

## ELIZA ("BETSEY") COLLINS.

[Eldest child of William and Esther.]

WITH her family she left the farm and resided in the town of Litchfield. The family, for a time, provided a home for the students in the law school of the place. She afterward taught school in a little, red, barn-like structure. She was firm, clear and accurate in all things. She must have been a good teacher. Doctor Edward Beecher told the writer that Miss Betsey Collins made a strongly marked and deep impression upon him as a boy pupil in her school. He remembered particularly her explanation of the significance of the Fourth of July. She had the honor of having several of the other Beecher children in her school. She once expressed gratification but did not conceal her surprise that Harriet Beecher, "the little dumpy girl," achieved fame as one of the most effective and brilliant writers of the English language. The writer in his boyhood knew her as "Aunt Eliza." With her widowed sister, Almira, she lived in a little house across the way. The other members of the family were the old grandfather, William, and Almira's little boy, Frederick. Aunt Eliza's capacity for economy was akin to genius. She made the amount of water used in washing her face a matter of conscience. It was her regular habit during the apple season to fill a "piggin" with apples, from which she had carefully cut the decay, for the delectation of the Sunday School children, who visited her house as the repository of the Sunday School library, and to quench their thirst from the old oaken bucket which hung in a well in the door-yard. I do not remember that I ever saw her smile. I felt that she was an embodied conscience. I have sometimes thought that possibly some arctic frost had suddenly fallen on the ardent feelings and affections of her youth and chilled them to a superficial hardness. She was a representative Puritan. If in an earlier day of persecuting cruelty she had been called to a trial of her faith "by fire," she would have had the nerve to have held up the stake rather than been held up by it. If the Stoic and the Puritan had searched for a feminine model combining the distinctive qualities of both, they would have found them in her. Her placid calmness and uncomplaining fortitude served her well when in old age she lay helpless with a broken thigh bone. She left a small estate and divided it by will among some nephews and nieces. I am reminded of her kindness whenever I look upon the engravings of Cole's "Voyage of Life," which have hung on the walls of my home for more than forty years.

There was a tradition in the family that she was at one time the object of a certain preacher's admiration, but, at one motion, hastily shut the door upon his approach and upon all possible visions of marital experience. Be this as it may, she was a ripe saint and had ante mortem fitness for that world where there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage, but all are as the angels in heaven.

An interesting incident illustrative of her character appears upon another page, under the caption "Blodgett's Hollow."