

1833

MEMOIR

OF

ANN ELIZABETH PIERCE,

WHO DIED IN H——N, MASS.

AGED NINE YEARS AND SEVEN MONTHS.

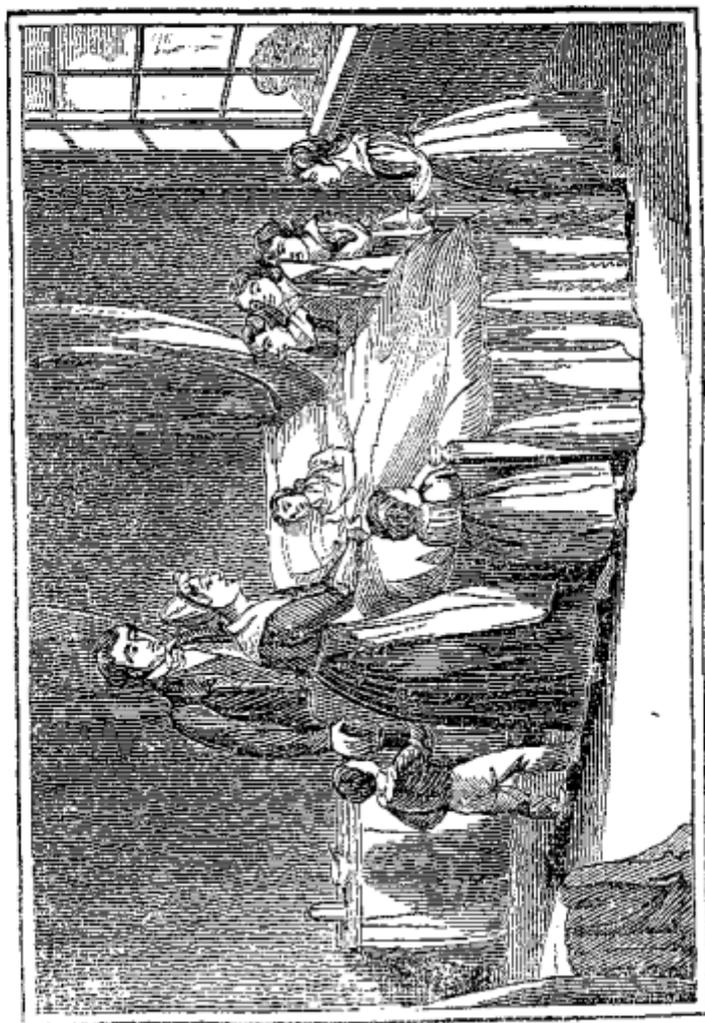
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MEMOIR.



CHAPTER I.

*Elizabeth's history previous to her conversion—
Her conversion, &c.*

THE subject of the following Memoir, lived in H———n, Mass. Her name was ANN ELIZABETH PIERCE. She was about nine years of age when she died; and died, as is believed, in the faith of the gospel.

Her case is the more remarkable, inasmuch as her opportunities for religious instruction and improvement

were very few and limited. Her parents were neither of them pious, and of course did not give her a religious education. They did not give her up to God in baptism, nor train her up particularly in the way she should go. Though they doubtless respected religion, yet they were not in the habit of teaching her out of the word of God, or of going away with her to some retired place to pray with her and for her, and thus teach her to pray for herself. She had few or none of those precious means of instruction in religion, which the children of pious parents have.

Beside this, she lived in a remote part of the town, between four and five miles from the meeting-house, so that she had but few opportunities of going to meeting on the Sabbath. And as

to other meetings, the people in that neighborhood were rather opposed to them, so that there were very few of them for her to attend. Of course, she had almost no opportunity of getting religious instruction from attending religious meetings.

Indeed nearly all of the religious instruction she ever had, she received in a small Sabbath school, which was established in that part of the town some three or four years since. And this she was not able to attend more than two summers. She attended it in the summer of 1830 and 1831; and in the summer of 1832 was taken sick. Her sickness was what is called a consumption. Of this disease she died, February 3, 1833.

While able to attend the Sabbath school, she attended with great regu-

larity, leading her little sister with her, and was remarkable for getting her lessons well. On a certain occasion, when a little girl was turned out of the school for not getting her lessons, Elizabeth was grieved, and said to her mother, that she was afraid she should not get her lessons well, and should have to leave the school too. She was always attentive also during prayer and whenever any person addressed the school, and was at times evidently affected by the remarks which were made.

But attached as she was to her school, and profited as she was by it, God saw fit to send sickness upon her, so that she was unable to enjoy its precious privileges longer. Consumption seized upon her, and her strength failed. She did not however murmur

or complain under this dispensation of Providence. On the contrary, while her sister was absent at school, she would sit patiently and silently by herself, and when asked by her mother if she felt worse than she had done, would reply pleasantly, 'No ma'am.' Unless questioned, she would scarcely say any thing all the day. Her mother used to wonder at this; for Elizabeth was naturally very talkative. She supposed at first, that it was because she did not feel as well, but when Elizabeth told her that it was not this, she hardly knew what to make of it. After Elizabeth obtained a hope however, the matter was explained. She then said to her mother one day, "I have thought a great deal about dying, that you never knew of;" from which her

mother infers, that she was thinking of this at these times.

In the first part of Elizabeth's sickness, her grandmother, who was a pious woman, came to see her, and, among other things, talked with her about dying. Elizabeth said she did not think she was prepared to die, and that she must have a new heart before she could be.

About four weeks before her death, her grandmother visited her again. At this time she seemed to be quite anxious about herself, and talked with her grandmother a great deal about dying. She used to ask her to read the Bible and hymns to her, and to pray with her. Her grandmother remained there several days, and before she left, a great change was apparently effected in

Elizabeth's feelings. In reply to questions proposed to her, she said, "I am willing to die, but I am concerned about my father and mother." "Mother," said she, "I used to think I should get well, but I do not think so now. I think I am prepared to die, and I feel willing to die; and now I want that you should be prepared to die, so that you can go to heaven and be happy with me. And father," she added, "I want you should give your heart to the Saviour *now*, and become a good man, and be prepared to die. *It is easy to do it if you will.*"

At another time she said to her mother also, "Mother, I want you should be a Christian and give your heart to the Saviour *now*. You *can* do it if you *will*; for it is easy." At another time she said, "Mother, I

wish you would pray with me.” Her mother said she did not feel as though she could, and added, “ You must pray for yourself, Elizabeth, and for me too.” “ I have been praying for you, mother,” said she, “ but it will not do any good unless you pray for yourself.”

Such, dear reader, were the opportunities which little Elizabeth enjoyed for instruction in religion. Almost the whole of them consisted in the privilege of attending a small Sabbath school, taught by two or three pious ladies, and of attending it too only two short summers. And yet, as you see, she learned the way of salvation, gave her own heart, I trust, to the Saviour, and then besought her father and mother to do so also; assuring them that it was “ *easy*,” and that nothing but their own unwillingness prevented their doing it

“*now.*” Does not her example, then, reprove you? Have you not enjoyed greater opportunities than she? Have you not had line upon line and precept upon precept, where she had scarcely a word? And are you still in your sins and unprepared to die? Then, dear reader, little Elizabeth, by her example, speaks to you, and bids you prepare to die. And if you will not heed the admonition, you must expect that she will rise up in judgment to condemn you. *Where much is given, much will be required.*

“There is an hour when I must die,
Nor do I know how soon 'twill come ;
A thousand children, young as I,
Are called by death to hear their doom.”

CHAPTER II.

The rich man—The wicked child—The good child.

IN the same neighborhood in which little Elizabeth lived, there lived also one Mr. T——. When in health, he was very worldly-minded, and was untiring in his efforts to lay up treasures here on earth. He had, accordingly, become quite rich. He was the richest man in that part of the town. Indeed he owned quite a number of the houses, and a large part of the land in the neighborhood. But all his riches could not keep him from dying, nor could he carry them with him. He was taken

sick and died just a week before little Elizabeth. Elizabeth, it seems, had been informed of his sickness, and one morning said to her mother, "I wonder how Mr. T—— feels this morning in his mind." "I do not know," said her mother, "but I think it is not likely he feels as you do." "I do not think he does," said she; "I should be loath to change places with him with all his riches." She probably felt that she had chosen the good part and laid up durable riches in heaven, and that these were infinitely better than all other treasures. She remembered the Saviour's injunction, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust

doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”

At another time, an individual who watched with her, informed her of the death of a little girl, who was opposed to religion, and when at the Sabbath school would read her book in prayer-time, in order to divert her mind, so that she might not hear the prayer. She was taken sick and deprived of her reason ; and in this state she died, without having manifested any change in her feelings. This event made a deep impression on the mind of little Elizabeth. She spoke of it often ; and said, “ How bad that little girl’s parents must feel, to think that she died so.”

In the same part of the town in which Elizabeth lived, there lived also another little girl, by the name of Mary Ann Wheeler. She also was taken

sick about this time, and died about two weeks before Elizabeth. She was five years and seven months old, when she died. She was an only child. About six months before her death, she appeared to be unusually serious, and, at times, absorbed in deep thought. "Mother," she would occasionally ask, "if-I am a good girl, will God love me?" The summer before her death she saw little Elizabeth, and was told that she was sick and must die soon. This made a deep impression on her mind. She never forgot it as long as she lived. She spoke of Elizabeth often, and asked, "Will she go to heaven, when she dies?" And sometimes added, "Mamma, what do they do in heaven?"

When guilty of a fault, she used to be grieved, and would say to her

mother, "Mamma, if I say my prayers, will not God forgive me?" Mary Ann was also anxious to learn to read, and about three months before she died, she would select pieces for herself to read, and seemed delighted to read where she could find the name of Lord, or God. "I never smile," said she, "when I read those words." She was also fond of learning hymns. The following,

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies," &c.—

Watts, 65th Hymn, B. II.

was a great favorite. She requested her mother to sing this to her, two days before her death. And when her mother told her she could not sing, little Mary Ann herself, although her throat was exceeding sore from her disease,

(the canker-rash,) tuned her voice, and in broken accents, for the last time on earth, sung her sweet, favorite hymn.

When her death was mentioned to Elizabeth, she recollected that she was an only child, and said to her mother, "How lonesome they (Mary's parents) must feel to-night! But, mother, it will not be so with you when I am gone, for you will have so many other children left." This is only one of the many ways in which she seemed to be endeavoring to prepare her parents for her death. At other times she talked familiarly of her own departure, and charged her parents repeatedly not to weep for her; for she was going to be happy with God. She inquired familiarly, respecting the place in which she should be buried—whether in the grave-yard where her grandfather was

—whether her father and mother would be buried there also ; and thus, in various ways, seemed to be familiarizing her own mind as well as theirs with the idea of her death.

One of the most striking instances of her conduct in this respect, was seen in the manner in which she distributed various little articles that belonged particularly to her. She gave her hymn-book to her father, saying, “Do read it, father, for I want you should become a good man.” She distributed some of her things among her cousins, and among the rest, did not forget a little boy that her mother had formerly taken to nurse. To her little brothers, she gave the certificates she had obtained at school by her diligence and good conduct. Of these she had quite a number. She directed her mother to

keep them for her brothers, until they were able to read them, and then, said she, "Give them to them, and tell them to keep them to remember me by." Her clothes she gave to her sister, and as she did it, said, "Now, I suppose, mother, you will cry when you see them, but I do not want you should." These arrangements were all made with perfect composure. At this time, and indeed at all times, after she indulged a hope, she spoke of dying with as much composure as she would of going to visit a friend; and uniformly when she saw any one weep, she would request them not to weep for her.

Thus, dear reader, did the rich man, the wicked child, and the good child die, as it were, together, and go down into one grave. And little Elizabeth, too, as you will see, soon followed them.

But ah! how different in their death!
“ Let me die the death of the righteous,
and let my last end be like his.”—Yea
let it be said of me when I die, “ Bles-
sed are the dead who die in the Lord,”
and I envy not the rich ; nor would I
change places with the monarch on his
throne. *Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for their's is the kingdom of heaven.*

“ 'Tis religion that must give,
Sweetest pleasures while we live ;
'Tis religion must supply,
Solid comfort when we die.”

CHAPTER III.

Elizabeth's desire for religious conversation and prayer ; and for the salvation of her friends.

THE following incidents illustrate, among other things, how very much Elizabeth desired the salvation of her parents and others around her. In this respect she seems truly to have imbibed the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and in the exercise of her enlarged desire to have embraced the world.

On a certain occasion, a little infant (her cousin) was brought into the room. She had ever been very fond of this child. "Do you not wish," said some

one, "that it (the child) may be a good child and go to heaven and be happy with you?" "O yes; and *every body else*," was the reply.

At another time she called her little sister to her, as she came from school, and conversed with her, saying, among other things, "You *must* be a good girl and mind your mother, and not tell any lies or speak wicked words."

One Monday morning, she said to her mother, "I hope that Aunt R— or Aunt H— will come here this week to see me." Being asked why—"Because," said she, "they will talk with me about religion." In this she had her desire. Her Aunt H— came, and brought S— H— (Elizabeth's cousin) with her. She was a professor of religion. She remained with Elizabeth some days, during which she asked her

repeatedly to pray with her. She accordingly did so. When she was about leaving her, Elizabeth could not consent to have her go until she had made another prayer with her. Indeed it seemed to be her greatest pleasure to have those come to see her, who would pray with her, and converse with her on the subject of religion.

Her cousin S— H— says, “When I first went to see her, I thought she exhibited a remarkable degree of patience for one so young. At that time I did not know the state of her mind. Accordingly, on asking her a few questions, I was surprised at her answers. Said I, Do you love the Saviour, Elizabeth? ‘Yes,’ was her unhesitating reply. But how long is it since you thought you gave him your heart? ‘Last week,’ was her answer. In reply

to my inquiry, she then said, she was willing to die, but wishing to know whether she realized what she said, I asked, Are you willing, Elizabeth, to be laid in the cold ground, and leave your dear parents, and brothers and sisters? 'O yes,' she replied, with a great deal of feeling, 'I had rather die and go to heaven.'

"One day some of her playmates came in to see her. After they were gone, I said to her, Do you not wish that you were well, so that you might go with them? She replied, 'I have sometimes wished I was well, but I do not now; I had rather die and be with my Saviour.'

"At another time she said to me, 'Can you pray?' I can, was my answer. 'Well,' said she, 'will you pray with me?' I told her I would,

and, as there was no other person present, added, Are you ready to have me pray with you now? ‘But are you not willing,’ said she, ‘that mother should come in? I do want she should.’ I told her I had no objection. It was evident, that it was her great desire that her parents should become interested in religion. She often expressed great anxiety on their account. To her mother she said, ‘Now I do wish you would be a Christian, why won’t you?’ ‘I will *try*,’ said her mother. ‘Well,’ said Elizabeth, ‘I know you can if you will *try*.’ To her father also she said, ‘O, I want to see my father a good man! Father, you can be a good man.’ He replied, ‘I don’t know as I can.’ ‘Yes,’ she answered, ‘I know you can—you can be good now.’

“ Such was her very great anxiety in their behalf; and yet, on the Saturday before she died, when her grandmother asked her if she had any fears of death, she said ‘None;’ and added ‘I am willing to die, and to give up all my friends, and every thing in this world for Christ.’ ”

Thus you see, dear reader, that death was disarmed of terror to her. Like Paul, her heart’s desire and prayer to God in behalf of her friends was, that they might be saved. And like Paul, too, she was ready to depart and be with Christ, esteeming it far better than continued life on earth amid earthly friends. *For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

CHAPTER IV.

Elizabeth visited by two ministers.

IN conclusion, I will give the substance of what passed between Elizabeth and two clergymen, who called to see her during her sickness. The first who visited her, was the Rev. Mr. W——, of U——. The following is his letter giving an account of the interview.

U——, June 1st, 1833.

Dear Sir,

Being requested by the parents of Elizabeth to make her a visit when sick, I will, agreeably to your desire,

state, as nearly as I can, some questions that I asked her, and her answers. This was but a few days before she died. I said to her, You are sick, very sick, Elizabeth. She replied, "I am." You wish to get well again, do you not? "If it is God's will I should; if not, I am willing to die." But, said I, it is a great thing to die, and appear before God; and as you love your parents, and brothers, and sisters, had you not rather get well and live with them? "Yes," said she, "I do love them, but I love God *more*." Did you always love God? "No—I did not. I can remember when I was afraid to think of God. It is not so now." Where, Elizabeth, do you expect to go when you die? "I hope," said she, "to go to heaven." But why do you hope to go to heaven?

“Because I love Christ.” And why do you love Christ? “Because he is *holy*, and hates sin.” And do you *hate sin*, Elizabeth? “I did not once,” said she, “but I do now.”

Here she made a long pause and looked at me very earnestly, and then said, “I want you should *talk* with my parents, and pray for them. I am afraid they will be lost.” I then asked, Do you wish to have them go to heaven? “O yes,” was her answer, “and my brothers and sisters too.” And who else do you want to have go, said I? “*Every body*: I want all should love God.”

Before leaving the family, prayer was offered up in the name of him who hath said “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

Yes, my dear brother, such was the evidence that I obtained by this interview with young Elizabeth, that I felt fully satisfied that she had been renewed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost; and I have reason to believe that she *now rests* in the bosom of her Saviour.

Yours, affectionately,

B—— W——.

The day before Elizabeth died, another clergymen called to see her. At this time, she was so much distressed with coughing, that she could hardly say any thing. From what she did say, however, it was evident that she remained in the same happy state of mind, and looked forward to the hour of her departure, with the same joyful expectation that it would only be

the hour of her release from pain and her entrance into rest. She did not wish to live, she said, but had rather go to heaven and be with God. Being told that heaven was not like this earth, and that its happiness was in most respects unlike the happiness of earth, inasmuch as it consisted in loving, and praising, and serving God, she replied, "I know it;" and added, "I am going there, and shall see God and praise him." She then requested the minister to pray. He did so, and left her.

She remained in the same happy frame of mind until her death. At length exhausted nature failed, and on the 3d of February, 1833, little Elizabeth fell asleep in Jesus, and entered, as is believed, upon the employments and enjoyments of a better and a brighter world.—"Blessed are the

dead, who die in the Lord.”—Of a truth, “Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, thou hast perfected praise.”

“Happy soul, thy days are ended,
All thy mourning days below :
Go! by angel guards attended,
To the arms of Jesus go.”

In conclusion, then, the writer of this would say to every reader, especially to every parent, and every Sabbath school teacher, that in this brief history you have another witness to the truth, so long and so criminally overlooked, *that little children can be converted unto God*. And these witnesses are multiplying. God grant they may be multiplied a thousand-fold! And every one of them, reader, is the witness of the ever-blessed God to this

truth. Have you ever been sceptical then in respect to it? Then let me say, O ye of little faith, wherefore do ye doubt. Or admitting it in theory, have you failed to put it in practice? The greater then is your guilt, and you cannot wash your hands in innocence. On your own admission you stand condemned. O, then, make haste to retrace your steps. Do your duty. The souls of *young* immortals, perishing from neglect, cry to you for speedy help. Make amends for the past, then, by a double diligence and fidelity in future.

But it is probable that many little children will read this book. To you, then, dear children, I would say, that like little Elizabeth, you are not too young to die, or too young to give your heart to the Saviour, and repent of all

your sins. And if little Elizabeth could speak to you now out of the grave, do you not think she would tell you to give your heart to the Saviour the first thing you do? O yes, she doubtless would; and she would tell you to do it "*now*," and tell you that you could if you would, "for it is easy." Remember, then, I beg of you, all that she said. Give your heart to the same Saviour that she did. And then when you come to die, you can die as she did; and after you are dead, can go with her to that Saviour's bosom, to dwell in his presence, and to love, and serve, and praise him for ever and ever. I ask, will you do it? Will you do it *now*? *Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.*

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