

ELIZA,

THE INDIAN SORCERESS.



It was in the autumn of 1823 that I met a little Indian boy on the island of Mackinaw; and accompanying him home to gain permission of his mother to bring him into the Mission-school, I first saw the then-wretched woman who forms the subject of this narrative. She was about forty-five years old. Her Indian name was *O-dah-be-tuh-ghe zhe-go-quai*; signifying, in English, the Midway-sky-woman, or the place of the sun at noon. She was born about three hundred miles up the south shore of Lake Superior, and was by blood of the Chippeway tribe.

Her uncle being a chief, she was chosen, in early life, to become interpreter of dreams. The qualifications for this honour were to be decided by living ten days in a separate

but, without any other nourishment than a little water each night. She faithfully observed the prescribed abstinence, although it nearly cost her her life; and of her own accord afterward fasted nine days more. From this time she was considered an extraordinary being. The tribe would not permit her to work, but provided her with a wigwam of distinction; and she constantly received from them the best of their food and clothing. She was also furnished with a large otter-skin, or medicine-sack, stored with every article thought to be necessary either for the magical cure of the sick, or for interpreting dreams. This sack which she carefully preserved, was her badge of honour; and in all their medicinedances she was greatest among the great. On these occasions she took the lead in drinking whisky; by which means she became so excessively intemperate, that in some of these scenes she twice lost her sack, which, with the death of two of her children and the neglect of the Indians, so dispirited her, that she abandoned herself to every vice.

About nine years ago she lost another child, the third of four. In her desperation she once tried to hang herself. At another time she threw herself into the lake; but an Indian caught her by the hair, and drew her again into the canoe. Having but one child left, she remained sometimes on the island of Mackinaw, and sometimes on the main land, with no fixed object, but to get whisky by every possible means.

She was thus living when, as above related, I found her little boy, and accompanied him to her lodge. A wretchedly destitute and miserable scene we witnessed. At that time no persuasion could induce her to allow her son to join the Mission-school. But going the second time, and the boy himself being willing, she at length, though unwillingly, gave her consent. The following spring, more out of pity than for our convenience, I employed her, on condition that she would drink no whisky, and conduct herself properly. By much counsel and care, she did so much better than I had expected, that I finally told her, that, provided she would be steady, and do such work as she was able, she might have a home with us. After this I believe she was but three or four times intoxicated.

About two years after, she began to pay a serious attention to religion, but for some time was very fluctuating. While under the sound of instruction she would be affected sometimes to tears. This was often the case at our adult Sabbath-school; though afterward, as she says, she used to throw the subject off, and become in a measure indifferent. Again,

impressed with the idea that there could be no mercy for such a creature as herself, and the thought of her religious state making her unhappy, she would avoid being present at our meetings or family worship. Yet, she says, she often felt so strong a desire to hear the sound of prayer and singing, that she has gone to the door and remained there as long as she thought she could without being discovered, sometimes till nearly frozen. During most of that winter she felt such uneasiness of mind that, not daring herself to look to God for mercy, because she was such a sinner, she felt it a relief to overhear the worship of others; as if God might possibly hear their prayers, though she was unworthy to be present. During the spring she was greatly distressed. When gathering sap she often had thoughts like these: "Here I am, going the same round daily from tree to tree, and can find no relief; I must always carry this wicked heart, and when I die, be miserable for ever." A pious Indian woman used to converse with her; and, after praying, would perhaps ask her if she did not feel the importance of joining with her in heart. She said she did; and though there was, to her mind, no prospect of ever being better, yet she would, as she says, often feel strong desires for mercy. After her return from the sugar camp, she thought that every one must look upon her condition as hopeless; and, as before, she often stayed away from divine worship, because she thought it unfit for her to be there. Most of the following summer she spent at the farm, where at times she seemed to awake to an affecting view of her religious state, and with such feelings that she often went off from the house to pray and weep alone; but for the most part she indulged in despair, and found no relief.

The next autumn we had unusual sickness in the family; and Eliza and her son Joseph were left at the farm alone for two or three weeks. They also were both taken ill, and probably suffered somewhat for want of nursing before we were aware of it and could bring them home. In reference to this time, she says that she thought with herself that she had found no relief to her mind in *our way*, meaning that of Christians; and that she would again try her *old way*, her medicine or sorceress songs; and that she spent the greater part of several nights in songs and her former Indian mummeries. After she was brought home she discontinued this; but she thinks she nearly lost all anxiety about her soul, and seemed to have no feeling further than to take care of her son Joseph, who had much profited by the instructions

he had received. He spoke to her much ; but she said she was like one who had lost her senses, and nothing seemed to move her feelings. Joseph became dangerously ill, and showed the influence of religious instruction on his mind in the time of affliction. He had a long conversation with her : he told her that he should die soon, and that he wanted her to promise him never to drink any more whisky, to remain with the Mission family, listen to their instructions, love God, and pray every day to him ; then, when she died she would go to God and be with him. At first she told him, that if he died she would die too. But Joseph said that was wrong ; for that God only had a right to call her to die when he saw fit. At length she promised him that she would remember, and do as he had requested.

During the whole scene of Joseph's death and funeral her behaviour was singularly calm and solemn ; so much so, that it was noticed by all. When she perceived that his spirit was really gone, the tears rolled down her face, and she exclaimed, in Indian, " My son ! my son ! " but further than this not a complaint or groan was heard to escape her lips.

After the funeral I sat down with her, and had a long conversation. Among other things, I asked her why it was that she appeared as she now did ; and whether it had been so at the death of her other children. She said, no ; for she had, as is common among the Indians, wailed and mangled her body in her affliction. " I have no such feelings now. God is good ; and I feel that what he has done must be right." Although she expressed no consciousness of the love of God in her soul, yet she furnished evidence that her feelings were under the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. Nor was it long before, through the mercy of her heavenly Father, she began to experience peace and joy in believing in Christ. Her soul was also filled with love to all the members of the Mission family ; and she said she felt that her own children had never been so near her heart as they. At times her mind would recur to the scene of her son's death ; but, to use her own expression, literally interpreted, " I felt as if I was in a narrow happy way ; and if a thought came to me about Joseph, it seemed like being drawn out of this way, and I longed to get back immediately." With these feelings towards God and Christians, she now became very anxious for the souls of her own people ; and said, " O, if they could only see as I do, how happy they would be ! "

When asked about the state of her mind afterwards, she said, " I have always been happy in God since then. The

more I have seen of the love of God in Christ, and the longer I have lived, the more I have desired to love him, and to love him more and more, and to be more and more like him in my soul. I do not know that I have since ever had any sorrow of soul so great as I have had for those who are ignorant of God. Sometimes, when going into church, or while there, it has made me weep to think of those who do not love God. There has never been any day since I found peace to my soul, when I did not feel that God was with me." The reason which she assigned for this mercy was, that God would soon take her out of the world, and that He was pleased to be thus preparing her for his presence." "Every Sabbath," she said, "I have felt that this leaves me one Sabbath less to be in this world, and brings me one Sabbath nearer the time when I shall be with Christ."

About two years since she was reduced quite low, and one evening was thought to be dying; but she expressed joy in the prospect of being soon with God. "I long to be gone," said she; "I want to have the time come." Afterwards she felt that she had expressed impatience, and it grieved her exceedingly; so that she had several seasons of weeping on account of it.

At another time she had gone to bed, and, as she supposes, had not slept long, when she awoke and felt a desire to pray. She arose and knelt down, but in a few moments fell asleep on her knees. This occurred again; but awaking the second time, she feared that her love to God was decaying. With tears and a burdened heart she set about prayer in earnest; her soul was so full that she could not sleep; and she spent the remainder of the night in prayer and joy in God.

I afterward put several questions to her: "You said, before you found peace in Christ, that for many months you felt yourself wretched, and that you often prayed: was it for the merits of those prayers that God gave you peace?" "No, it was because of Christ's pity to my soul; because he died for poor sinners; and it was of God's mercy that Missionaries were sent to teach me." "Do you mean that you never had any fears that you were deceived?" "I have always felt sure that God has had mercy on my soul; and the more I have thought on my old wicked life, the more it has drawn me near to God; it has made me feel more humble in myself, and a strong desire to live only for him." "But should God take away his Spirit from your heart, and leave

you to yourself, what do you think would become of you?" "I should be good for nothing." "Have you any fears that God will ever take away his Spirit from your soul?" "No." "Why?" "From what I have heard of his word, he has promised to keep those that trust in him: and I believe he is faithful to his word." "There have been several times in your sickness when you have been very low, and have had reason to think you would live but a short time: have you, at none of these times, been unwilling or afraid to die?" "No." "Have you constantly felt, that if it were God's will it would be a privilege to die, and you would be glad to have the hour come?" "Yes, I have. Lately, when I was very sick for two days and nights, and felt that God only could make me better or take me away, I thought, if it were his will, how glad I should be to be sure that I was dying, that I might be with God." "A year ago last spring you were received into the church: can you tell me any thing of your feelings at that time?" "After I understood that Christ had commanded it, I had a very strong desire to join myself to his people; nor is there any thing in this world I felt to be so great a privilege. When I promised solemnly to be for God, I really felt in my heart every word, and that I was now all the Lord's, and no more for myself or for any other. I was happier than I can express." "Have your seasons of communion with the Lord's people been always precious?" "Yes; every one of them. I have heard more of the Saviour, and have learnt more of his love from the Bible: I have felt, if possible, more and more near and happy in him." "What good do you think a profession of religion could do you, without a heart to love the Saviour?" "None; there would be no joy to my soul." "Could you have this joy and peace of which you have told me, if you did not, as far as you know, strive to serve God in all things?" "No, I could not. Though unable to labour with my hands for God, it is my sincere desire daily to have my heart much in prayer for the salvation of others; and because God lets me live, I believe he wishes me to be devoted in spirit to this." "Do you think you love God and souls as much as you ought?" "No; I try to love, but do not feel as much as I ought."

From this time her bodily powers failed, but she was strengthened in the Lord day by day. Her sufferings were great; but she was uniformly patient and happy. It was the daily practice for some member of the family to take an interpreter, and spend some time in reading the Bible to her.

She frequently spoke of these privileges with exquisite delight. On one occasion she expressed a fear that her faith was growing weak, and requested me to read about Elijah's praying for rain; adding, she had never forgot that since she first heard it. The chapter was read, and also the last of James. She seemed much strengthened, and often gave her assent while we were reading. I asked her what she understood by it, and how it applied to her. She answered, "We should pray as earnestly for the Spirit as Elijah did for rain, and God would as certainly send down a shower of grace." This was on the evening of the monthly prayer-meeting I asked her if she knew that this night Christians throughout the world were praying. She answered, "Yes; I have been thinking of it all day; and when I heard the bell ring, I knew it and felt glad." We then sang a verse, and two of the Mission children prayed in Indian. It was a blessed season; and before we closed Eliza seemed to be again on the mount.

As a member of the family was passing the door that led to Eliza's room, she heard her singing in her own language, "Heavenly Father, come down and take thy wanderer home; for I want to be with thee. O how I long to be with thee! Come, Lord Jesus, come."

On Saturday evening, as another entered her room, she took her affectionately by the hand, and began to express her feelings, but was so much affected that she could not proceed. The next day the same individual carried her "The Life of Christ." While showing her the plates, she discovered much emotion, particularly with the view of the Saviour's bearing the cross, and said, He was now near her. She then said, "I wish you to know that I did not weep yesterday for my pain and suffering, but for joy. God was very near. I did not rest while he was so near, but prayed all the time." To her heathen sister, who was sitting by her, she then turned and said, "You must not weep for me when I am gone; I am going to a better country."

As we were daily expecting her death, I took the little girls of the Mission to see her. While standing around her emaciated frame, she faintly said, "Listen to instruction. Love God, that you may meet me in heaven."

On the day of her death she repeatedly said, "I think I shall go to-day." In the afternoon she requested that the Indian hymn, "And must this body fail?" &c., might be sung.

After it was finished one of the Missionaries asked if it

expressed her feelings. She said, "Yes." She was then told, if she kept her eyes on Jesus, he would not forsake her, but go with her through the dark valley. With much emphasis she pronounced "*Baget*," the Indian word for "Yes," and appeared to be filled with the Holy Ghost. She continued to fail through the evening. As one went in to bid her farewell for the night, she clasped her hand, with eyes beaming with pleasure, saying, "I think I shall go to-night!" "Why do you think so, Eliza?" She laid her hand upon her breast, and said, "Something here tells me I shall go to-night." She then bade her a solemn, affectionate, and cheerful farewell; and, in allusion to David's words, said she "feared no evil." Soon after she became speechless. One who was attending her remarked, "You will soon get through." She cast her wishful eyes toward heaven, and seemed to say, "I hope soon to be *there*;" and about eleven in the evening, November, 1830, she died.

READER! beware lest, when you meet this benighted Heathen in the day of judgment, "*a ransomed soul*," you be, by your own criminal rejection of Christ, "*yourself thrust out*."

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