

# THROUGH CLOUD AND SUNSHINE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MEDITATIONS ON THE SEASONS," &c., &c.

"I need Thy presence every passing hour,  
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?  
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?  
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me."

## CHAPTER I.

### THE TREVENYNS.

"Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;  
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;  
Thy fate is the common fate of all,  
Into each life some rain must fall,  
Some days must be dark and dreary."

**P**RIORYHURST was a quaint little country town, situated in one of the western counties of our land, deriving its name from the beautiful woods which formerly belonged to an old Benedictine Priory, the ruins of which still remained close by what was known as Priory Wood, which crowned the hill at the back of the town. Prioryhurst had once been a municipal borough, and a town of great importance; but its influence and posterity had gradually declined, till the annual election of one of its inhabitants to the office of Mayor was the only thing that remained as a relic of its former grandeur; it had been supplanted by many boroughs of mere "mushroom growth," the very names of which were unknown and unheard of in its palmy days.

The railway station was situated about two miles from the town, on the branch-line from Fairchester Junction to Hayleyton; it was a pretty little place, with the small plot of garden-ground, bright and gay with a succession of lovely flowers, on which the Station-master had bestowed great care and attention, and he had therefore been successful in obtaining a prize for the best-kept garden on the line.

Prioryhurst consisted of two principal streets:—Fore-street, on entering the town from the station-road, was steep and rather narrow, with old-fashioned gable-roofed houses, and several small shops: here was also situated the Grammar-school, a massive-looking old granite building, but which was scarcely seen to advantage in the narrow thoroughfare. At the top of this street was the Market-place—a square—having on one side the market (the only modern building the town possessed), and directly opposite a row of almshouses, built and endowed by "y<sup>e</sup> charitie of y<sup>e</sup> Dame Wynter," as the inscription duly witnessed. The other sides of the square consisted of thatched cottages, very picturesque, although decidedly dangerous in case of a fire. Turning out from the farther side of the square was Church-street, which led down to a pretty rustic bridge over the river Brea; in this street were the fine old Norman Church of St. John the Baptist, the parish schools, several pretty cottages and villas, and also the entrance to the Rectory grounds. On the other side of the little river the road led up a steep hill, at the summit of which was Priory Wood; passing close by this, it extended across a level plateau or table-land, from whence magnificent views of the surrounding country and of the sea-coast could be obtained; and then onward, by a gentle descent, to the flourishing town of Hayleyton, ten miles distant.

It was now the middle of May, when everything in nature seems to tell of new life and fresh hopes; the trees, but a short time ago bare and leafless, now waved their delicate green branches in the gentle breeze; the rippling river glided swiftly on its way, *now* flowing 'mid fresh green meadows, *now*

"Streaking the heath-clad hill  
With a bright emerald thread;"

are, dancing and sparkling in the golden sunlight, *stere*, shaded by the willow branches bending tenderly o'er it; a picture of human life, with its light and shade, its "chequered scene of joy and sorrow." And from every hedge-row, meadow, and along the streamlet's banks, myriads of fair spring-flowers displayed their dainty blossoms, or nestled among the soft moss and graceful drooping ferns. The primroses still lingered in many a nook; anemones, violets, and bluebells grew in wild profusion in the woods; bright yellow cowslips adorned the fields; forget-me-nots flourished at the brooklet's edge, and by the road-side their blue flowers blended with the darker hue of the speedwell, with bright red campion the deep gold of the buttercup, and the almost transparent white of the stitchwort; while the sweet hawthorn crowned the hedges and scented the air with its fragrance.

The day had been bright and glorious, the deep blue sky just flecked with tiny white clouds; the very earth seemed bathed in sunlight, while a soft, balmy breeze tempered the intense heat, and all nature joined, as it were, in one glad chorus of rejoicing.

"As if no heart on earth could ache."

Yet were there sad hearts in the little town, and a heavy sorrow had fallen upon the people there; for, in the green and well-kept churchyard,—where, under the Church's shadow, for many a generation their loved ones had been laid to rest, till the last great Easter Morn,—one had been laid only a week ago; one whom it seemed as if the Prioryhurst people could ill spare, one in whom their life had been bound up, and their very joys and sorrows closely linked and entwined,—their good Rector, the Rev. Cecil Trevenyn, who had ever been alike a faithful pastor and true friend to all his beloved flock, and whom therefore they mourned with no common sorrow. Only a few days before he had gone to the city of Fairchester, to be present at the Diocesan Conference; on his way home his horse had taken fright,—it was supposed at a fallen tree lying by the roadside,—and he was thrown off, and killed on the spot; leaving a widow and one son, eighteen years of age, to mourn his loss.

Prioryhurst Rectory was situated to the eastward of the churchyard, and was approached from Church-street by a carriage drive, on each side of which hydrangeas, rhododendrons, and sweet-scented lilacs flourished; while, here and there it was shaded by pink or white hawthorns, leafy horse-chestnuts, and the graceful golden tassels of the laburnum. The house itself was built of red stone, and the windows of the rooms on the ground-floor opened on a terrace-walk, elevated considerably above the lawn: the front of the house was almost covered with Virginia creeper, white clematis, and a magnificent Gloire-de-Dijon rose-tree: at one end of the house was a conservatory filled with choice plants; and the flower-beds in the lawn were gay with a succession of lovely flowers. At the foot of the sloping lawn was a large meadow, and beyond it a tiny copse led to the river Brea at the foot of the hill. Nor must we forget the vegetable and fruit gardens behind the house; the bushes bending in their season beneath their load of currants, gooseberries, or raspberries; the strawberry beds, the pear and plum-trees, the apricots and peaches; the cherry-trees laden with their ripe red fruit. And then the orchard with its trees with their delicate pink blossoms, or rosy-cheeked apples: while under the trees was a soft carpet of moss and turf, where daffodils, snowdrops, narcissus, and primroses grew in uncultured luxuriance.

The interior of the Rectory was plainly furnished, but the rooms were large and comfortable, with a decidedly homelike appearance, and an entire absence of stiffness or display. The drawing-room had a bow-window of modern structure opening out on the terrace; from this window a most extensive view of the country

could be obtained, with a glimpse, in the far distance, of the blue sea at Hayleycombe. The walls were adorned with copies of celebrated pictures, among them Holman Hunt's "Light of the World;" some paintings of grand and bold Cornish coast-scenery; pretty sketches of Prioryhurst Church, and the ruins of the old Priory; and numerous sacred photographs. On a table, in the centre of the room, were many books, some of which were young Trevenyn's prizes while at Mr. Spence's school: at this table sat Mrs. Trevenyn, her head resting on her hand, in an attitude of deep thought. Margaret Trevenyn had a very sweet face and placid expression, though she possessed but little energy to battle with the cares and troubles of life; her parents had died many years before, and her only brother, Alfred Hayley, had, by dint of great perseverance, attained a high position in the world; he gained a large fortune by means of paper mills, which he established on the banks of the river Fair, where gradually the town was built which bears his name, he being the owner of nearly all the property both in Hayleyton and the seaside village of Hayleycombe. The town having been visited by some members of the Royal Family, Mr. Hayley received the honour of knighthood, as a return for the reception accorded them. Sir Alfred Hayley was a very haughty and purseproud man, and had never forgiven his pretty sister for marrying a poor clergyman, particularly the Rector of such an insignificant place as Prioryhurst; he had, however, condescended to be present at his brother-in-law's funeral, but had returned to Hayleyton the next day. Mrs. Trevenyn had cherished a hope and longing that her brother would take a fancy to his nephew, that so her husband's plan for sending Ambrose to Oxford might still be carried out; but alas, if she had thus reckoned she was sadly mistaken. A week had now elapsed, and on this particular morning he had written to make but one proposal respecting his nephew's future position. The clerk at the mills intended leaving in three months' time for America, he would place Ambrose under him for this period, and then offer the clerkship to him at a fair salary. This was Sir Alfred's offer; if his nephew accepted it, well and good: if not, he would do nothing more for him: and his decision must be made within three days.

Young Trevenyn had been obliged to go to Fairchester early that morning on business; he had quitted his home before his uncle's letter arrived, and in total ignorance of his changed prospects.

Cecil Ambrose Trevenyn was born on April 4th, and therefore received the name of Ambrose in addition to being named after his father. Cecil Ambrose Trevenyn, what a charming name most people would say; and so his own relations thought, until afterwards they found, looking at the initials, that he was really named C. A. T.

Ambrose (for so he was generally called) was educated at the Prioryhurst Grammar-school; the head master was Mr. Spence, a very clever man, many of whose pupils had achieved high positions in the world of intellect; and he had thought that the Rector's son would have been an addition to that number. Ambrose's school-days were, on the whole, bright ones; true, at first the boys had terribly teased him, and nicknamed him "Pussy;" but his good temper and amiable disposition rapidly gained him many friends, and his abilities made him a great favourite with Mr. Spence. Those days were now over, and he was about to enter on a college life, when the sudden and unexpected event of his father's death had taken place.

Ambrose Trevenyn was strikingly like his mother in appearance; he was tall, with fair complexion, light hair, rather curly, and blue eyes; but his was a much more animated countenance than hers, and he possessed great energy and determination. He had not at all an unfeeling, mean, or what would be called a selfish

character; he was generous, open-hearted, earnest, true, and loving; but he had one great failing, one decidedly weak trait in his character—he was fond of castle-building: many and many of these airy fabrics of fancies, schemes, and wishes,



"Well, my boy, you have been quicker than I expected."—(p.24.)

had he raised from time to time; and thus, often and often, had his thoughts wandered almost unconsciously to self.

On his way to Fairchester, Trevenyn, just at first, was in no mood for dreaming of the future, his thoughts were rather of the past, of the events of a week ago, of the open grave, the sorrowing people, the bright example which would still live in the memory; he thought of the words of comfort and hope then spoken, and of his own and his mother's deep loss. But these thoughts led him on to the present, he had that mother now to care for, upon him would she (humanly speaking) have to depend, and he felt that he had a work and responsibility now to fulfil. Then, as he neared Fairchester, and the graceful spires of the old Cathedral gleamed in

the bright sunlight, the one great wish of his life came into his thoughts, those day-dreams of Oxford which had so nearly approached realization that he had almost begun to look upon his life there as a certainty, but over which the clouds of uncertainty were gathering so thickly. Like many another, Am<sup>l</sup>rose longed for it all the more ardently as the chance of his going there seemed to diminish; so often does "Distance lend enchantment to the view," and it is only when the desired object has been attained that its real value is discovered. Ambrose deluded himself into the idea that his uncle, having no children of his own, would pay his expenses at Oxford; he pictured himself at Magdalen College, working hard, his efforts crowned with success, and eventually obtaining First-class honours: he pictured his mother still residing at Prioryhurst, where he would return to spend the vacations, and see the dear old place again; he pictured, too, the delight of his uncle at last, and even the possibility of being made his heir. With these day-dreams still in his mind, young Trevenyn returned to the Rectory, and entered the drawing-room, where his mother was seated. Mrs. Trevenyn looked up as he entered, and said, in as cheerful a voice as she could command,—

"Well, my boy, you have been quicker than I expected, but I am so glad you are come."

"Why, mother dear, what is the matter?" Ambrose exclaimed, looking at her sad expression, and then, hoping to divert her thoughts, he added, "Have you heard from Uncle Alfred? what does he say? does he make any proposals about me?"

"He does, dear Ambrose, and it is about this that I wish to speak to you. Your uncle makes one offer, not at all what you or I expected, but *he* seems to consider it a most generous proposition, and requests that you will give him a decided answer within three days."

Mrs. Trevenyn then proceeded to tell Ambrose what his uncle had said as calmly as she could, for she well knew what a bitter disappointment it would be to him. He heard it all in silence, his countenance alone betraying his emotion; bitterly as he felt it, he was determined not to add to his mother's weight of sorrow: he felt he would rather think it over in solitude, so in a firm yet gentle voice he said, "Never fear, dearest mother, all will come right one day, even the darkest cloud, you know, has a silver lining. It is a lovely evening, I should like to go out for a little while, I will soon be back again."

The day was drawing to its close, the evening shadows were fast stealing over hill and vale, and the rays of the setting sun gilded the wane on the top of the fine old tower of Prioryhurst Church, and bathed the western windows of the Rectory in a very glow of light. Ambrose passed through the garden, gay with pansies, geraniums, tulips, roses, lilies, and forget-me-nots; he headed them not, but wandered on to his favourite haunt, under the shade of a copper beech-tree. How often had he sat here, watching the many varied tints as the sombre foliage was illuminated by the rays of the fast-declining orb of day; looking out under its leafy branches at the wealth of colour in the garden and in the copse beyond; listening to the song of thrush or linnet, the blackbird's shrill whistle, or the plaintive note of the wood-pigeon; how often, too, late in the evening, had he heard the nightingale's sweet lay, or the melancholy hoot of the owls.

Dear, very dear was this spot to him, and now when he reached it, his self-control fairly gave way, and he sobbed as if his heart would break. Sad would it be to leave his old home, to sever those many happy associations, those sweet memories of his childhood which were linked so closely with it; this, however, he knew must be done, and he had made up his mind to it; but his proud and impulsive nature

chafed and rebelled against the position in which he now found himself, so very different from what he had imagined.

With his schemes he had reared a lofty castle, only to see it crumble to dust before his eyes; he had "built a bridge of fancies," and it had been swept away by the relentless force of stern reality; he had dreamt of a brilliant University career, of wealth, influence, and position, which he might use for the good of others; he had pictured himself doing a great work among the heathen, either at home or abroad; he found himself only a clerk at the Hayleyton Mills, with £100 a-year.

After this first outburst of feeling Ambrose grew calmer, he seemed to hear a voice saying to him, like the message of the prophet Jeremiah to Baruch, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." He saw how all the while he had been seeking self; and, under the semblance of philanthropy, zeal, and self-denial, had been making idols of his own pet schemes and wishes. He asked now that he might be guided aright, and might enter upon his duties, not trusting in himself, but ever praying,

"Lead me by Thine Own Hand,  
Choose out the path for me."

It was almost dark when Ambrose retraced his steps to the house; he had gained a victory more truly noble than aught he had ever dreamt of; but his pale face alone showed signs of the struggle he had undergone, as, with a light step and cheerful voice, he entered the room, and informed his mother that he intended to accept his uncle's offer, and hoped that he should be able to give him every satisfaction.

Mrs. Trevenyn looked up with a sweet smile and said, "I am so thankful; I thought from the first that was the right thing to do, but I wished you to make the decision yourself. I could not but feel, my dear boy, that you would pray for light and guidance, and that the true course would be made plain to you."

*(To be concluded in our next.)*

## S. A G N E S.

AGNES, thou whitest lamb of Paradise,  
Could we but see thee as in childish dream,  
The new fair morning mirrored in thine eyes,  
Thy sun-touched hair, thy garments' pearly gleam!  
Ah! could we follow thee as then; thy feet  
Tracking to songful brooks, or whispering bowers,  
Or sleep-enchanted meadows, dewy sweet  
With amaranthine flowers.

Agnes, we may not dream that dream again;  
Yet not all vainly comes thy festal day,  
If it may stir our hearts to worthier pain;  
If yet, before thine image pass away,  
Our darkness kindling at its light intense,  
Our spirits opening in thy finer air,  
Some faintest symbol of thine innocence  
Our earth-stained robes may bear.

ADELAIDE M. HERBERT.