

THE
SPRINGFIELD COTTAGE GIRL.



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A LOWLY cottage, near the centre of the green, in the village of Springfield, England, was the birthplace of Emma. This pleasant and healthful little village, it is said, derives its name from the very many springs found within its limits, and is remarkable as having contained the old farmhouse in which Dr. Goldsmith wrote his "Deserted Village."

Emma was the fourth child and second daughter of Thomas and Martha Sharpington. Her countenance was open and ingenuous; her disposition kind; her manners not unpleasing. Full of life and activity, she entered with spirit into the labors and pleasures of the day, and always seemed to enjoy herself, whether engaged in doing what was appointed for her to do, or in following her childish plays. She was quick of understanding in things pertaining to religion; very studious to oblige and please; skilful in the management of her younger brothers and sisters, and exemplary in her conduct to her parents.

In order to make it more convenient and easy for her mother to go to the house of the Lord, she readily undertook the care of an infant and of the little ones left at home, though loving the house of God herself, and anxious to visit it as often as possible. Alive to her mother's comfort, and to the general good of the family which consisted of eight members, she never shrunk from labor and fatigue, if an opportunity presented itself for her mother to earn a trifle, and to add to the little store of cottage comforts. To promote an object so desirable, she was observed to endure toil and weariness, and to exert herself, even beyond her strength, with an unflinching smile of good-humor and cheerful content. But what was far better

than all, early as her sun went down, it did not set until in her was found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, which sweetly shone forth in the dark night of affliction that God suffered to overtake her at the close of her eleventh year.

It was Emma's privilege to be blessed with a pious mother, and, from her earliest childhood, to have "known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." But her last were, doubtless, her loveliest and best days. Through a considerable part of her little history, she showed something that was pleasing and valuable in character, something that might justly be termed the bud of promise, something that yielded a ray of hope. The minister on whom she attended well remembers her having said to him, a year or two before her death, "I should like when I die to be an angel of God, or to live with the angels, and, like them, sing the praises of God." Her mother having noticed with some surprise, that Emma often remained a long time up stairs, was on one occasion induced to go, with slow and careful step, to find out the cause; and lo, her child was found upon her knees, praying at the foot of the bed, in the middle of the day. If at any time she left her chamber in the morning, without repeating the little prayers which she had been taught, her

mother had often the gratification of seeing her return to it to call upon the Lord.

It always appeared to be among Emma's greatest delights, to have a name and a place in the house of the Lord. Neither the rain nor the cold, her parent's consent once obtained, kept her back from the multitude of those who delighted to enter the gates of Zion. So devotedly attached was she to the Sabbath-school, that while in health, she was seldom if ever absent, except from necessity. The hymns, and the scriptural lessons there learned, were her comfort in her long and trying affliction. In singing and repeating these, she spent and enlivened many wearisome hours. It is rather singular, that the very last hymn which she committed to memory was that one by Dr. Watts beginning,

"That awful day will surely come ;"

than which few hymns are more solemn, under the pressure of spiritual sorrow, and in the prospect of approaching death. She recited with great delight the hymns and portions of Scripture which she had publicly to repeat. She also again and again repeated the ninety-sixth psalm, the last scriptural lesson that had been selected for her, with ever fresh delight.

On Saturday, the 19th of November, 1836, it pleased God to lay his hand upon Emma, and

greatly to afflict her. A violent and unusual pain seized the heel of the left foot. Nothing, however, but a small red speck appearing, her mother supposed it to be merely the effect of a chilblain. But loss of appetite almost immediately following, rendered it clear that something more serious had befallen her. During the very first night of her affliction sleep departed from her eyes. Unable to remain in a lying posture, she sat up in bed, covered with a blanket, and was compelled to awake a sister, not six years of age, who cheerfully and kindly left her little bed to hold the aching foot of the sufferer. Within one short fortnight it was apprehended that in Emma's case earthly physicians would be but of little value.

The great Being, whose hand was in all this, had so shaken the tender frame, and kindled such feelings within, as to give almost the full certainty, that pain and pining sickness would soon cut her off, and blot her out of the land of the living. On hearing the doctor's judgment from the lips of her mother, she immediately said, "I do not expect that I shall recover. I do not think that I shall live long." Such a moment and such a confession were far too valuable to be lost, or to be allowed to pass, by a mother anxious for the welfare of her precious soul, without attempting

to turn them to profitable account. She therefore instantly put to Emma the searching and momentous question, "Are you afraid to die?" To such an inquiry an answer was given without delay—an answer not less solemn and important than the question which occasioned it: "Yes, mother, I am afraid to die; I think I shall be afraid to die. I am afraid my sins have not been forgiven." "Have you ever prayed, my child?" added the mother. "Yes; I have not lived without prayer; I have prayed." "And you must not leave off prayer," continued the mother, "until you know your sins are forgiven. God is so merciful, that he will forgive you, if you ask him. And Jesus, you know, invites little children to come to him."

Emma was not inattentive to the counsel of her mother. She prayed most earnestly. Before midnight she called her mother to her, and said, "Well, mother dear, I am not now afraid to die. I hope that my sins are forgiven. I feel assured that they are." Shortly after this, she exclaimed, "I feel so happy, I must sing." On her mother's remarking, "You are too weak to sing," she replied, "Indeed I can sing;" and immediately sang,

"Glory, honor, praise, and power,
Be unto the Lamb for ever:
Jesus Christ is our Redeemer,
Hallelujah. Praise the Lord."

Then changing the word *our* in the third line into *my*, she said, "Jesus Christ is *my* Redeemer—is *my* Redeemer;" and added, "Mother, is he not a precious Redeemer? Oh, how happily could I now die, if he were pleased to call me."

Not long after, this child of scarcely twelve years was evidently harassed with sharp temptations from the enemy of mind. To her mother, watching by her bedside, she thus expressed the sorrows of her soul. "Mother, you cannot think how the enemy worries me." "What does he tempt you to do, or to say?" "O, mother, to say bad words, even to curse God; and it seems to come so powerfully to me, as though he were actually by me, and telling me thus to speak." To soothe her troubled child, the mother quickly replied, "You have never used a bad word, and who has kept you from it?" "O," she said, "I know, mother, who has done that; it was Jesus. I have not used bad words." So strongly however did she feel the temptation that she earnestly desired to die, that she might be delivered from the great enemy. She then betook herself to prayer, and so earnestly did she pray, that though her mother had left the chamber, and gone down stairs, she distinctly heard these words of her child wrestling in prayer with God: "O, my dear Saviour, take me from this wicked enemy; take

me before I commit this great sin." On her mother's return, the tender-hearted but somewhat less agitated child again declared, "I am so sadly afraid lest I should do this great wrong." But the appeal to her Father in heaven when Satan desired to have her that he might sift her as wheat, was not in vain. God heard the voice of the child, and neither despised her prayer nor turned away his mercy from her. Her mind gradually became peaceful, and she felt happy in the assurance that the Lord, who had kept her, would keep her, if she called upon and put her trust in him.

Who can describe a pious mother's feelings; who can tell her joy in beholding these gracious doings of the Lord with a beloved child, over whom she was daily expecting the hand of death to pass, and bear her away? Often had the exclamation escaped her lips, "Could I but hear my child say something concerning the certainty of her salvation, I think I could part from her, and be happy." Behold, the desire of her heart was granted. God chased away her fears, and enabled her child to say, "Now I am happy; now I am not afraid to die." Her tongue, as well as her mind, was set at liberty. Calling her father to her, she said, "Do not leave prayer till you come upon a sick bed; possibly you may not have

your senses. Do, father, pray for me, and pray for yourself, and do it *directly*; you do not know how long you have to live. Father, dear father, I hope you will repent and seek forgiveness; there is forgiveness for you; will you repent? will you seek forgiveness? I hope you will repent of your sins. Will you, father? Do, father, do! I hope that I shall meet you in heaven." She then begged him to teach her brothers, particularly the eldest, the right way, and to lead them to give their young hearts to the Saviour. "O make them pray, and pray for them." To her mother she said, "O, mother, seek to enter heaven. I will pray for you, mother." To her grandmother she said, "Do repent; there is repentance and forgiveness for you as well as for me; though you are old, it may not be too late. And do begin now; perhaps you may not have much time to prepare for eternity; do not leave it till you are laid on a sick bed: health is the time in which to begin to serve God." Then speaking to and of her friends and neighbors, brothers and sisters, and school-fellows, she said, "There is room in heaven for all, if they will but seek forgiveness before it is too late. I hope I shall meet you all there. I wish to do it."

During her heavy and most painful affliction, of nine weeks' duration, Emma was never heard

to utter a murmuring word. Such was the peculiarly distressing character of her disease, that for six or seven full weeks, even the comfort of change of posture was denied her. Often did the affectionate and astonished mother put the question, "Do you never think it hard, that God should so afflict you?" and as often did she receive for answer, "No, mother, I do not." "Do you think you deserve it, then?" asked the mother. "Yes, mother, I know I deserve it," was the instant reply. Not many days before her death, she said, "Mother, whom the Lord loveth he afflicteth. I hope that I am one of his children. Lazarus had none to comfort him; but, mother, Jesus sends me good friends.

"Oh for some angel near my bed,
To bear me to the skies."

As long as reason was in exercise, she continued to declare, "I am not afraid to die; not because I have done any thing myself: I am a great sinner; I know I have offended Christ; but I am sure that Christ has died for me."

Throughout her affliction, when she had any comparative ease, she abounded in acknowledgment of the sins of her childhood, and in supplication for mercy. Often did she confess what a great sinner she was, and frequently did she pray,

"O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the heart, wash me in thy blood of righteousness."

About forty hours before her death, she talked very freely, but with great modesty and propriety, and much artless simplicity, with her minister, for whose counsels she was truly thankful, and in whose prayers she took much delight, often saying, "I love to hear Mr. G—— pray." In proof of this, and to show in what direction the current of her thoughts and feelings ran, it may be mentioned, that at the beginning of her affliction she inquired for her minister, and expressed a wish that he would visit her, saying that she was one of the lambs of the flock, that he ought to see her, and to pray by her. At this last long interview, the minister directed Emma's attention to prayer, loving Christ, comfort in death, and the joys of heaven. Words were scarcely necessary to describe the feeling and interest with which they were received. The speaking and animated eye, the significant expression of the countenance, and the serious tone and manner, all proclaimed that these were truths to which the understanding of the child was indeed no stranger, and to which her heart had given the most cordial welcome.

A short time before her death, her minister expressed himself to the following effect: "You

have long been a child of prayer; your mother has early taught you to do that which is commonly called saying prayers; but I hope you have not always confined yourself to a form of prayer." Emma answered, "No; I have long repeated, twice a day at least,

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look on me a little child;"

"Lord, teach a little child to pray,
Thy grace betimes impart,
And grant thy Holy Spirit may
Renew my youthful heart;"

for though a hymn, sir, that is a prayer. But for some time before, and since my illness, I have frequently prayed without using any particular form, saying what was put into my mind. I am able, and I delight to follow you in prayer. I understand very much of what you say, and repeat it after you, and add my Amen. I have often done so in public worship, repeating the words after you. At such times I endeavored to attend not to the sermon only, but also to the prayers."

Alluding to a desire she had frequently expressed of again worshipping in the earthly courts of God's house, she said, "I should like to sing God's praises there once more; not but that I can sing his praises and glorify him in this chamber, but I think in his house I could praise him best."

She then intimated a wish, that after her death a funeral sermon should be preached from Ecclesiastes 12 : 1, and solemnly and slowly repeated the words, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." With great feeling she repeated the first five verses of the 107th hymn of the second book of Dr. Watts, beginning,

"That awful day will surely come,
The appointed hour makes haste
When I must stand before my Judge,
And pass the solemn test ;"

and requested them to sing that hymn and her favorite verse,

"Glory, honor, praise, and power," etc.

Being again asked if she was not afraid to die, she answered, "No." "But why are you not afraid to die?" "Because Christ died for me." "Are you not aware that you have often done that which was evil in his sight ; how then comes it to pass that you are not afraid to die?" "Because Christ died for sinners, and for sinners such as I."

After this she was only heard to make a hasty reference to one of her parents, and to utter, in a low and feeble voice, the well-known lines,

"Prepare me, Lord, for thy right hand,
Then come the joyful day;
Come, death, and some celestial hand,
To bear my soul away."

Thus died Emma Sharpington, January 23,
1837, aged twelve years and forty-seven days.

Doubtless of such children is the kingdom of
God and of heaven.

"Happy the children, who betimes
Have learnt to know the Lord;
Who, through his grace, escape the crimes
Forbidden in his word.

"Should they be early hence removed,
He will their souls receive:
For those who Jesus here have loved,
With him shall ever live.

"May we wish them, in bliss, O Lord,
For ever numbered be;
Taught, by thy Spirit and thy word
To live alone to thee."