



The Victorians

A comfortable life? Emily's life

By Sue Reid

- EMILY: Emily...Ann...Barr. There. The very last letter of my name on my sampler...
- My name is Emily Ann Barr and I am 13 years old. It has taken me a long time to finish my sampler – that's a piece of embroidery – and I am very proud of it.
- I live with my Mama and Papa in a big house in London. Papa is an important doctor and so we have servants to do the work.
- You probably think my life is easy, but it isn't. I hardly ever see my parents. I spend most of my day in the schoolroom with my governess. And now that my brother Bertie has gone back to school, I'll be all on my own. I felt so sad as I stood with Mama and waved goodbye to him.
- Goodbye, Bertie! Goodbye!
- MAMA: You can stop waving now, Emily. Bertie's gone.
- EMILY: Oh, Mama. How I'll miss him.
- MAMA: Of course you will miss your brother, Emily. We all will. Inside now...
- EMILY: Mama looked sad and I felt like crying. Then Mama sent me away to the schoolroom.





MAMA: Come along, Emily. It's time for your lessons.

EMILY: Yes, Mama.

I felt sad as I climbed the stairs to the school-room. Now I'd have to do lessons on my own with my governess. That's Miss Stevens. She is very strict. How I wished I could go away to school too – at school you learn all sorts of things, Bertie says. All about the world – the big world outside. Bertie wants to go to India when he grows up. I'd like to go to India. But I can't. I'm a girl. I can't go anywhere.

In the evening I put on a clean pinafore. Then one of our maids came to wash my face and brush my hair. And then Miss Stevens took me down to the drawing room to say goodnight to Mama and Papa and show them my sampler...
...Mama was playing the piano.

MISS STEVENS: I have brought Miss Emily to say good night.

MAMA: Have you been a good girl today, Emily?

EMILY: Yes, Mama.

Papa put down his paper.

PAPA: What have you done today, child?

EMILY: I have finished my sampler, Papa, and I have learnt a new piece on the piano. And this afternoon Miss Stevens took me for a walk in the park.

MAMA: Is that your sampler you are holding?





- EMILY: Yes, Mama.
- MAMA: Let me see it, child. Why, it is beautiful, Emily. This big building looks exactly like our house.
- EMILY: It is our house, Mama. And do you see those little trees in front? I put them in so you will know that it is our garden.
- MAMA: Indeed. So you have. Look, my dear.
- EMILY: She showed Papa my sampler. I watched his face as he studied it. He smiled at me.
- PAPA: It is indeed beautiful, Emily. You embroider very neatly. Tomorrow we will hang it on the drawing room wall. You are a clever girl. Your mama and I are proud of you.
- EMILY: Thank you, papa. I am glad you like it.
- MAMA: Goodnight, Emily.
- EMILY: Goodnight Mama, goodnight Papa.
- PAPA: Goodnight, my dear.
- EMILY: After that, Miss Stevens took me upstairs to the schoolroom and I got ready for bed.
- MISS STEVENS: Hurry and get into your nightclothes, Emily.
- EMILY: Yes, Miss Stevens.
- MISS STEVENS: That's a good girl. On your knees now...and hands together please...





EMILY: 'Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep
If I should die before I wake
I pray the Lord my soul to take.'

MISS STEVENS: Don't forget to pray for your papa and mama
and your brother too, and to thank the Lord for
all your many blessings.

EMILY: Yes, Miss Stevens...

Then she turned down the gas light. I climbed
into bed and snuggled down under the sheet
and blankets.

MISS STEVENS: Goodnight, Emily.

EMILY: Goodnight, Miss Stevens.

I listened as the door shut behind her. I stared
into the fire. It had nearly gone out, but the
coals were still glowing. I am happy that Mama
and Papa are pleased with me. I am proud of
my sampler. But oh, how I wish I could go to
school like Bertie!

