

THE WEE EMIGRANT'S GRAVE.

HAPPENING to be a passenger on board an emigrant ship bound to New South Wales, I became a spectator of as touching a sight as any I have witnessed in many lands. Amongst some seven hundred emigrants were many children. In one berth was a poor young woman with her one-year-old child, who, having lost her firstborn in Sydney, had gone home to Scotland that her second should be born in her "ain countrie." She was now taking the wee bairn to its new home, and its yearning, expectant father.

But the little one fell sick of some unknown trouble with its teething. The good doctor tended it with great care, but as we neared the tropics and the heat increased, the child lost strength. On the 7th of March it was so much worse that it was removed to the cheery little hospital on deck, the doctor himself carrying her tenderly in his arms, the mother and a matron going with him. All night it was watched and cared for, the doctor coming several times before retiring for the night, and leaving instructions with the matron that he should be called if the little one should grow worse. But she lay quietly dozing all night, except just at the intervals when nourishment or medicine was given. So still was she that the poor mother asked several times, "Is she awa? Is wee Bella awa?" Then, imploringly, "You'll no' deceive me if she is like to flit?" and the matron answered her she would not.

In the early morning, before sunrise, there was a change, and it became apparent that the wee tired birdie was longing to fly away and be at rest.

The mother, who was sleeping in a berth (where she had been made to rest), was awakened, the matron saying, "Wee Bella is going now. Jesus is coming for her. He is very, very near. Dinna greet [Don't cry]; He will take her very tenderly in His arms, and fold her in His bosom. He has said He will." The doctor did all that could be done, bringing a large and tender heart to aid his great professional skill. It was beautiful to see his face as he bent over the little one, and anon turned with tender voice and gesture to say a word of comfort to the poor mother. I have never seen in all my life any child of rich and great receive a like amount of care; but in vain the doctor tried to save, in vain the anxious watchers pleaded—

"Birdie, stay a little longer,
Till thy little wings are stronger;
Then shall birdie fly away."

The wee bairn lay so still that we scarcely knew if she had gone, when she suddenly turned her tiny tired head round, and opened her pretty blue eyes with one yearning, wistful look at her mother. Her little lips parted, as if to speak. Very softly and clearly she said the first syllable of "Mam-ma;" but ere the little loving lips could form the second, she was with Jesus—

"Like a birdie to its mither—
A wee birdie to its nest."

And the poor mother was left desolate, with nought but the tiny clothes her darling had worn and some little



rings of golden hair to show to the poor expectant father of the little one he will not see till he himself crosses the dark river, and his feet are set in that good land, the inhabitants whereof shall no more say, "I am sick."

Reverently the doctor uncovered his head, and never afterwards entered the hospital cabin without doing the same.

I love this solemn and beautiful custom. In the East is preserved the older form of putting off the shoes from the feet; but the spirit is one and the same in all lands—that of recognising that the place of human sorrow is "holy ground."