

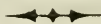
where, after a short but hard struggle with death, she slept calmly away, between three and four o'clock in the morning, Dec. 14, 1642.

“ God had taken off her heart from minding the children or any thing else, and had much weaned my heart. Notwithstanding her long weakness, her death was somewhat severe, and she was sensible to the last, though she had much feared the loss of her senses. Dec. 15, about two o'clock in the afternoon, the body of my wife was committed to the grave. Mr. Horrocks preached on Rom. vi. 23, ‘ The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ Dec. 18, God sent Mr. Hollingworth to help me, who preached on Job xxxiv. 29, ‘ When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble ?’ The Lord graciously assisted him. He said, ‘ One good look from God would make things well with a kingdom or individual.’ ”

A
BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT
OF
MRS. ELIZABETH HEYWOOD,

First Wife of the Rev. O. Heywood ;

EXTRACTED FROM HIS MANUSCRIPTS.



SHE was the excellent daughter of an eminent minister, the Rev. J. Angier. She was born, June 24, 1634, at Denton in Lancashire, the place where her distinguished father was minister many years ; and was baptized, June 29, by Mr. Henry Root, then preacher at Gorton, a neighbouring chapel. She being brought up at home, partook of her parents' excellent dispositions. She was naturally very forward in learning any thing, so that she could read some of the hardest chapters in the bible when but four years of age. At six years of age, she was able to write down passages of sermons she heard, in which, by continual use, in process of time she arrived at great perfection, so that she could repeat a sermon very methodically and distinctly. This evidenced not only her natural genius, but that “ by reason of use, she had her senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” As for her acquaintance with scripture, I may say of her as was said of Timothy : “ That from a child she had

had known the holy scriptures ;” much of them she had committed to memory. She took delight in reading God’s word : not a day passed over her head in which she read not several chapters : morning and evening, she was getting a repast from this richly supplied board.

She was about eight years of age when her own dear and precious mother died, which, though it was a great loss to her, the Lord was pleased in a short time (in a great measure) to make up, by providing a very tender mother, who was very affectionate to her, and she also was very obedient to her.

She began while she was yet young, to seek the Lord God of her father, and by degrees received gracious influences and impressions. I know not but I might say, she was sanctified from the womb, or that the principles of holiness were instilled into her heart with her mother’s milk. This was an occasion of sad doubts about her state, because she did not remember any signal juncture of time when her transition from nature to grace might be dated. She was often in fears, because she had not felt those strong convictions and deep humiliations which others could enumerate. But, for my own part, I think that those who have been piously educated and have made no apparent defection into gross sin, but have kept forward in a course of secret duties from a principle of conscience, and are afraid of offending God in any thing, may conclude that their state is safe, though they have not felt those convulsions in their souls which others have had. This I have observed, that God usually comes by some affliction or conviction to take off such a person from his own righteousness, or leaves him to fall into some reproachful sin, whereby he takes occasion to awaken conscience, or leads him into some remarkable way of self-discovery, and then creates lively springings of the Spirit of grace in the heart. She constantly practised the duty of prayer. After reading the scripture, she always went to prayer, and would shut herself up in her room and be long alone.

From her very infancy, she was of so sweet and tender a disposition, that she always delighted in peace, and would never endure anger or contention. In any matters of difference that fell out on any occasion, she would often say, “ Let us yield rather than contend.” She had a remarkable dexterity in putting off, or putting the best construction on, what might tend to animosity.

She had a very tender affection for her poor brother and sister, and shed many tears for them ; especially for her brother, whose extravagancies almost broke her heart, as if she had been his mother. She loved him so dearly while they were both

young, that she would have wished to have borne his corrections for him, and many times used her endeavours to do him good. Her heart was much carried out after his soul's welfare, and she trembled to inquire respecting him, lest she should hear what is evil. O what fears and jealousies had she for him! What tears and prayers did she pour out for him, and what letters of grave advice did she write unto him! How did it rejoice her heart to read his penitential letters from New England, when there appeared any hope of his doing well!

April 18, 1656. She brought forth her first-born son, called John, after her reverend father: I pray God he may tread in his steps. The ensuing year, on the same day, she was delivered of another son, and named him Eliezer, saying, "The God of my father was my help."

The Lord was pleased to train up the subject of this memoir under the severe discipline of the rod. From her youth she suffered by the frequent visits of bodily afflictions, so that when she enjoyed the greatest health, physicians said, she was of the weakest constitution they had ever observed. It pleased the Lord to exercise her with great debility; and finding it increased the winter before her death, she took much time to set her house and heart in order for her great change, that she might be ready to take her flight into eternity. She bought no clothes but for present use, because she said she was shortly to take her leave of all. She provided necessaries for us, that we might have nothing to buy for some time. Sometimes she would speak concerning a second marriage, desiring me to keep God's way as I had done before, and he would provide well for me again. She mentioned not only some characters but persons to me, who she apprehended would be suitable and helpful to my children. Much serious counsel did she give me, which I hope I shall remember while I live. Two things she particularly urged on me: first, that I would be much in secret prayer, and look chiefly to the frame of my heart therein; secondly, that I would never pray without mentioning the church of God, "if it be but," said she, "in two or three words, yet let Jerusalem come into your mind."

Thursday, April 18, 1661, we took our journey for Lancashire with our little sons, being sent for by our dear father to Denton, to see if by change of air and other means her frail constitution might be restored. We finished the journey in two days, and as we went along, she often bade farewell to Yorkshire, and was persuaded she should never return, as indeed it proved, though I hoped otherwise. It was remarkable that God should so order this exchange, sending my dear mother to die

in my house, and sending my endeared wife to die in her father's house where she was born. When she first arrived we had some hopes of her recovery. She went to Manchester to consult physicians; but by fatigue or some other cause she was in great danger, and seemed to be breathing her last most of that night: yet it pleased the Lord to restore her for a season and bring her back to Denton, and therein to answer her request. After that, she apparently became weaker and took little medicine, for the doctors durst not prescribe for her: they said it was a consumption on her lungs.

On the Friday before she died, when she had been panting and struggling for breath, seeing the children of the family about her, she said, "Sirs, prepare for this time, for it will come to you that are young, as well as to me. I want breath to speak. O spend your breath well! not in idle and vain conversation, but to God's glory. Remember you must give account of every idle word." When her father had gone to prayer, being revived, she said, "I bless God I am better. Blessed be God for his covenant which he hath made with me, everlasting, ordered in all things and sure. This is all my salvation, all my desire." Being asked if she found God gracious to her, she answered, "Yes, in supporting and reviving me; but I do not find the Lord speaking so clearly to my soul, that he is mine and I am his, as I desire; but I would cleave to him. It is fit we should wait for him. O come, come, Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance." Addressing herself again to the children, she said, "Beware of pride: 'pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.' Labour for humility, it is a grace that adorns all other graces. Labour to serve God with a perfect heart and a willing mind; blessed are they that walk in the law of the Lord, blessed are they that fear God: it brings not only a blessing to ourselves, but to our children, sometimes to many generations. Labour to be real Christians; it is not to go to church, and hear, and come away, and no more: but if you would be Christians indeed, you must hide the word in your heart, meditate upon it, and get the sweetness out of it. There are secret duties you must also be careful of, as meditation, self-examination, and searching the heart. Labour to watch over the heart, pray for grace, and spend time well." Then turning her speech to her father and husband, she said, "You that are older, keep close to God and his truths. Do not forsake him, and he will not forsake you. Do not fear men, but choose the greatest affliction before the least sin: if you should be put to the hardest trial, and if they should take away your lives, it will but send you

sooner to your reward, and that will be no injury to you. If God do suffer those lordly-spirited men to afflict his church for a time, I believe it will not be long: the church is dear to the Lord, and he will not suffer it always to be trampled upon. O sirs, let the church of God lie near your hearts, it lies near God's heart: 'They shall prosper that love Zion: prefer Jerusalem before and above your chief joy.'

That night she poured out her soul to God in a serious and fervent prayer for her own soul, that God would shine upon her and give her the sealings of his Spirit. O what heart-melting expressions did she use for that purpose! Then she prayed for me, with reference to the place where God had placed me, and the troubles I had met with, and begged earnestly that God would continue me there. She prayed for her dear father and the ministers of the gospel, for their preservation and success in the Lord's work. Then for the family, that the Lord would reward them for their labour of love, and that he would dwell among them: and then for the church of God, that the Jews might be converted, and that the gospel might be preached to the remainder of the Gentile nations.

On the Saturday, her father asked her, "How she felt her spirit?" She answered, "All her fears were removed and her doubts satisfied, so that nothing much troubled her." Though she found not such sensible comforts and transporting joys as many attain, yet I think she felt more than she did or could express; for just as her breath stopped short, she endeavoured to speak something which she could not utter, but was taken up to her long desired rest, to feel what no eye can see nor tongue articulate.

May 26, 1661. Her blessed soul left her tender body about two or three o'clock on Lord's day morning, and went to keep a perpetual sabbath with her best husband. On the ensuing Tuesday, she was decently interred near her beloved mother's grave. Mr. John Harrison of Ashton, who preached our marriage sermon, preached also her funeral sermon on that text of which she had felt the sweetness and which she desired might be taken, 1 Cor. xv. 57, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Her death was exceedingly lamented by all; and as she was respected in her life, so she was much honoured at her death, by the solemn attendance of very many of the gentry and ministry, and great multitudes of the common people.