

A Periodic Interview with the King of Terrors

February 1771–December 1778

By James Meikle

1730-1799

February, 1771. Last night a person was removed by death, who, though feeble and infirm, had fond expectations of recovery, and strong desires to live. O what is it in this world, that is so bewitching; and what in the eternal world that is so forbidding—that we recoil from *that*, and cleave to *this*? If life is sweet, and if a man will give all he has for his life, should not living in the presence of God be a thousand times more welcome? It is a moving spectacle to see malefactors, being banished to foreign climates, taking the last look of their native land, with weeping eyes, wringing hands, and broken hearts. But it is a joyful parting, when some illustrious and agreeable stranger is taking his last farewell here of all his friends, being recalled to his native country and his prince's court. With heartfelt joy, he loses sight of the shore, to reach the nobler climate. Let me never look, then, on the approach of death, like a rebel banished to some inhospitable isle—but like a son going to his native country, and his Father's house.

March 5, 1771. This day is a mournful remembrancer to me of the death of my dear sister. A melancholy twelve months has not blotted out my loss, though I see that the dead go to the land of forgetfulness. But, amidst my sorrow, I sink into the same situation. Sorrow for our departed relations is the most irresistible, and yet the most unreasonable of all sorrow. It cannot profit the dead—but may hurt the living. It characterizes the heathen, who sorrow as those who have no hope. But is foreign to the Christian, who has a future world always in view, and eternity at hand. With my better informed part, I triumph over grief—but my human feelings still deplore my loss. When *sense* looks beyond the grave, it sees nothing but inscrutable mysteries, and appalling prospects—and it *succumbs*. But when *faith* looks beyond the grave, it sees all things amiable, inviting, safe, and tranquil, in his unchangeable love—and it triumphs. O, then, for a steady faith for that important, that approaching hour!

May 1, 1771. It is common to complain of the troubles of life, yet they are kindly designed to loosen our affections from the world. If our life were all clear sunshine, without care or confusion, jar or contention, disappointment or pain, how would we be glued to the world, and cemented to the things of time, since amidst all the disasters which occur, we are still so attached to the transitory things! "God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness."

Hebrews 12:10 (NIV)

May 7, 1771. On this day, when many miles from home, I had a warning of my own death in the dying aspect of an acquaintance, a correspondent. He is done with this world, and so weak that he cannot speak of the other. When my situation shall be the same, let this Monthly Memorial witness for me that I have expected it. And that I have now and then thought on a future state, and the world to come.

May 30, 1771 (birthday). Why do I mention my birthday but to remember the day of my death? And it is remarkable, that the wisest of men, and an inspired writer, makes no account of the whole human life—but of these two grand events—to *be born, and to die*—as all the rest are either so short, or so trifling, that they deserve no notice. By the first, I am served heir of future worlds, and the universe combined against me cannot defraud me of this inheritance. And by the last, I am put in actual possession of eternity itself—where the contest of monarchs for kingdoms, appears as the struggles of school-boys for toys and trifles; and where the kingly scepters and crowns of gold are utterly despised by all the immortal multitude, in either state—for there is a state of endless felicity, **and** of eternal torment! O to secure my interest! ascertain my state!

June 6, 1771. Many things we should place over against one another; as death—in opposition to life; judgment—to all our actions; the dark grave—in opposition to our grandest mansions; our soul—in opposition to all our acquisitions; eternity—in opposition to time; heaven—in opposition to earth; and God—in opposition to all finite existence. And then we will be at no loss to know our duty.

June 15, 1771. This day an uncommon and melancholy providence sends a promising boy and an affectionate father to the grave together! The stripping, though heir to an estate, fevers and dies. The fond parents are overwhelmed with sorrow, yet the sorrowful father writes the burial-letters. But who should think that he should accompany him *in the coffin* to the house of silence! His life seems to have been bound up in the life of the lad; for, after putting the lifeless, yet beloved clay into the coffin, he faints, perhaps from some insupportable pang of grief, and excess of sorrow—which cut his heart strings in two!

I sympathize, I feel for the survivors. The tender mother laments the loss of her son—and no husband to comfort her! The inconsolable widow laments her dead husband—and her son is not alive to allay her sorrow! The tender-hearted children are lavish of their tears for their brother—but have no kind father to sympathize with them. They are swallowed up of sorrow for their departed parent—but their brother is dead, and cannot sympathize with their mourning!

What should any man, what should I, expect in the world—but disappointment, lamentation, mourning and woe? How sudden, how irresistible—is the call of death! Here one must not wait to bury his oldest son, dispose of his other

children, or comfort the wife of his bosom!

October 23, 1771. No man knows whether love or hatred will be in store for him. But to the saint, everything comes in love. How am I kept still alive, when, lo! a laborer in God's harvest is carried hence in the very bloom of life! A desolate congregation, a disconsolate widow, and helpless orphans, make the scene very mournful! But his disembodied soul has no connection with terrestrial things—it is full of glory, full of God! Ah! what worldly enchantment holds me, that I am not more conversant with the invisible world?

November 5, 1771. When I hear of the death of a saint of God—or when I think of my own death—why do I grow pale? To go home to his native country, and his Father's house, to meet with all his dearest friends, to enter into a palace, to receive a kingdom and a crown, to put on immortality, and be clothed with glory—must give us an idea of grandeur and felicity! Now, all this ensues on the death of the righteous, and may make us rather bless his situation, than bemoan his death!

February 20, 1772. Several of my acquaintances have commenced members of the invisible world, and their last possessions below are a few feet of putrefying earth. One of them dies on a visit, and in two hours. Another sleeps out of life, yes, so to speak, sleeps himself awake through the night of time, into the broad day of eternity. While others, by acute diseases, are stripped of their mortal state. It seems essential to death to come upon all man-kind unawares with respect to their friends, if not with respect to themselves. Let the friends of a dying person wait on him, and expect his death every day, yet when his death comes, it will be at an hour that they looked not for, at a moment that they were not aware.

March 3, 1772. The truth of the above appears in a young hopeful person, who gets only a broken shin. But that brings on a fever. And the fever ends in an unexpected death.

What am I to expect in the world but lamentation? The more comforts I enjoy—the more crosses I may expect. The more friends I have—the more funerals I attend. Why should I dwell on my sorrow? Why repeat, that on this very day two years ago, I lost a dear friend! Silence. And rejoice, O my soul! that your Redeemer lives.

April 7, 1772. How are my departed acquaintances this night employed? Just as they were employed below. The soul that delighted himself in God, maintained communion with God, panted after likeness to him, and longed for the full enjoyment of God—is this night ravished and delighted in his beatific presence, maintains the most intimate and nearest communion with him, expands in his similitude, and, in his enjoyment of God, presses on and aspires eternally after more and more of God. But the ungodly, in none of whose thoughts God was, who slighted his love, and trampled on his law, and in everything fled from God—

is this night filled with tormenting anguish, horror, and remorse, is made to drink of the wrath of the Almighty, and is eternally separated from God, and from the glory of his power.

Heaven and hell are begun in time. If, then, on earth I have not my heart in heaven more or less, I may be assured that I shall never be personally there. And he that ripens not for glory, must be fitted for destruction. And to such, death is death indeed.

May 30, 1772, (birthday). On the day that I was born, there was joy in my father's house. But on the day that I must die, there shall be sorrow in mine. But whatever sorrow there may be in my family, and among my friends—may there be joy in my soul, even joy unspeakable and full of glory. Many feast their bodies on their birthday; may I feast my soul, in the faith of being admitted to the marriage-supper of the Lamb! I am entered on another, and, for anything that I can tell, perhaps the last year of my life. O! then, to live every way like one upon the confines of eternity! On this very day I attend the funeral of a person but a little older than myself. And before I myself am much older—others must attend mine.

June 2, 1772. What satisfaction can I find in a round of vexation and vanity? and what else can I expect in the world? Though I should never rest until death, yet death shall bring me to my everlasting rest. And by a strong faith thereof I enter into this very rest. Sin, the greatest of all evils, does the saint many good offices, among which this is not the least—to reconcile him to death. For when he finds his enemies often assault him, and he himself often hurried into acts of rebellion—must he not long to pass over Jordan, that he may never more offend his rightful Lord and best Friend?

July 6, 1772. O that spirituality were my element! then it would be no pain to think on death, as the door to eternal glory. The fish cannot live on land, the land-animal cannot live in the water; what supports life in the one, is death to the other. An angel could not live on earth, a devil could not dwell in heaven, nor (O strange! O true!) a worldly man! Everything seeks its element, and tends to its center. O that sacred love were my element, and God my center! then shall I breathe in the one, and soar towards the other.

October 6, 1772. From this world, which has much occupied me this morning, I retire a few minutes, to think on death, and glance at the world to come. For what do I bereave myself of rest? Could I add kingdom to kingdom, unite empire to empire, and bundle all the scepters of princes, kings, and emperors together, and possess myself of them—what would this do for me in the hour of death, or in those solemn moments when I must stand at heaven's tribunal? Nothing, or worse than nothing—even an addition to my guilt, an aggravation of my sin!

October 12, 1772. This is a melancholy day to an affectionate father, and fond

mother, who send to the house of silence, their little family. The two boys, though different in their ages, in one day are laid in one grave. Many a year the married pair longed for the blessing of the womb; it was obtained—but now all their joy perishes in the untimely tomb. They never had more children, and probably never will have more; therefore they must be sorrowful to their very soul. O then, to take God for our all, that we may be comforted against grief on every side, and enriched against every loss below!

November 3, 1772. I am pained at my very heart to hear of the death of a dear acquaintance! Indeed, he is gone from the service of the lower sanctuary, to join the triumphant song of the higher house. But why am I surprised that a journey comes to an end—that a traveler arrives at home? What, then, is life but a journey—and the living but travelers? O to believe this, and to have my eye on my latter end!

December 2, 1772. How must our dead friends who are gone to God, to glory—pity our ignorance in lamenting them as cut off forever, from every desirable enjoyment—when indeed they are only carried to be possessed of their utmost wish, and to be blessed above their widest hope! This is the case with my dear acquaintance; he is above all sorrow, and satisfied with the abundance of every good, even with the exuberance of God himself.

January 6, 1773. It is often fatal to grow remiss in important points. So has an army been many a night under arms, and kept the strictest watch—but growing at last secure, has been surprised and overthrown. Some die so openly profane, that hell, in the eyes of the world, opens her flaming mouth to receive them. Others descend by a back passage to the pit. In like manner, some, as it were, steal incognito to glory, while others rise in the broad day, amidst a cloud of witnesses, to bliss. Oh! to carry as much of heaven in my life, as to let the world see that I am traveling heavenwards. And as much of death in my meditation, as will remind me that I am traveling to the tomb!

February 2, 1773. If I am traveling to the land of promise, to the Canaan above—it will afford me comfort, that I have gone so many days journey through the desert, and am now almost within sight of the better country.

April 1, 1773. The whole employment of a well spent life should be to prepare for death, and improve for eternity. If, then, I have a mortal life, why am I thus glued to the things of time? And if I have an immortal soul, why am I not more enamored with the realities of eternity, with the joys of heaven?

May 4, 1773. As this is the month in which I was born, it may not be improper to ask myself a few questions:

1. How many years have I lived in the world?

2. Can I say that I find myself either more willing or more ready to leave it, than I was many years ago?

3. Do I relish earthly things less, and heavenly things more than formerly?

4. In a word, do I believe myself really nearer death now than ever?

If the spirits of just men made perfect, and holy angels, be my friends; if heaven be my home, and God be my Father; why do not I long to see my friends, to arrive at home, and to be admitted into my Father's house, and into my Father's presence?

May 30, 1773 (Birthday). While I would sanctify this day, being the Lord's, it may be proper to put myself in mind, that as children are born in every day of the week, so we may expect to die on any day. But O to be the happy person, who, whenever death comes, may expect to enter on an eternal Sabbath of rest! Death may deprive me of the ordinances below—but then it shall bring me to the temple above, and to the more spiritual worship of the inner house. If my life be hid with Christ in God, then the very prospect of death, which shall usher me into his heavenly presence, shall be like life to my soul.

June 12, 1773. There are two seasons in time in which the whole world are put on a level, the hour of birth, and the hour of death. Thus one of some rank among men, pants in his last pangs like one of the common people, and gives up the spirit like any other son of Adam.

Though death is of great consequence to every person, yet, with few exceptions—what a trifle is it to the rest of mankind! What a faint impression will it make, and how soon will the event be forgotten! for how should those remember that *monitor of mortality*—the death of their acquaintance—forget that they themselves shall die? And it is nothing to the other parts of creation though all the human race should fall into the grave! I look through the window, and see that the lilies in the garden hang not their head, though their master is no more, nor the tulips lose their sparkling variety of colors, though their proprietor is pale in death. And yet, surprising to tell, precious in God's sight is the death of his servants, his saints.

How should I dwell now in the day of health at the throne of grace, since I may be so fast held by death for days before my death—that I may not be able to pour out a prayer!

July 9, 1773. Why do not I rejoice at the thoughts of death? Shall it not be the day on which I am discharged from all my burdens, freed from all my foes, crowned with my highest expectations, and carried to the very throne of God?

November 2, 1773. However terrible death may be in itself; yet what a change

does redeeming love make therein to the saints; for at this solemn hour, they are only said to fall asleep! When the sick or fretful child, which has long kept its mother in motion and pain, falls asleep—she encourages its tranquility, and rejoices in its repose. Why should we then disquiet ourselves so much when our friends fall asleep in Jesus?

December 7, 1773. God keeps the time of our decease hidden from us, that we may be prepared to meet it **every** day. But because we know not the precise time of our departure, we put out of mind that we shall ever die, and become oblivious to death. Thus, we counteract the kind design of Providence

How shall all heaven dilate my soul, in the very moment I shall enter into the invisible world! A change—sudden, sweet, transporting—shall pass upon me—and earthly cares, and worldly concerns, and carnal delights, and temporal pains, and corroding sorrows, shall never more be known. Such views may balance the fears of death. And make me meditate on the decisive moment with composure and peace.

May 30, 1774 (Birthday). How short is the span, and how brittle is the thread of life, the experience of numbers can tell. Two days ago, a person sits down without any complaint of sickness or pain, and expires without a groan. And who can tell but my death may be as sudden and unexpected? Should not such events be caveats against reveling and feasting on our birthday? May the day of my death in all respects be better to me than the day of my birth! In a word, I must either bless God for being born again—or curse the day that ever I was born!

July 1, 1774. One thing that renders the disembodied state solemn, is appearing in the immediate presence of the great God. Now, were my soul sweetly and intimately acquainted with God, and admitted into heavenly communion with him, I would have no pain nor perturbation at entering on the nearest presence of my dearest Friend—death would change my place, not my company.

August 2, 1774. As a person may have the form of godliness without the power; so may I have the form of remembering my latter end, without a right practical remembrance of death. To say something of mortality by rote—and to believe myself a dying man—are quite different. O to have such a belief of death, as to make me walk circumspectly whatever I do, every day moderately careful for the present world, and earnestly careful for the world to come!

September 6, 1774. A prospect of my latter end may make me less careful about all intervening concerns, of whatever importance. The king needs not to be much in love with a crown, nor the slave much loathe his chain—if both are to be removed tomorrow.

October 4, 1774. Cares without, and corruption within, make my situation here

but melancholy. Yet, like the worst of all slaves, I am in love with my chains, and solace myself in my bondage.

November 1, 1774. Coming home from a long journey—let me remember, that I have a much longer journey before me. My present journey has been to no purpose, and might have been avoided. But that journey cannot be avoided, and, I hope, shall be to the noblest purpose, in winging me home to my native country, and my Father's house. Why does my heart not beat with joy, at the thought of my eternal home?

December 1, 1774. O king of terrors! what havoc have you made, what numbers led to prison, since I appeared in life! If thirty years measure the life of man, I have seen the world wholly swept, and well near half spent again, of all its inhabitants! For though numbers, as I have done, arrive at forty-four, greater numbers die at fourteen. And should hundreds see sixty years, thousands never see six moons. Or, should one now and then see ninety or a hundred years, yet greater numbers never see the sun at all. But, O death! however you may appear to the wicked, know that you shall only perform the drudgery of a conquered, a captive king, to all the saints of God; even draw them in their clay chariot to the gate of glory, and open the chariot-door, that they may step into the immediate presence of God.

December 6, 1774. This day death has brought to the house appointed for all living, a youth, who two days hence, was to have presented his sister to her bridegroom on her wedding day! How is sorrow, and mourning, and woe—inlaid and wrapped through all the affairs of human life, that we may never forget to be serious, even when permitted to be most cheerful! The friends, if they have any feelings of humanity, must make but a mournful appearance on the wedding day, since so near a friend is no more.

January 2, 1775. Not a year ends, or begins—but with lamentation, mourning, and woe, to many. And this should moderate the mirth of all, since the lot of one may be the lot of all. The case of the young man who was interred two days ago, rouses up all the tender feelings in my soul. In his last illness, he has the use and exercise of his reason, and is extremely solicitous about his eternal state; begs his friends to hold up his case to a throne of grace; cries out, that he is willing to be an eternal debtor to free grace. But withal deplores that he has not the least assurance of the dreadful step! What diligence, what care, can be too much, to make our calling and election sure, and make us go triumphing off the field of battle!

February 5, 1775. When I see a person wasting under an inveterate consumption, I am ready to say to myself, how soon must that soul mingle in the eternal and unchanging world! But is not every man—am not I—as surely under the sentence of death as he? A few weeks, and a few years, make no difference to candidates for eternity. Therefore may I say, how soon must every man, how

soon must I—mingle in the eternal and unchanging world! And what proofs of this just now surround me! There an infant, that can scarcely be said to have seen the sun—dies, unseen, in the silent night. And there a sister, that a few weeks ago performed kind offices about her dying brother, is laid in the house of silence. And there one acquaintance, who had betrothed one of his children, cannot remain to see the nuptials solemnized. And there, another acquaintance is hurried off by a few hours illness, and leaves a young family and a bedridden widow. These are lessons from every quarter, from every situation of life—they are loud, and are all directed to me. O to hear them for my good!

March 7, 1775. This is the melancholy day that robbed me of the last of my near relations. But were I assured that all my dear friends were sometime very soon to make me a visit, and have nothing terrifying in it—but converse with me a few hours on the most pleasant and improving subjects, how would I forget my mourning in expectation of the longed-for meeting! Well, then, though they shall never return to me—I am certain that I shall go to them; and as certain that, when we meet in the heavenly presence, we shall be better company to each other, than we ever could be below—and the perfections and love of God shall be our inexhaustible theme through endless day!

March 24, 1775. A few days ago, my horse being frightened, jumped from under me, so that I fell to the ground, and fell on my forehead; had it been on a stone, or with greater force, it might have been a mortal blow! Wherever I go, or whatever I do, there is but an hair-breath between me and death! But happy I, if I be still nearer to your love than to death itself.

April 2, 1775. There is a time in which we account ourselves young; and there is a time in which we ought to think ourselves growing old. What is in youth—that we are so fond about it? What is in old age—that we are so averse from it? It is life we seek in the one—and death we shun in the other. But in every period of life we *may* die, though in old age we *must* die. From this time, then, I will look upon myself as in the afternoon of life, and as uncertain when my sun may set to rise no more. But, O! that then a better day and a brighter sun may arise on me—never to be obscured, never to set again!

May 2, 1775. As I would wish to enjoy the society of saints and angels after death, so would I eagerly wish for the company of saints in life. Death can never hurt nor separate the happy members that are united to the glorious Head. Twenty years ago, I was full of plans and schemes about my future life. But should not my care, concern, and anxiety be diminished now according to that great deduction of years? for while I know not if there remains a year or two to plan for, I am sure there are twenty years gone that I shall never have more concern with.

May 30, 1775 (Birthday). This day, one in high life is to be laid in the silent grave; while another lies silent in death. Now distinctions cease forever, and the

disembodied soul of a king carries no nobility with it into the eternal and unchanging world. O! then, to put on the righteousness of the Savior, by which I shall shine when the sun and moon are extinguished. Many a birthday have I seen; it would be folly to expect to see many more. But may I see a better day—when days, and months, and years are no more.

It is a work sufficient for our whole life—for every moment of our time—to prepare aright for death. And yet any other trifle easily gets the ascendancy. If in the course of the week, one were to secure to himself as much money as would comfortably sustain him as long as he should live—with what constant care, unabating eagerness, and vigorous anxiety, would he attend to the acquisition! But when eternal happiness is to be secured in a few years, months, or days of an uncertain life—what madness is it to neglect the golden opportunity until all is lost!

June 6, 1775. A deceased person has left immense riches to a near friend. Some envy, others wonder, and all talk of it. But what can the bequeathed wealth do for the survivor? Alas! the shining heap cannot—procure health, banish sickness, give peace of mind, secure against anguish and disquiet, defend against the wrinkles of old age, or bribe devouring death!

What advantage then, shall the obtaining of this vast wealth do to the possessor—who also in a little while must be stripped of all by death? How happy, then, to have my treasure laid up in heaven! For death, instead of tearing me from my possession like the men of the world—shall bring me to the full enjoyment of my everlasting all.

July 4, 1775. Such, by nature, is my attachment to life, such my aversion from death, though I cannot always live—but must at some period die—that it is highly needful *periodically* to fix my meditations on death. He is in a melancholy case—whom the prospect of death makes melancholy. But thrice happy he who rejoices in view of death. What are riches, honors, titles, family, and friends, pleasures and delights—in the hour of death, in the day of eternity? Again, what are poverty, disgrace, disappointment, solitude, pain, and anguish—in the hour of death, in the day of eternity! Then, whenever the vanities or vexations of time, swell and appear big in my eyes, I will look to the hour of death, to the day of eternity, and see them decrease and forever disappear.

August 1, 1775. How am I like an old tree, that, while near the time of being felled, strikes its roots deeper, and spreads them wider, and thus takes a faster hold in the ground—which it must leave so soon! O to have the carnal mind removed, the affections set on things above, and this world kept under my feet! Just now, since I began to write, a letter has arrived, informing me of the death of a friend. And this is giving me a recent instance of the truth which I would gladly imprint on my mind—that *I am but a sojourner below*. O to be much conversant about that world where all live unto God, for in this present world we die to one

another very fast. Those who today mourn over a dead friend—in a little while die themselves, and transfer their lamentations to the disconsolate survivors. Hence, mourning shall never be out of the world, until suppressed by deeper astonishment at the resurrection of the dead, and the coming of the Judge.

How mournful the condition of my friend! The husband has lost the wife of his youth—the wife of his bosom. And his children have lost the knees that dandled them, and the breasts which nourished them. So must all the tender relations be torn asunder by the iron hand of death. O! then, to have a relation that will bid defiance to death itself!

September 5, 1775. A right belief concerning death will moderate every passion, and every expectation. Why should we excessively love—what we must lose so soon? Why should we greatly fear foes or afflictions—which so soon shall be no more? Why expect any felicity on this side the grave where death renders every joy uncertain? But the unchangeable God—we should reverence with filial fear, love with glowing ardor, and in his plenitude expect all satisfaction.

November 12, 1775. How miserable would our life be, if often visited with sickness, or attacked with such acute pain as I felt last night! a pain so intense, that I cannot have a full idea of it now that it is gone. What language, then, can describe—or what thought comprehend—the wretched state of those who feel pains infinitely more excruciating, and tortures more infinitely agonizing than anything in time—while the soul, in every power and faculty, feels anguish and distress, torment and despair in a superior degree to the body? And alas! how many are rushing to this dreadful state!

O for gratitude to my kind deliverer! And O to improve the rosy hours of ease and health in preparing for the world to come!

January 2, 1776. The year is ended—and another begun! So must my life end—and I enter on another state! O to begin the heavenly state in time! O to bring eternity near by faith and meditation—since it is drawing nearer every day! The patience of God is not exercised, and the kindness of Providence is not poured down—to make me forget that I must shortly go hence, and be no more seen—but to bring me nearer to himself, with whom I would hope to dwell forever—even when I am traveling on the way.

April 2, 1776. Last night, four hours sleep departed from me by a slight pain in my head. What then, thought I, must their situation be, who are tormented through the endless night of wrath! who cannot wait for the morning-light, because the day is fled from them forever! O it is sad to take up Saul's complaint at our latter end! "Health has departed from me; time has departed from me; opportunities are past; friends and I must soon part forever; the Philistines are upon me; sickness is upon me; anguish has come upon me. And, which sums up all—God does not favor me—but is about to depart from me forevermore."

May 7, 1776. Amidst a world of uncertainties which daily beset me, of this I may be sure—that death will certainly come upon me! And since I cannot shake myself free of vanities and vexations—death will come and set me at safety from them all. Death is a change that is daily realized by many in the world—and yet is a stranger to the meditation of the greater part of the world.

May 30, 1776 (Birthday). It is the custom of people in high life to feast on their birthday. May I also feast my soul in view of that state of eternal glory, towards which I hope I am going! This is the day which brought me into the world, and that day is fast approaching that shall bring me into the eternal and unchanging world. The day of my death is solemn—and cannot be avoided. Here I accuse myself of the most consummate folly, that I am so concerned about a few earthy trifles—when my future state is so near, and a whole eternity is before me. To grow in grace, and ripen for glory—should be the main employment of a life that is daily drawing nearer to its end. I adore the providences of this last year. I accept of the chastisements, and mourn over all my sins and shortcomings.

June 4, 1776. Death, in some respect, comes on all men unawares—but the saint never shall be greatly surprised. He is like a man about to go on a sea voyage—who, while waiting for a fair wind, entertains himself agreeably, contracts acquaintances, and mixes with company. But when the wind is favorable—he is suddenly sent for—he springs to his feet, bids all his friends adieu, and with alacrity hurries aboard. Thus I know I must die—but when, I cannot say. I expect it some time—but may meet death at a time I did not expect it. O to be watching for the heavenly morning, as the sentinel watches for the morning light!

July 2, 1776. What a poor thing is funeral pomp! The silent grave devours up all! But what a sweet thing is sound hope in death, and consolation in my last moments! As my last moments are daily approaching—O that they may be my best moments, and bring me to my endless rest.

July 16, 1776. When any of our friends die—at what pains are we to hope they are in heaven! How fond are we to believe that their heart was good, and their grace was real—that though we saw their failings! We collect everything good about them, to render it probable that they are in heaven. From all which, what I would infer is this—why should not every man, why should not I, give all diligence to make our own calling and election sure, while alive? It is sweet to have the evidences, scriptural evidences for heaven, in our own bosom, shining through our life, and dropping from our tongue in our last moments. We wish to hope our friends in heaven when they are dead; why not to secure heaven for ourselves while we live? If it is comfort to us to think that our friends are in heaven—should it not be our consolation to see ourselves going to heaven?

August 24, 1776. I see some men, though arrived at the verge of life, and

emaciated with disease—still fond to protract life—which, if much longer protracted, must become a very burden. This folly I condemn in others. And when I arrive at the same period, which is fast approaching, I wish I may not be guilty of it myself. Had I bright views, through a strong faith of the heavenly glory—I would rather long to die, that I might be forever with Christ—than to dwell enthroned on this earthly ash-heap, where crowns totter, scepters break, and war and confusion overwhelm the nations, and where sin and corruption make continual inroads into my soul.

October 1, 1776. As our harvest-work is over—and our cares subside. And when all the fruits of the field are gathered in—our whole concern is turned into another channel—to prepare the ground for another crop. Just so, since much of my time is over—why is not my concern about the things of time greatly lessened? Since eternity is the approaching period—why do not I make provision for a world to come? Again, to weary reapers, what can be more agreeable, than a soft bed and a sound sleep at night? Such is the death of the happy soul who dies in Jesus—his toils are finished, and his weary dust shall rest until raised up immortal.

November 5, 1776. How soon must life—and all the scenes of life—come to an end! But, happy is the heir of heaven—since all the fullness of God, since all the glories of eternity—are his when time is no more! I wish to enjoy God in his gifts, in his creatures, in his ordinances, in his graces, and in his Christ here. But in his glories, in his Son, and in himself hereafter, in the highest degree of perfection.

December 3, 1776. When I come to a bed of languishing, may my comforts flow rather from the prospect of a better life, than from my hopes of recovery. But this I see, that he who is not serious in the hours of health, may be sad and sorrowful—but will not be serious in the day of trouble—at the hour of death. **To live careless about our soul, is the way to die under stupidity of soul.** Conscience may sometimes be awakened, yet the man die unconverted. O to be kept from a false hope—or faithless fears! Then shall I rejoice in the prospect of death.

This day the man who once was my bitter enemy, is in trouble: but I behave as he were my brother. And, before him who searches the heart, I desire to send my prayers to the throne of grace for him. He who rejoices at the calamity of his enemy—has a disease in his own soul that may cause him to mourn.

December 19, 1776. It is a melancholy day for this sad family. O that it may be a day of reflection with all! For to trifle on the brink of eternity is dreadful! And where—but on the brink of eternity, does every living man stand? The widow and her daughters weep in the house, and the boys weeping attend the coffin—as their husband and father is lost in death. Nothing but a lump of insensible clay is before us. But O happy orphans, whose father is God! and happy widow, whose Judge is the Lord!

December 22, 1776. Shall I be more astonished at the stupidity of the dying sinner—or of his surviving friends? Here an intimate acquaintance of mine expires, and his relations say he has gone straight to heaven! And yet, O strange! though convinced that his death was at hand, he drops not a single word in commendation of Jesus! He has nothing to say in praise of free grace. He asks not one prayer to be addressed to the throne of grace for him. He has no complaint of indwelling sin, or the errors of his life. He has not a word of godly advice to give to any around him. This man has no fears--nor any exercise of grace, or actings of faith. He is never observed to be in prayer--and yet fears nothing!

December 31, 1776. Last night pain admonished me—that my life, like this year, must have its last day. But what must the anguish of a *soul* in pain be, when it may not complain, or has none to complain to! Death lays the saint as well as the sinner very low. But there is a noble balance here, for when my mortal frame is almost dissolved—my heavenly state is well near begun. When my friends, sad and disconsolate, cover my dust in the grave—my soul, glad and triumphant, is crowned with unfading glory. You, my friends, may weep on my account—but it should be for joy at my felicity, and not for sorrow at my departure. If the dying saint was never in such a deplorable state, as at the time of his death—he was never in such a happy state, as at the time of his heavenly exaltation. Then, though there may be a mourning and lamentation in my house on the day of my death, there shall be joy and acclamation in my Father's house! In the hour of my entering into heaven, and in the general hallelujah—I shall forget all my sorrow, and be filled with unspeakable joy! The sorrow of relations must diminish, (the sooner the better,) but my joy shall be on the increase through eternal ages.

January 1, 1777. I have begun another year. Yet I cannot be certain of another day! I have a whole eternity before me--and to prepare for that, may well employ all my time!

Death in itself is a melancholy time to all. But the death of some has something in it very afflicting to friends. Thus my acquaintance, alone in his room, and come to warm himself at the fire is seized with a fainting fit, and falls into the fire, where he is roasted to death before any person enters the room! And who but the poor mother who had suckled him comes first in—and finds him in this deplorable situation! What she feels, I own I dare not attempt to put in words.

Alas! who can tell in what manner I must die? O to die in Jesus, and I shall be safe, whether drowned in a stream, or devoured by the flame.

January 13, 1777. What sad aggravations have the sorrows of some! My school-fellow and friend, who has been many years far abroad, and by his fond mother long expected home—ah! poor mother, how often has your imagination, with heart-felt joy, anticipated the happy meeting, arranged the kind embraces, and

the mutual endearments, with all the subsequent scenes of happiness on the reception of your son! But while the happy day is expected, the mother receives no letter from her dear son. So she writes, chiding the ungrateful silence, and at the same time breathing motherly affection. Well, what is her answer? None! Instead, news comes from that country informing the mother that her son has died! O how many arrows must pierce the tender heart! She, like the mourner of *Nain*, is a widow, and has lost her only son. Then, may the compassionate Savior, though he raise not her son now, yet comfort and support her soul, and say, *Woman, weep not.*

April 1, 1777. Whatever disappointments Christians may meet with in time; death will not disappoint us at the end. And we may think less of all lesser disappointments—in view of this great and eternal change. I have lessons of mortality every day, and admonitions to remember the world to come—and yet how little do I think on these things? This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

May 1, 1777. The more pleasures we possess—the more pains we may expect. He that has the dearest relations to heighten his bliss—may fear the severest anguish in losing them. Just so, this day my near neighbor and dear friend—who has one son that shines in the world, and trades to foreign lands—gets the melancholy news that he has died! The affectionate mother, who longed to embrace her son, whom she had not seen for many years, and whom she had expected very soon to see—is crushed in the most tender manner, and is drowned in mourning and woe, while the father feels all the severity of a manly grief. But the invisible world calls off my attention from lesser things, to ask the state of his soul. O! then, to die in Jesus—and all shall be well.

May 24, 1777. Some men are threatened with death through some severe disease—and a compassionate God sometimes pities them as his creatures, not as his children, and girds them anew with strength, as he did Cyrus of old—though they have despised him. But it is melancholy to see the unrepentant sinner go to the very gates of hell, hang over the pit, and very near plunging into it; and yet, when pulled back by the hand of God, run on to perdition and woe!

May 30, 1777 (Birthday). This day, coming from a long journey—I have arrived at my 'home'—or rather 'inn'—where I only lodge a few nights on my journey to my 'long home'—the silent grave. Now as a traveler is thankful—though not over solicitous for a good night's lodging—so I desire to thank God for the conveniences of life which I enjoy—while I would wish to fix in my mind, that I must soon remove from everything below. But O what a noble habitation is the heaven of glory, the temple of God.

July 1, 1777. I have now finished a part of my house that has long stood unfinished. But I desire to remember, that death can as easily find his way into my house now as before—and that, though snatched away from it, I shall neither

be surprised nor disappointed. Not surprised, for I dare not boast of tomorrow. Not disappointed, for I shall lose an earthly cottage—and find a heavenly palace! In the mean time, I bless God for my habitation here; and much more for the hopes of a better habitation hereafter.

August 5, 1777. I desire to believe that I am daily approaching the eternal and changeless world. And that I may, at any time—be summoned to the solemn tribunal of Heaven, to give an account of every word I speak, as well as every work I do. Alas! what inattention to the truths of God stares me in the face! And O, to live as a dying man—and for eternity!

September 2, 1777. The daily disappointments I meet with in the world should loose me from the world, and prepare me to leave the world. O to believe that everything below is vain—and to long for the better, eternal country! To him who is to bless me at the end of my journey—well may I commit the guidance of my journey. And though some parts of the road are rough, I will walk cheerfully on it, not because I do not feel pain—but because my heavenly Guide is pleased to lead me along it.

October 1, 1777. A young man, while marrying a wife—has lost a parent. How is his joy over his bride, mixed with sorrow for her who bore him! One day the son is married; the next day the mother dies; and on the next day the old woman is interred in the churchyard. This is a scene exquisitely mixed, and extremely moving.

October 7, 1777. Vexation and woe are inscribed on human life. Here the children lie on sick-beds—but their moans and complaints do not disturb their poor father, for he has just fallen fast asleep in death! The poor wife is just recovering from a fever—to do the last kind offices to her husband and her sick children—of whom some are so concerned about their own decease, that they have scarcely time to mourn for their departed parent. Amidst the sick groans of his little family—he yields up his spirit and is no more.

November 4, 1777. Four weeks ago, the aged parent lost his son, and attended him mourning to the grave. Now he has lost his wife—but being in a fever, and having lost his reason—he cannot be persuaded that she is dead. He seems also on the very verge of the invisible world! O the sad disasters—the heavy crosses and calamities that waylay us in our journey through life! But happy if they all end at death—and happy is that soul which is prepared for death, and pants for heaven!

December 2, 1777. Thousands are apprehended by death unawares! O to be prepared for death! O to be ready to move to the eternal and unchanging world! O to go hence with cheerful alacrity—like one going home to his father's house, and to his dearest friends! If I would be thus prepared, I must not have two homes—but I must account myself a stranger here on earth—and heaven must

be my home!

January 6, 1778. We may end the year in overindulgence—and begin it in vanity. But we should end it as we would wish to end our life—and begin it as we would wish to begin eternity—that is, with God. In this—how faithful am I? but O to be wise in all time coming!

March 3, 1778. **Time** is one of the talents put into every man's hand, and is more precious than we are well aware of. To prepare for death, and to improve for eternity—may well employ our time though ever so long. O! then, how may my heart weep to think how much precious time I have trifled away! O to be wise in all time coming! Lawful recreations are allowed by God. But in this, how soon may we go beyond what is lawful! Too much pleasure in them, too much time spent about them—spoils all. When our amusements become a part of our employment, or call us away from something more necessary or noble—it is high time to drop them altogether.

April 4, 1778. The eye of clay, as it were, sees better and shines brighter—in the youthful spring of life. But there is a period, when I must daily see worse and worse, until my eyes are closed in death. Now, when minute objects are beheld with difficulty—may faith, the eye of my soul, see heavenly objects with delight.

April 7, 1778. Our life may be happy in the enjoyment of the good things of time. But we can never be truly happy, until we can hope to be more happy in the days of our death, than we have been since our birthday. O how near am I to the day of death! Should not I, then, let go the things of life in view of eternity?

May 5, 1778. Is it possible that a man may live until he forgets that he must die? Yes! The greater part of the world has forgotten it! Alas! how often am I likely to forget it myself—and that amidst all the admonitions of my own mortality—and in the frequent deaths of acquaintances and friends.

May 30, 1778 (Birthday). I have seen many birthdays—but am uncertain if I shall ever see another. There is one day which is awaiting me—a solemn and most important day—which shall change my company, my state, and my employment. Every event, the nearer it comes—is the oftener in our meditation. But death, which is the cardinal, the crowning event—often comes like an enemy—by surprise—and seizes us while we think it to be at a very great distance away.

July 7, 1778. Confined to time and sense—I lose the sight of the future, eternal state—though it should be my whole concern. But O to have my views widening for eternity, all my powers opening for glory, and my whole soul panting for God! If I have a monthly interview with death, I should also take a monthly farewell of everything below. Farewell, then—all that I possess—all that I expect to possess in time. But welcome all the treasures of eternity—all the fullness of God!

August 2, 1778. The shorter my time grows—the brighter should be my views of eternity. I should feel the less for troubles or disappointments, as the very sphere in which they move (time) is soon to be removed. What sparkling glories cheer me—while eternity opens before me, with all the unspeakable joys of paradise! What can one feel in time, that has such a prospect! O to live in view of that eternal and changeless world where I shall shortly be—and possess whatever I can wish or desire—and more than I can conceive!

August 27, 1778. Alas! from the nearest friends rise the sharpest sorrows and griefs. A woman, long renowned for piety, meets with some worldly losses, (what else should we expect in this perishing world?) and turns peevish, repining, and discontented. The poor husband shares in the misfortune—but keeps his temper, while she sees everything going wrong, loses all peace of mind—and hangs herself! O how changed the scene! In that house pious acquaintances used to meet for prayer. But now Satan walks along in triumph. In whatever form death may come to me or mine—let not Satan be the attendant.

September 18, 1778. A man may have few comforts—and many sorrows. And he that has many comforts—must have some sorrows. Thus the parents carry their young child in perfect health to bed; and in the morning the mother rises and leaves it, as she thinks—fast asleep. But how surprised, when, after a good interval, she looks, and finds the infant stiff in death! I sympathize—but cannot conceive the astonishment, the terror, the grief and anguish—which must overwhelm the mother's soul!

October 6, 1778. Why do I have loads of cares on my mind—when in a little while I and they must part forever? Why must I be so concerned about the trifles of this life—if the land of glory is before me? O to be weaned from this world, and to have my affections set on eternal realities! Whatever is my lot in this present world—it quiets and comforts me that I am under the government of the God of heaven.

November 3, 1778. He who has appointed the bounds of my life, has also regulated all the changes thereof. O what tranquility and comfort may it yield me, that my lot is at his disposal—into whose hand I shall commit my soul at death! Nothing that can take place with me, can prevent or postpone my death. But death may prevent many things that I either expect or fear; therefore, I should never be too anxious or too fond of anything below.

December 1, 1778. How various are my cares? How many are my enterprises? How constant my strugglings? How numerous my fears, about a life that is short and uncertain! It is only natural to be wise for this present world—but to act the arrant fool about the eternal and changeless world to come. O to believe, that as sure as I am now alive—in a little while hence I shall be dead! O to believe, that as sure as I dwell now among men—I shall go in a little while, to dwell in the eternal and changeless world!

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