

**THE DREAM OF  
PYTHAGORAS  
AND OTHER POEMS**

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The dream of Pythagoras and other poems by Emma Tatham

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**EMMA TATHAM**

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BY  
Emma Tatham.

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A BRIEF  
MEMOIR OF EMMA TATHAM,  
OF MARGATE.

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IN the early autumn of 1854 a volume was published, bearing title "The Dream of Pythagoras, and other Poems," from the pen of this child of song. Her muse at once attracted general admiration, and opinions of the press were given in a manner unusually flattering. In influential quarters Miss Tatham was commended for "great imagination, depth of thought and feeling, exquisite tenderness, great power of expression, combined with a harmony of metre rarely surpassed." One of her critics, selecting for example a passage from her "Tempest Songs," does "not fear the comparison with Shelly and Mrs. Hemans which it provokes." "Our promising young poetess," says another, "is still in the flower of her youth; and, from the sample she has given us of her powers, we prophecy that in process of time she will achieve a lasting reputation. In the poem, 'Jordan's Lament,' the subject is treated in a manner worthy of its grandeur." And (not to multiply these eulogies) even the "Catholic Standard" ascribes to her pieces "a very high order of merit;" adding a sinister observation, which, as it is characteristic of the reviewer's school, may be quoted: "There is a devout and reverential tone about Miss Tatham's writings which we wish we could detect more frequently in Protestant authors."

Not two short years have passed away, and the hand which so gently yet so effectively struck the lyre is in the dust. The following pathetic sketch will show with what deep lowliness and unaffected wonder the applauses of the public were received; and how truly the religion of Jesus Christ can refine, beautify, and hallow the graces and accomplishments of the mind. Here is a voice that speaks loudly to the young, the educated, the gifted. We stay not to rehearse its teachings: they will occur to every serious reader's meditation. One word may suffice to indicate their tenor: Nothing is great that is limited to time: nothing little that stretches into eternity. "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." (Isai. xl. 6—8.)

GEORGE and ANNE TATHAM, the parents of Emma, were residing, at the time of her birth, October 31st, 1829,—in the Boundary House of the Bedford Charity Estate, Theobald's-road, Red-Lion Square, Holborn, London. Their only other child, Charlotte, was born September 8th, 1827, and died September 6th, 1828. By the time Emma reached her fourth year, she had learned from her parents to read and write. Her memory being strong, she was wont thus early to recite with ease metrical pieces of considerable length. An old and well-worn Bible of her grandfather's was her favourite companion. The Books of Jonah and Job, and the history of Joseph, had already engaged her mind so much, that, when between six and seven years of age, she paraphrased the whole of them in verse. By reading the Scriptures, she was soon deeply impressed with solemn reverence, and a childlike love of God. One day, in a state of great excitement, she ran to her mother, and said, "*I do—I do love God!*" Present every morning at family prayer and reading, she appeared to take an interest in these sacred exercises, which is not very common in children of so tender an age. Her mother taught her short prayers, to be offered up to God on retiring to rest, and suffered her

also to express her wishes to God in her own simple way. An instance is fondly remembered, which is in beautiful harmony with a thousand later proofs of her strong filial affection. Her father having been absent for some time in the country on account of the death of her grandmother, she felt much concerned, and one night said, whilst on her knees, "O Lord! Lord! bring my dear, dear father home; and never, never let him go again."—Another instance will show her love for sacred engagements: Two little girls were invited to spend an evening with her, and shortly after tea the dear child invited them into a private room *to pray with her*.—At the age of four she was sent to school; but, the effect appearing to be unfavourable, her parents felt it their duty to withdraw her for some time. To keep her mind occupied, her father now gave her a book to write in. On the first leaf she stated, in three verses, that her intention was to fill the book with prose and poetry. And this she did, adding an index, and one verse at the end, in evidence that the design was accomplished. After that, she made a request, in three or four verses, for a small writing table; and then set to in earnest, and filled four books with passages on a variety of subjects. When six years old, she composed on one Sunday night an essay on *the soul*, and a *hymn for the Sabbath*. In this way her time was employed till she was nearly nine, when she was sent to school once more. And now she made great progress in whatever she was led to undertake. To the amusement of her governess, but equally to her delight, she still occasionally indulged her taste for making verses. After three years spent here, her parents, seeing her great desire for learning, added to superior capacities, sent her to another school, where she had higher advantages. Ere long she justified their decision, giving proof of her abilities in various departments of elegant study; the spirit of poetry still finding occasion of joyous utterance, from time to time, in thanks to her parents for gifts of books, and other favours.

To her governess she presented a few sweet verses, in which her schoolfellows were compared to the different flowers of the garden,



and herself to *the daisy*. Her French master testified by a reward the progress she made in his class; and the lady who taught her music said she had never met with a pupil before who, like her, mastered all the notes at the first lesson.

About this time she appeared to derive much spiritual profit from the discourses of the Rev. Dr. Beaumont and B. Gregory. She frequently brought home in memory the sermon, and paraphrased in easy verse nearly the whole of it.

In March, 1846, her first contribution to a public journal appeared. It was published in Edinburgh, with the title, "Lovely Spring,"—in answer to a piece most strangely called, "Hateful Spring." In the July following she was attacked with a violent hooping-cough, which so prostrated her that her life seemed to hang in suspense. Her medical attendant was much struck with the patience she manifested during much suffering. But it pleased the Lord to bring her up from the gates of death, to the delight of her parents and friends. Such was her state of weakness, however, on her return home, that it was not thought prudent for her at once to resume her school-duties. Slowly recovering, she would be constantly occupying herself either in music, or drawing, or her sweet task of poetry.

In the December number of the "Youth's Instructor" appeared a piece of hers,—"God is love." She wrote much, indeed, about this time; and several of her friends urged it, both on her parents and on herself, to give these effusions to the world. These importunities she answered in the touching lines which follow,—lines but too truly premonitory of her early fate:—

TO MY FRIENDS WHEN THEY SPOKE OF PUBLISHING MY  
POETRY.

HAVE patience with a baby-muse,  
Whose harp is yet unstrung;  
Scarce tasting the Castilian dews,  
Untutor'd, weak and young.

A wilding bird of joyous wing,  
Still heedless let her roam ;  
A timid blossom, let her spring  
In the sweet shades of home.

Why pluck the' unfolding floweret ? why ?  
O, let it yet abide,  
And from each cold, unhallow'd eye,  
In blest retirement hide.

A blight might touch its drooping leaf,  
A blight ye could not heal :  
At best, its summer day is *brief* ;  
Then cloud it not with care and grief,  
Nor teach it pain to feel.

O, let it in its own calm hour  
Unboom to the ray !  
And bloom alone, a hidden flower,  
In contemplation's calmest bower,  
And softly fade away.

I cannot stoop to court the fame  
On which earth's minstrels live :  
My laurels are of loftier name,  
Such as my Lord doth give.

Wait, till a few fleet years are fled,  
And *I am pass'd away*,  
And the spring flowers bloom o'er my head ;—  
O, wait, till then I pray !

And let me sing my little song,  
In peace unmix'd with pain :  
Have patience ; *it is not for long*  
The early buds remain.

In June following, the family left High-Holborn, and removed to Margate.

During the years 1848 and 1849, Emma suffered great mental depression. It was the time of strong temptations, and she feared she would perish. After many a struggle with sin, Satan and unbelief,—added to a deep sense of unworthiness,—she obtained, through faith in Christ, the victory over all her enemies; and from that time she went on her way looking to Jesus. The Lord gave her a deep and piercing view of the fall and depravity of human nature, which kept her in the valley of humiliation, all through her life, to the day of her passage through Jordan. She was united in church-fellowship with the Wesleyan Methodists worshipping at Hawley-Square Chapel, Margate. There she was, also a teacher in the Sunday-School, and a true lover of the little children. But she never could be induced to take “an upper class,”—preferring “the lambs,” as she styled her favourite charge. Any who manifested an inclination to be really serious, were objects of her tenderest solicitude; and these she had once in the week at her own home, for prayer, counsel, and free conversation. She was a collector for the Bible Society, and ever willing to forward, to the extent of her power, the Redeemer’s kingdom.

It was at Margate, and when she was much depressed in spirits, that she wrote most of her much-admired poems. The first edition, consisting of five hundred copies, went off in a few weeks; and a second, enlarged and revised, appeared three months later. She contributed, also, to various periodicals devoted to the interests of religion and humanity; besides devoting time and care to the gratification of friends who were continually invoking her muse. She was a letter-writer for poor and aged widows, finding a genuine pleasure in doing anything to add to the comfort of such parties. Her sympathy was, indeed, peculiarly shown toward young children and aged widows.

At the time when her poetry was passing under the notice of various reviewers, and their opinions were coming under her eye,