused to join him in an unspecified business or property transaction, 'I told my wife sith shee would not joyne with mee in sale, shee should keepe the house as she would, neither would I meddle with her at all' – the remaining part of the journal suggests that their married life had become quieter and more harmonious.⁴

Some women who produced contemporary accounts during the civil war itself or who later wrote about the war years are already well known and well studied. Perhaps the two most famous, on either side of the civil war divide, are Lucy Hutchinson and Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle. Well after the civil war was over, both wrote detailed biographies of their husbands, John Hutchinson, the parliamentarian colonel, war-time defender of Nottingham and then a regicide, and William, Duke of Newcastle, the king's leading general in northern England during the first half of the war,

⁴ H.J. Morehouse, 'A dyurnall, or catalogue of all my accions and expences from the 1st of January. 1646 [1647], by Adam Eyre' in C. Jackson ed., *Yorkshire Diaries and Autobiographies of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Surtees Society 65, 1877); the quotations are from pp. 36, 43, 46, 51, 53-6, 66, 80-2, 84, 106, 111. See also A.J. Hopper, 'Eyre, Adam (1614-1661)', *ODNB*.

until he went into exile on the continent after defeat at Marston Moor in July 1644. Neither work, however, tells us much about the war-time lives and experiences of the author herself, instead focusing very much on the (male) subject of the biography.⁵ The autobiographies of Lady Anne Halkett (Anne Murray as she was when the war broke out) and Lady Ann Fanshawe (Ann Harrison at the start of the war) are also well known and give some insight into how two well-educated and single young women of royalist inclination spent their time in the royalist capital of Oxford during the civil war. However, neither account gives deep or detailed insight into their lives at that stage and both become noticeably fuller and more colourful only once the king had lost the main civil war, with Fanshawe embarking in 1645 on the typical royalist exile's route, moving first into the far west of England and then on to France via the Isles of Scilly and the Channel Isles, while from 1647 Halkett became caught up for a time in the intrigues of the royalist agent Joseph Bampfield, including helping in the successful plot to spring the Duke of York from prison.⁶

Also very familiar to historians and often heavily drawn upon in military and other studies of the war are the letters of Lady Brilliana Harley, whose war-time correspondence provides the fullest and most gripping account by a woman of being caught up in the civil war and of playing a direct part in the fighting. With her husband, Sir Robert Harley, away in London attending and active in the Long Parliament, it fell to her to respond to the increasingly threatening and hostile position in which she found herself, defending her home and family interests in the Brampton Bryan area of the Shropshire-Herefordshire border. Thus the closing sections of her surviving voluminous correspondence to her husband and, from the later 1630s, to her eldest son Edward ('Ned'), to whom she was also devoted, throw light on her troubled war-time experience, as a parliamentarian and puritan sympathiser in a region which was overwhelmingly royalist in inclination. Her surviving letters dating from the outbreak of the civil war to within a week or two of her own death from natural causes at the end of October 1643 – in her last letter to Ned she noted that 'I

⁵ L. Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson* (numerous editions, including ed. C.H. Firth, London, 1906) and D. Norbrook, 'Hutchinson [*née* Apsley], Lucy (1620–1681)', *ODNB*; we gain far greater insight into Lucy herself from her later writings and translations, most of them of a spiritual nature, as summarised and listed in the *ODNB* biography. M. Cavendish, *The Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle*, (numerous editions, including ed. C.H. Firth, London, 1886) and James Fitzmaurice, 'Cavendish [*née* Lucas], Margaret, duchess of Newcastle upon Tyne (1623?–1673)', *ODNB*; again, we gain greater insight into Margaret's war-time life, at the royalist court in Oxford, down to 1644 when she accompanied the queen to Paris and there met her husband, from one of her other and far less well known writings, 'A true relation' of her early life, included in *Nature's Pictures* (1656), pp. 368-91.

⁶ D. Stevenson, 'Halkett [*née* Murray], Anne [Anna], Lady Halkett (1623–1699)', *ODNB* and P. Davidson, 'Fanshawe [*née* Harrison], Ann, Lady Fanshawe (1625–1680)', *ODNB*. Their two biographical accounts have been published together in J. Loftis ed., *The Memoirs of Anne, Lady Halkett and Ann, Lady Fanshawe* (London, 1979).

have taken a very greate coold, which has made me very ill these 2 or 3 days, but I hope the Lord will be mercifull to me, in giving me my health, for it is an ill time to be sike in' – reveal her determination to hold onto her family's interests and property, the delaying tactics she adopted when her main seat of Brampton Bryan castle came under direct royalist threat in early summer 1643 and her organisation of the successful resistance mounted to a royalist siege between July and early September.⁷

While Harley's letters and her account of her defence of Brampton Bryan during the first year of the civil war are well known to historians, two other female accounts deserve to be better known, even though both are now available in print and their authors receive *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entries. Joyce Jeffreys was, by the outbreak of the civil war, an elderly spinster, residing in a rented house within Hereford, and conducting much of her successful business, principally money-lending, in and around the city. At first glance her surviving financial diary, recording repayments of and interest received on financial loans but also giving monthly accounts of her own personal and household expenditure, might seem a little dry and uninformative, but close reading enables us to reconstruct much of her life during the civil war. The accounts reveal that the onset of the civil war badly disrupted both her professional and her personal life. Her money-lending activities dwindled, as did her financial position, for she was often unable during the war to collect interest on existing pre-war loans or to recover her capital. A royalist sympathiser and supporter, in September 1642 she contributed cash 'towards the buying of armour and weapons and artillery to strengthen the city against the parliament' as well as continuing to pay for the training of a member of the local militia, now supporting the king's cause, and helping to equip others who 'went to soldier'. Accordingly, she fled from Hereford later in the month, 'for fear of the coming of the parliament's army from Worcester to Hereford', and shortly before units from Essex's main parliamentary army duly rolled into the city, instead taking up residence in the countryside nearby. She did not escape unscathed, for some of her goods, including cash, two horses, both of them 'bay coach mares', timber and 'much linen', were taken from her by the parliamentarians, who plundered known royalists during their occupation of the city. She did not return to Hereford until the end of the year, once the parliamentarians had withdrawn, whereupon she managed to recover some of her lost property – redeeming 'my 2 black beaver hats and 2 gold

⁷ J. Eales, 'Harley [*née* Conway], Brilliana, Lady Harley (*bp.* 1598, *d.* 1643)', ODNB; J. Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads: the Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the Outbreak of the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1990). Her letters to Edward of 1642-3 can be found within T. Taylor Lewis ed., *Letters of Lady Brilliana Harley* (Camden, 1st series, 58, 1854), with the quotation from p. 209, much of her war-time correspondence with her husband is transcribed or calendared in Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Fourteenth Report, Appendix Part II. The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Portland, Volume III* (London, 1894) and her written exchanges with her royalist opponents in summer 1643 before and during the siege can be found in Historical Manuscripts Commission, *The Manuscripts of the Most Honourable the Marquis of Bath, Volume I* (London, 1904).

bands, out of the thieves' or plunderers' hand' cost her 21s 6d – plus other goods which were still in her house there or were being held for safe-keeping by various friends in and around Hereford – such as a neighbour who was paid by her 20s for 'keeping my beds and trunks and boxes from the plunderers'. She moved out of Hereford and so was not there and did not suffer too much when the city was briefly regained and occupied by Sir William Waller's parliamentarians in spring 1643. However, the two parliamentary occupations had cost her more money, for she reckoned that over £70-worth of her food, livestock and other goods had been taken and consumed by parliamentary troops which had billeted in her house during 1642-43 and she had to lay out smaller sums to have repaired the minor damage which the house, standing close to one of the city gates, had sustained during Waller's attack upon and capture of Hereford.

Although Hereford was held fairly securely by the king's men after Waller's departure in May 1643 until spring 1645, Jeffreys incurred further expenses over that period in billeting soldiers from the royalist garrison, as well as contributing to other costs of the garrison. In 1644 she paid 1s 8d towards 'work done in making bulwarks to defend the city of Hereford from invasion', but she drew the line at having her store of timber removed for that purpose and subsequently tipped 'an honest carpenter, for preserving my timber from the governor's knowledge'. Jeffreys herself did not return to Hereford, other than for very brief and fleeting visits – her house was, after all, now occupied by soldiers – and she spent the rest of the war living in friends' houses in the Herefordshire countryside or at her own rural property of Ham Castle, near Clifton on Teme close to the Herefordshire-Worcestershire border. In spring 1645 she attempted hurriedly to sell other properties she had in the Hereford suburbs, ahead of an anticipated attack or siege by parliament's Scottish allies, while late in 1645, around the time that English parliamentarians under John Birch surprised and captured Hereford, her main residence of Ham Castle may have been threatened, for Jeffreys had some of her valuables hidden, buried in one or more trunks the grounds.

The civil war did not destroy Jeffreys and some elements of her pre-war comfortable life continued, even at the height of the war. For example, her monthly personal account for August 1644, which she spent mainly in the Bromyard area, included money expended when visiting a friend for dinner at nearby Clifton upon Teme, 3s spent acquiring two quarts of sack at Worcester, 34s for a quantity of tiffany, a fine silk material decorated with flowers, 4s 6d for three pounds of loaf sugar which she sent to a god-daughter who was sick – she always had a soft spot for and enjoyed treating female kinswomen and friends and their children – together with 2s 6d for a new pair of shoes for herself, 6d to a servant of the vicar of Broadway who brought her a basket of his Worcestershire pears, 12s for a felt hat which she intended as a gift for her cousin and 5s for a jug of 'salit oyle', almost certainly olive oil. While Jeffreys lived on until the end of the decade and her

accounts from the post-war period show that she still enjoyed quite a comfortable lifestyle, evidently the civil war disrupted her life significantly for several years, her pronounced royalism caused her to feel threatened at times of parliamentary advance in or control over Herefordshire and forced her to leave Hereford and shuttle around the county and surrounding area, and the conflict cost her plenty of money and undermined her money-lending business.⁸

Alice Thornton, in contrast, was pro-royalist, having been born in 1626 into a Yorkshire landed family with strong royalist connections – her father was a close friend and distant kinsman of Sir Thomas Wentworth, first Earl of Strafford, and had himself briefly served as lord deputy of Ireland before his death in 1640. The family escaped from Ireland in the wake of the Irish Rebellion, settling first in Chester and then on their estates or with relatives of Alice's mother in Yorkshire. According to her later autobiographical account, on returning from Ireland they were initially welcomed in Chester and treated well by 'the gentry of the city' who were 'exceeding courteous and civil to my dear mother and myself...and such pity and favour we found that she wanted nothing in that place'. But life did not remain so pleasant, for by summer 1643 Sir William Brereton began harassing the city. On one occasion, she was up in a turret in the Chester house they were occupying when, 'as I looked out at a window towards St Mary's church, a cannon bullet flew so nigh the place where I stood that the window suddenly shut with such force the whole turret shook; and it pleased God I escaped without more harm, save that the waft took my breath from me for the present and caused a great fear and trembling, not knowing from whence it came'. Around the same time, her brother fell sick with smallpox and, although he recovered, 'he was very much disfigured, having been a very beautiful child'. Alice herself then fell dangerously ill, probably also from smallpox, though she too recovered, but another boy who was living with them slowly died of the disease.

In late August 1643 the Thorntons decided to move on to Yorkshire, travelling through war-torn and divided territory, via parliamentary Warrington, where they witnessed an alarm of a possible royalist attack, or perhaps just an exercise to keep the defenders on their toes, and on to Wigan, which had been 'sorely demolished and all the windows broken', where they were received with some suspicion. Attempting to cross into North Yorkshire, they were stopped by parliamentary guards at Downham, near Clitheroe, subjected to 'harsh language and abuse by a parliament corporal and his gang', arrested, threatened 'we should be stripped' and held overnight in 'a pitiful house for shelter', before a parliamentary colonel and distant relative heard of their plight,

⁸ J. Spicksley, ed., *The Business and Household Accounts of Joyce Jeffreys, Spinster of Hereford, 1638-1648* (Oxford, 2012); the monthly account for August 1644 is at p. 255. See also R. Tittler, 'Jefferies, Joyce (c.1570–1650)', *ODNB*.

confirmed their pass and ordered that they be allowed to travel on unmolested. For a year or more, they lived quietly with relatives in a small North Yorkshire village, also visiting another relative nearby in Richmond, troubled by nothing more than occasional family illnesses, including an outbreak of food poisoning which, in typical fashion, Alice turned into a highly dramatic and spiritually confirmative incident in her autobiographical account. 'It pleased God to preserve me from death, which I was nigh unto by eating a little piece of lobster. That day I had taken physic, for it turned on my first sleep when I wakened into an exceeding terrible vomiting and purging, and so followed with such violence that they could not make me any help, nor could I have so much respite or ease until I could take anything; and this continued all that night and the next day until night, but by the gracious blessing of God upon some respite and things given by Mr Matrum, with my dear mother's care, I escaped that desperate fit and by degrees was cured, only it brought me very weak and faint'.

One brother, Christopher, went off to school in York around this time, but thoughts of the whole family moving to York in spring 1644 were abandoned at the onset of the parliamentarian siege. Hearing news of a possible battle on Marston Moor, they feared for Christopher's safety and another brother, George, was sent to fetch him; 'he happily met him riding out of the town to see the fight' and took him up on his horse and carried him away, for a time 'pursued by a party of horse of Scots', though the pair arrived home safely at midnight, 'out of those great dangers of being murdered', as Alice rather dramatically put it. Her brother George, newly returned from France in fact, was wrongly suspected of being a royalist army officer and so he was forced to move on and 'lived obscured from all people' for a while.

The rest of the family, including Alice, stayed on in now parliamentarian-controlled Yorkshire, living mainly at Hipswell near Richmond. However, as known royalist sympathisers, their life became tougher, for they were harassed by mainly Scottish troops, occasionally plundered 'of meat and drink', compelled to pay £25 per month to support the parliamentarian war effort and required to take in 'a troop of Scots on free quarter'. The family became hard pressed financially and was forced to borrow money to cover costs and expenses. Alice herself, now in her late teens, kept out of the way of the Scottish soldiers as much as possible, but one day she was surprised in her mother's chamber by a Captain Innis, whose eye she clearly caught and who 'began to be much more earnest and violent to have stayed in the house'. The family managed to get him out, 'who was so vile a bloody looked man that I trembled all the time he was in the house', though he then approached Alice's aunt with an offer of marriage to her niece, only to be rebuffed there. Alice hid herself elsewhere when he paid a return visit to their home, causing 'this villain captain' to threaten cruelty. Financial demands increased and, with his troops, the captain, 'most vile and

cruel in his oaths and swearing' against mother and daughter, returned and demanded more money and led off their cattle. The family suffered other losses in the mid 1640s, including the lingering death of Alice's only sister, who was buried quickly and during the night in Masham church 'by reason of the parliament set and Scots, who would not let a sermon be preached'. But Alice and her mother survived the civil war and were still living together with some of her brothers in Yorkshire as the main war ended and as the Scots pulled out. A long if not always happy life lay ahead of her – both her husband, the son of a middling Yorkshire landowner with parliamentarian connections, whom she married in the early 1650s, and six of the nine children they had together, died quite young – and she proved to be the longest-lived of the authors whose works have been explored here. She lived on into the early eighteenth century, dying full of years during the reign of Queen Anne, after a long widowhood taken up with religious and charitable activities and writing 'my own book of my life, the collections of God's dealings and mercies to me'.⁹

⁹ A. Thornton, *The Autobiography of Mrs Alice Thornton*, ed. C. Jackson (Surtees Society 62, 1873), pp. 28-53. See also A. Hughes, 'Thornton [*née* Wandesford], Alice (1626–1707)', *ODNB*.