THE

SIMPLE ANNALS

OF

A POOR CHILD.

Price Sixpence.

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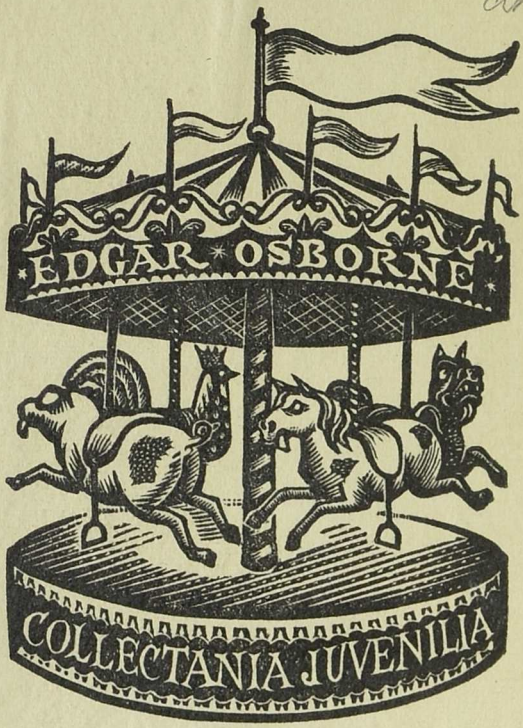

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FRONTISPIECE.

Let the sweet work of prayer and praise
Employ my youngest breath:
Thus I'm prepar'd for longer days,
Or fit for early death.

THE

SHORT AND SIMPLE ANNALS

OF A

Poor Child.

BY THE

REV. JOHN EYTON, A.M.

He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom.—*Isaiah* xl. 11.

SEVENTH EDITION.

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THE circumstances which compose the following narrative, having been found to engage the attention and to interest the feelings of almost every individual to whom they have been occasionally and partially related; it is hoped that a more extended publication of them may, through the blessing of God, be made in some measure answerable to the design of those charitable persons who, being disposed by the love of Christ to feed his lambs, are in the habit of distributing religious tracts among the children of the poor.

TO THE YOUTH OF EITHER SEX,

IN THE PARISHES OF

WELLINGTON AND EYTON,

BUT MORE PARTICULARLY

TO THOSE ATTENDING

HIS EXPOSITION OF THE SCRIPTURES

UPON THE EVENING OF THE LORD'S DAY,

THIS LITTLE NARRATIVE

IS PRESENTED

AS AN EXPRESSION OF UNFEIGNED REGARD,

BY

THEIR FAITHFUL FRIEND,

AND AFFECTIONATE MINISTER,

JOHN EYTON.

SHORT AND SIMPLE

ANNALS, &c.

HANNAH, the fifth and youngest child of Richard and Martha Beech, was born at Small-Hill, about three miles from Wellington, in the county of Salop, on the first day of January in the year of our Lord 1800, and baptized upon the 10th of the following August. About two years before this period, her mother had been delivered of a still-born child under circumstances which so greatly endangered her life, that scarcely any hope was entertained of its pre-

servation; but it pleased God, upon whom she called in her trouble, to incline his ear unto her cry, and to rescue her from the borders of the grave. When, however, it became apparent that she should again be called to undergo the pain and peril of child-birth, the apprehension that her time on earth might consequently be drawing to its close naturally revived, and the consciousness that she was unprepared to give up her account to God, (for hitherto Martha had been chiefly careful and troubled about the things of this world,) caused her to look forward to the period of her approaching trial with many painful forebodings—her heart was disquieted within her, and the fear of death had fallen upon her. But the Lord hath said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," and these gracious words were very remarkably verifi-

ed in the experience of this poor woman. She gave herself unto prayer. She not only became an importunate supplicant before the throne of grace in secret, but likewise a diligent and regular attendant upon the public ordinances of religion. She enquired with sincerity, "What must I do to be saved?" and as the truth of the Gospel began to dawn upon her mind, she took it as a lamp unto her feet, and a light unto her path. Through the blessing of God upon Martha's sincere endeavours to seek and to serve him, her fears began to subside as the time of her travail drew near; and when at length her hour was come, she found herself sustained by a satisfactory persuasion that he who had vouchsafed to bring her into the way of everlasting life, would be with her in trouble. Accordingly, the prayer which she had so frequently offered up, that if it were the Lord's will

both her own life and that of her infant might be spared, was not forgotten before God. Martha was "saved in child-bearing," and became the thankful and happy mother of a fine healthy girl, who was named Hannah.

When this little girl was about six years of age, her parents, who had nothing but what they earned by hard labour, placed her at a neighbouring school. Hannah's mother had never been taught to read, but she had now learned to attach so great a value to the knowledge of God's word, that, had it been necessary, she would willingly have submitted to any hardship or inconvenience, rather than have seen her child denied the means of forming an early acquaintance with those Scriptures which were able to make her wise unto salvation.

Even at this early age, Hannah discovered many pleasing evidences that the grace of God was upon her. The duty of prayer, in particular, appeared to engage her most serious attention; nor was she satisfied to confine herself to the form of words which her mother had instructed her to use, but would generally add such little petitions of her own conceiving as served to express her dependence both upon the providence and grace of God. Her practice in this respect was the more remarkable, because, with the exception of her mother, every other individual in the family was accustomed to neglect this important duty; and many a time has little Hannah looked at her elder brothers and sisters with silent surprise and concern, nay, she has sometimes seriously enquired why they did not say their prayers, when she has seen them heedlessly getting

into bed, without so much as bowing their knees before the Lord. With respect to herself, however, she was not to be seduced from the performance of what she knew to be her duty, either by the influence of bad example, or by that false sense of shame, which deters multitudes of the aged, as well as of the young, of the rich no less than of the poor, from following the dictates of their consciences, in opposition to the prevailing sentiments and habits of those around them. From the period at which Hannah first became capable of engaging in the exercise of devotion, it is not recollected that on any occasion she rose from her bed in the morning, or retired to rest at night, without kneeling down to implore the blessing of Almighty God.

At the age of nine years, Hannah was ad-

mitted into the free-school at Wellington; and as her father's house was so far distant from that town, the governess of the school, who resided in Wellington, was kind enough to allow her during the winter season to pass the nights under her roof, by which means the little girl avoided the necessity of returning home in the dark. This accommodation was no less thankfully accepted, than it was benevolently offered, and while Hannah upon her part became strongly attached to her governess, the latter could not but feel a particular affection for a child, who was surpassed by none of her school-fellows in diligent application to every branch of learning, regularity of attendance, general propriety of conduct, cleanliness of person, gentleness of manners, and unaffected humility of spirit.

It has been remarked by those who had

the fullest opportunities of observing Hannah both at home and at school, that a meek and quiet spirit was a distinguishing feature in her character. To the authority of her parents and teachers she yielded the most uniform subjection, while gentleness and forbearance marked her deportment to her school-fellows and companions. Hannah was a lover of concord, she would suffer rather than resist evil; and when at any time a disturbance has occurred among others, either at home or abroad, instead of taking a part in such contentions, she has generally manifested the peaceable inclination of her disposition, by retiring from the scene of strife till the tumult had subsided.

Hannah's conduct in the school daily procured for her the commendation of her teachers, and it may seem equally surpris-

ing that these expressions of approbation should have been heard without exciting any apparent symptoms of pride on her part, or of envy on that of her school-fellows: but the truth is, that, although her superiority was too evident not to be felt and acknowledged by others, her diffidence was too great to allow her to be conscious of that superiority herself.

In imparting to others, without the prospect or desire of any recompence, a portion of whatever she might happen to possess, Hannah has frequently been observed by her governess to exhibit strong proofs of self-denial and disinterested generosity. Nor was this the only exercise of benevolence observable in her conduct towards the other children in the school: for as in no instance she was ever known voluntarily

to bring forward an accusation or complaint against another; so, whenever she was required to speak of a fault which she had witnessed, she would give her testimony with evident reluctance, always endeavouring to represent the case as favourably for the offender as her strict regard to truth would allow.

But the prevailing influence of divine grace upon the disposition of this little girl, was especially apparent in the spirituality of her mind. To any thing of a vain and trifling nature, she generally manifested so great a degree of indifference, that a partial observer might have been led to think her defective in point of sensibility; but this was by no means the case, for while she was thus dead to the world, she appeared to those who knew her most intimately to be no

less alive to God. Whenever her attention was called to the subject of religion, the powers of her understanding and the affections of her heart became immediately engaged by it. She discovered an appetite for the things of God, and these constituted her pleasant food.

When it was proposed that Hannah should pass the winter nights in Wellington, instead of returning after evening school to Small-Hill, some apprehension was entertained that she might feel uncomfortable and dejected at being thus separated from her relations at home. In order to prevent this, on the first night which she passed under her governess's roof, a variety of childish story-books were put into her hands: but she soon discovered that these were not suited to her taste, and after turning over the leaves she laid them all

aside without further notice. When however the Bible or the Hymn-book was set before her, she took them up with evident marks of satisfaction and contentment, and continued to read in one or the other with such fixed attention, as to make it apparent that she was not desirous of any other entertainment.

So greatly did this little girl value every opportunity of attending upon the public worship of God, that although the severity of the weather frequently induced the governess of the free-school to propose to Hannah that she should not accompany her to the evening lecture at the church, her objections were invariably overruled by the importunity of the child, who seemed to think that in the path of duty she might securely trust in the protection and care of Divine Providence. Indeed, the exercises of religion instead of being

an irksome task to Hannah were a source of refreshment and delight; and often has it been remarked, that when towards the hour of rest she has been heavy with sleep, instead of cutting short her devotions upon that account, and hastening into bed, she has no sooner engaged in prayer than every symptom of languor and weariness has appeared to be removed.

As summer approached and the days began to lengthen, Hannah once more enjoyed the pleasure of returning home to her parents' cottage, when the business of the school was over; and never was she more happy there, than when employed in affording her mother any little assistance which she might happen to require. As soon as the work of the house was finished, the child would generally take down the Bible or the Hymn-book from the

shelf, and offer to read aloud to her mother, who was always rejoiced to take her work and sit as an attentive hearer by the side of her little instructress. Hannah was likewise particularly desirous that her mother should learn to read: and her little services as a teacher having been humbly tendered and thankfully accepted, she has frequently entered upon them with the greatest seriousness and the most affectionate anxiety for their success. Her conversation was a perpetual source of comfort, and oftentimes of edification, to her pious parent; for Hannah generally preferred to speak upon some subject with which her Bible supplied her, and her observations discovered that she was a child "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." On the evening of the Sabbath, when she has been accompanying her mother home from church, their discourse has usually turn-

ed upon what they had heard during the sacred services of the day. It was upon one of these occasions, that the child, having just been listening to a sermon upon the subject of the guest who had not on a *wedding garment*, and not thoroughly understanding what was meant by that expression in the parable, requested her mother to explain it to her more fully; and when she was informed that God did not look on the outward appearance but on the heart, and that the clothing most approved in his sight was humility, purity, love, and all the graces of the Spirit, she was satisfied. Indeed, to any external decorations Hannah had always manifested a decided dislike; and sometimes, when she has happened to see a young person extravagantly dressed, she has remarked to her mother how much better it would be if such an one would dress like a certain friend of theirs, the neat-

ness and simplicity of whose apparel she was wont to admire.

Sometimes the mother, in the sincerity of her heart, has applied to the child for information. Thus, on one of those Sundays when the Athanasian creed is appointed to be read in the church, the poor woman, who had observed the variation in the service, but was somewhat perplexed by it, enquired of Hannah what it was which the minister had read that day? "O," said little Hannah, without any hesitation, "that was the Holy Catholic Faith, and did you not take notice that it was said, Except we do believe faithfully, we cannot be saved?"

It was the custom of Martha Beech to spend an hour on every Wednesday evening in company with a few pious persons

in the neighbourhood, who had agreed to meet together for the purpose of prayer and Christian conversation. Hannah remembered this, and knowing that her mother greatly valued these opportunities of spiritual improvement, would seldom set out for school on that day, till she had enquired from her mother whether it was her intention to be at the meeting of the society that night, and when she learned that it was, she would say, "Then I shall make haste home, that I may be ready to keep house for you;" a trust which this little girl never failed to discharge with the greatest steadiness during the absence of her mother, who upon her return home generally found Hannah with her book before her.

Hannah's affectionate disposition, and the

tenderness with which she would on all occasions sympathize with her poor mother in her afflictions, formed a peculiarly engaging feature in her character. When tears such as those with which the pious parent mourns over the errors of a beloved son have been silently stealing down poor Martha's cheeks, her little daughter, having perceived the circumstance and anxiously enquired the cause of it, has endeavoured with the most assiduous affection to suggest some consideration that might tend to soothe her mother's anguish and to keep alive the hope that a day would yet come when this sorrow would be turned into joy. That day, I trust, has at length begun to dawn; may it be "as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds," that Martha may no longer have to lament, with David, that her "house is not so with

God," as her heart's desire and prayer would have it to be!

If at any time Hannah became possessed of a little money, (a privilege which her exemplary conduct at school occasionally obtained for her,) she would ask her parents permission to lay it out in some small book of religious instruction. The history of a pious child, which she had bought for sixpence, afforded her great delight, and she would make many a pleasing observation upon it when reading it to her mother. In another little book, which was given to her by her brother-in-law, were a few lines designed to be said on entering a place of worship, and beginning with the following words: "Surely the Lord is in this place, this is none other than the house of God." These she carefully committed to memory,

observing at the same time that she had found them to be true in respect to the church which she frequented, and appealing to her mother for her testimony to the same effect. Indeed, Hannah seldom read or heard any thing of a religious nature, without carrying away in her heart some seeds of divine truth. One evening, when she had been practising in company with her schoolfellows a few hymns which they were learning to sing in church, her attention was remarkably engaged by one on the subject of Jacob's wrestling with the Angel, and for some time after she would be frequently repeating with peculiar earnestness two lines in which the well-known resolution of the patriarch, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," were happily expressed.

It being customary to allow the children

in Wellington free-school a month's vacation at the time of corn-harvest, for the purpose of gleaning in the fields, Hannah spent this season with her parents; and her elder sister, with whom she was sometimes left in the house while her mother was absent, has since informed us that, at various periods of the day, she has been surprised to see this little girl retiring to an obscure corner of the kitchen, where, supposing that she was unobserved, she would spend some few minutes in the exercise of fervent prayer. With Hannah this seemed never to be unseasonable, her heart was ready; and when Martha Beech has been asking the blessing of God upon their food, or returning thanks for their homely meal, Hannah has generally been observed gently to raise her hands as if she was inwardly partaking in these acts of devotion. She humbly and thankfully

acknowledged the hand of God in the distribution of her daily bread, and sometimes, when a small portion of food has fallen to the ground, she has picked it up with the greatest carefulness, saying, "Mother, we are not worthy of a morsel, no not of one of these crumbs, are we?"

Such was the gracious disposition of which this little girl was daily affording the most pleasing evidences, both abroad and at home; when, in the month of November, 1810, she caught a severe cold, which falling upon her lungs, shortly after confined her entirely to the house, and at length terminated in her death. I visited her, at her own request, on the 18th of January, 1811, by which time the disorder had made such ravages throughout her frame, that in any other situation than her

father's house I should not have known her. Being wholly unable to lie down in bed, she was under the necessity of sitting in a chair by the fire-side, both day and night. The frequency of her cough scarcely allowed her any intervals of quiet or repose, and she exhibited every symptom of approaching dissolution. I did not attempt to conceal from her my real opinion of her situation, nor did I find it necessary even to speak with caution, when communicating the solemn intelligence that, in all human probability, she had but a short time to live. Death, it was evident, had no terrors in the eyes of this dear child, and she listened to the tidings of his near approach with such sweet composure as was truly admirable; assuring me, that, if it were the Lord's will, she should rather choose to die than to live, since she believed that

in the former case she should go to her Redeemer. As she spoke with difficulty, I did not put many questions to her, but to those which I did propose she returned the most artless and satisfactory answers. Her mother informed me, that throughout the whole of her illness she had constantly exhibited a pattern of meekness and patience. On no occasion had she uttered even a peevish word; and when the increase of her sufferings had constrained her to seek relief at the hands of God, her prayer had invariably been combined with some expression of resignation to his will. As she was become too ill to read for herself, she would often request her sister to take the book, and having first chosen some particular passage which she considered as suitable to her present condition, she would listen with fixed attention, while it was read

aloud to her. On one of these occasions, having selected a hymn on the subject of Christ's death and resurrection, with the blessed consequences thence arising to his people, her mother, when it was concluded, enquired of her if she found peace and joy in the belief that Jesus had been delivered for her offences, and raised again for her justification? to which she answered, "Yes, and I love Jesus Christ."

Several of her school-fellows having called to see her, she was afterwards asked if there was any one among them, whom she loved better than the rest, and whose company she should prefer to have? but she answered, "No, I love them all." At another time, some of the neighbouring children would willingly have tried to amuse her, and offered their little services for this

purpose; but she affectionately declined them, saying, that it was not her wish to play, she had rather be lifting up her heart to God. To one little girl who came into the house, and would have engaged her in conversation, she said, very seriously, "Go, Mary, go, I have heard that you say naughty words."

Upon the following Tuesday I went together with a pious friend to visit this little sufferer again, and we had the satisfaction to find her in the same tranquil state of mind, though she was sinking rapidly under the increasing pressure of the disorder. Her mother informed us that, in answer to the enquiries of one of the family who entered the house soon after I had quitted it on the preceding Friday, Hannah had said, "Mr. J. Eyton tells me I shall not live:"

and upon being asked if that information had disturbed her? she answered, "No, not at all, I am not unwilling to die, for I shall go to Jesus." The cough was far more distressing this morning than it had been at any former period, and her mother, perceiving that her sufferings were greatly aggravated by this circumstance, was apprehensive lest her inward support and consolation should not be proportioned to her increased affliction. She therefore took the opportunity of asking Hannah whether she was still enabled to feel the same faith and love towards the Lord, notwithstanding he saw fit to afflict her more heavily? to which she replied, that she was not sensible of any loss in that respect; "nay," she added, "I think that I love Him better to-day than I did yesterday."

The governess of the free-school, who

also visited Hannah frequently during the progress of her illness, had repeated opportunities of witnessing the settled composure of her mind, throughout this trying season, and especially towards its close. When the medical attendant had just been declaring his opinion that a very few days must put a period to the life of his little patient, Hannah expressed much satisfaction to her governess, upon hearing that the time of her departure was at hand; and added, that now she had only to pray for patience, that she might be enabled to wait the Lord's time, and to suffer all his will. For this end she was also desirous of engaging the intercession of others, and during each of my visits she herself requested that I would pray with her. God was indeed her refuge and help. To him she habitually resorted, and in so doing she had learned by expe-

rience the truth of the promise, that "they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength," for truly she was "strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."

On the following evening, when, at the request of Hannah, her mother was kneeling beside her, and calling upon the Lord, in much heaviness and sorrow of heart, for grace to help them in this time of need; the poor child, finding that she could not distinctly hear what was said, and being very desirous of bearing a part in the devotions of her pious parent, begged that she would endeavour to speak aloud; which request being complied with, Hannah was satisfied, as she could then pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also. After passing

a restless night, and feeling probably that she had but a short time to live, she took occasion very affectionately to express her desire and hope that her father as well as her mother would regularly attend upon the public services of the church, a practice from which she testified that the most important advantages had been derived to herself.

Having once more requested that the hymn-book might be brought to her, she turned to the following hymn, (than which perhaps the whole volume would have been found to afford none more exactly suited to the circumstances of her situation,) and expressed a desire to hear it read.

Shepherd divine, our wants relieve,
In this our evil day;
To all thy faithful followers give
The power to watch and pray.

Long as our fiery trials last,
Long as the cross we bear,
O let our souls on thee be cast,
In never-ceasing prayer.

While these verses were read aloud by her elder sister, Hannah appeared to adopt every sentence as her own. Patience under her sufferings, and a happy issue out of all her afflictions, now comprised the sum of her desires; and as this hymn begins in the spirit of supplication for the former of these blessings, so it concludes with asking that the latter might in due season be likewise vouchsafed.

Then let me on the mountain top
Behold thy open face,
Where faith in sight is swallowed up,
And prayer is lost in praise.

At these words Martha, desirous of as-

certaining that the prospects of her dear child were still unclouded, and that she enjoyed all the support which her circumstances called for, again enquired of Hannah whether she found herself sustained by faith in Jesus? "Yes," said the little girl, and then pausing awhile to recover her breath, which was at that moment failing, she added, "FAITH and HOPE in JESUS:" but these heavenly weapons had now performed their office, Hannah had fought the good fight, her warfare was accomplished, and scarcely had she uttered the foregoing sentence, when she exchanged the SHIELD of FAITH and the HELMET of HOPE, for the PALM of VICTORY and the CROWN of GLORY.

FINIS.

Houlstons, Printers.