

# **THE TARN SIDE EVANGEL**

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The Tarnside Evangel by M. A. H.

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**M. A. H.**

# **THE TARNSIDE EVANGEL**



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TARNSIDE EVANGEL.

BY M. A. H.

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"THE MARSH BLACKSMITH."



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## THE TARNSIDE EVANGEL.

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### CHAPTER I.



THE quaint village of Tarnside was looking its loveliest when May Stanhope and her newly-widowed mother came to make it their home. The horse-chestnuts proudly held their spiral blossoms like waxen tapers to

the blazing sun, laburnums were all aglow with flaming tassels, while the hedgerow's green was nearly hidden beneath its mantle of summer snow. With graceful dalliance the plum-trees waved their blossom-laden boughs, and scattered at intervals light showers of pearly petals, and the meadows were golden with buttercups.

May's heart had felt very sad at leaving the home which, until the last few months, had scarcely seen a sorrow; but as the old-fashioned vehicle in which she was riding slowly passed along the hawthorn-scented lanes, she now and again turned to her pale-faced mother, and cried, in all the hopefulness of childhood: 'Mother, God is bringing us to a land of flowers and sunshine. I think He intends us to be happy here, just as you say father is happy where the angels are.'

Mrs. Stanhope smiled more gladly than she had done since over the soulless form of her own and her child's protector she had so earnestly striven to say, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' And as she replied in words of suitable

encouragement, she heard a whisper within her soul, saying, 'Become as little children;' and she silently asked for a deeper trust in the love of Him Who doth not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men, that like her little girl she might open her eyes to the sunshine of life, and look for the joy it would surely bring. Through the earlier part of the journey her thoughts had scarcely left the now vacant home at Bournash; but May's remarks aroused her, and she raised herself up to look out upon wood and dale, so beautifully decked in their bright spring robes.

'Yes, May; this is truly lovely, far more so than anything you ever saw in town.'

'Indeed it is, mother. I had no idea God had made the world so beautiful; even your descriptions, which I always thought so grand, seem poor now when I look at the meadows and hills and that long winding river, myself. I feel as if I must clap my hands, everything is so very, very good.'

'And so, my child, is the Lord Jesus, Whom you and I have learnt to love; and yet I well



recollect that though He was pourtrayed to me as the fairest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely, I pictured Him but dimly until I came and looked upon Him as my Saviour. Then I exclaimed, as did the Queen of Sheba, "The half was not told me ; happy are Thy men, happy are these Thy servants, which stand continually before Thee !" But my words were of a greater than Solomon. See, May, how the shadows lengthen towards the east, for the sun is slowly sinking to its bed ; in two hours at most it will be beyond our view. Everything appears just the same as when my home was at Tarnside ; I seem to remember every leaf and every flower, and the river down in the valley sparkles just as it ever did. These things all teach me that God is an unchangeable God ; that He Who from the world's infancy has kept His promise, that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter shall not cease, will as diligently care and provide for me.'

'I have been looking round, mother, and I do not see one tree that God has forgotten, though to some He has given flowers, and to

others leaves only; and don't you think that God would forget a tree before He would forget one of us, mother? I think He would.'

'Yes, May, I believe He would; and you remember the verses we so often sang with poor father:

' "Beneath the spreading heavens  
No creature but is fed,  
And He Who feeds the ravens  
Will give His children bread." '

'Mother, you know how I cried when first you told me that God would have us leave Bourn-ash. I felt as though He were going to send us into a dark, unhappy place; but I am glad now that He did not notice my tears and let us stay, for, O! mother, this is grand! grand! grand!'

'I am glad you think so, little one,' fell in cheery tones from the lips of a tall, honest-faced man, who suddenly entered the road through a stile, and after a few words exchanged places with the driver. May had scarcely time to wonder who it was who spoke these kindly words before she found herself clasped in her uncle's arms, and then seated by his side with the reins,

in her small hands, which rested like a snowball within her uncle's large, brown palm. It was the first time she had seen her uncle Bloomer, and for a little while she felt very shy, too shy to raise her eyes from the steady, board-backed pony, or to answer in a voice above a whisper the many questions which were put to her. But the constant pressure of his toil-hardened fingers, and the easy manner in which he conversed with her mother and told of the welcome which awaited her at Tarnside, gave her courage; and when at length there came a few minutes' pause she looked up suddenly into his sunburnt face, and asked, 'Uncle, did God ever forget a tree?' Since Mr. Bloomer had joined them, and May had felt too timid to give utterance to her thoughts, she had been thinking that as God has so many children to look after, and so many plans to make for their comfort and happiness, that perhaps after all He did forget a tree somewhere, and she felt sure her uncle, who had spent his whole life at Tarnside, would know.

Confidently her light-blue eyes met the gaze of her uncle's darker ones, but she felt puzzled