

Family Department.

EVER THE SAME.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."—Hebrews xiii. 8.

Ever the same! what words of tender comfort,
Falling like music on the listening ear!
Ever the same! should not the sweet assurance
Give us that love that casteth out all fear?

Ever the same! as when, with love and pity,
Thy touch restored the sick and healed the blind,
Stilling the storm, and bringing peace and quiet
To troubled waters, and to doubting mind.

Ever the same! the weary world around us
Changes, still changes with each passing hour;
Clasping yet closer all our fleeting treasures,
We dread Death's presence as we own his power.

Ever the same! though earthly friends may leave us
And hopes grow dim that once our hearts have blest,
Thy love speaks to us still the sweet entreaty:
"Come unto Me, and I will give you rest!"

We come, dear Lord! with earnest hearts; O, lead us
To rest with steadfast faith on Thy loved Name,
Until we find Thee in Thy Heavenly Kingdom—
Jesus our Saviour! ever still the same!

—Living Church.

CLAIRE.

A TALE.

(Written for the Church Guardian).

BY T. M. B.

(Continued.)

And thus the quiet routine of their life went on, year adding itself to year, stealing away Claire's early girlhood and leaving the impress of thoughtful womanhood upon her beautiful face, and letters went and came between the old-world city and the new, across the wide ocean separating those whose youth had been spent in such sweet and close companionship, and whose hearts were as firmly knit together as of old. At last Marthe received tidings from Claire which made her shed tears of loving sympathy. The Count had been stricken down with paralysis; Claire wrote by his bedside. She scarcely left him by night or day; he was conscious and seemed only happy with her beside him.

"Pray for me, *Ma petite Marthe*. I shall be, oh! so lonely, when he is gone; but yet I am thankful—how can I ever be thankful enough for these last years of peace and love." Long before the letter had reached its destination the Count had passed away, painlessly and at peace, and Claire was left lonely indeed; the one object of her care, on which she had lavished her tender solicitude, the centre of her existence, the being for whom she had worked and prayed unweariedly, gone out of her earthly life. Lonely, indeed, though there was no lack of kindly sympathy among the little circle of her friends, and though she was not without the best comfort of all, but yet her heart ached over its void, and she mourned her father, perhaps, with the greatest sorrow, because what should have been the love of a life-time, had been compressed within a few brief years.

So lonely that, at times, she shrank from the thought of the life stretching out before her, but that life had to be lived and so lived, she told herself, that she might feel at its close it had not been lived in vain. So, after giving a little while to her sorrow, she took up the familiar burden of her daily duties, and looked about her, day by day, for the work which lies ever ready to our hand, if we did but seek it. Desolate homes were cheered by her sweet presence; pain was soothed and poverty helped by her gentle hand; and many were the hearts in the great city, with its load of sin and suffering, which called her blessed.

* * * * *

Some months had elapsed since the death of Count Du Plessis. It was one of the first days in autumn; the air was very still and mild, but with a touch of freshness that told that summer was

past. The trees in the parks were still in their full leafage, and the sunlight sparkled on the water in the little lakes here and there. Children played in the grass, birds sang among the branches.

One of the strollers in St James' Park that bright afternoon was a stranger to London, who had only that morning arrived from France. For an hour or more he had been walking hither and thither in the least frequented paths, his arms crossed, his head bent, as if lost in thought, and indeed he was scarcely conscious of his surroundings.

Felix Duval is now a man not far from thirty, he has reached the fulness of bodily and mental vigor; the promise of his boyhood is fulfilled. His calm and noble mind has won its way among his fellows. He is honoured and beloved and a little feared in the sphere which his lot is cast. He has gradually attained a prominent place among his fellow-citizens in the young country, where the liberty that he had dreamed of for his own, seems to have become a reality. He has been happy in a life for which he is consciously adapted, but had until very recently never given up the thought of ultimately returning to the land of his birth and his love and devoting himself to her; and, hidden away under his busy life there is a secret spring of passionate feeling which never has and never will dry up, so long as the lifeblood courses through his veins.

The image of Claire DuPlessis never for an hour faded from his heart, and after three years of self-exile from her presence, he is so near her that ten minutes' walk might bring them face to face. And yet now that he can satisfy the yearning to look upon her once more, he has spent the hours of this bright day in trying to conquer himself, in trying to feel sure that they can meet and part again, without his betraying the love that has grown with his growth and strengthened with the strength of his manhood. When the tidings of the Count's death had reached Felix and Marthe, the first thought of both was Claire's loneliness.

Felix felt an uncontrollable desire to see for himself whether she needed a friend; whether he could in any wise help to protect her; but Marthe was the first to give utterance to the thought. A voyage across the Atlantic was a very different matter then from now, or she had urged her brother to let her accompany him, but his absence could not be a prolonged one; he could not suddenly break off his relations with the city whose interests had in a measure become his own. He would return shortly, and if Claire were really alone, Marthe should go, after a while, and bear her company; yes, he would share his *petite soeur* with her in the future, if indeed she had not formed new and closer ties for herself ere this.

Felix hastened his preparations for departure, and, not many weeks afterwards, landed at Havre, whither the vessel in which he had taken ship was bound. To see Claire had been his *first* object, but now that he once more on the soil of France, he determined first to revisit DuPlessis, to satisfy himself as to the condition of affairs and his father's influence upon them, and thus be enabled to take Claire tidings of her former and it might be her future home. Felix then had travelled to Paris, no longer the place of horror, of which he could not think without a shudder, but, as he saw it now, a fair and prosperous city, yet haunted with hideous memories. He did not linger there, but once more, under what altered circumstances, turned his face towards DuPlessis. How fair and peaceful the country looked, over which the wave of blood and anarchy had flowed a few years before.

Around the villages, through which he rode, the peasants were busy at their labour in the fields or vineyards, and little children, born since those dreadful days of national frenzy, played at cottage doors. Was there no visible sign remaining of those evil days? Yes, what were those gaunt ruins on the slope yonder among the blackened tree-trunks? Well did Felix remember the stately castle that had stood there with its towers and turrets. The Marquis of Berrigord had lived there, in lordly style, during the hunting season.

Felix well remembered his train of magnificent hunters, with the proud nobles on their backs, as they swept through yonder archway which was

standing still unscathed in mockery, as it seemed, of the crumbling ruin behind it; and yonder, too, that heap of rubbish already partly overgrown with friendly greenery had been a royal hunting lodge, a lonely spot in itself and its surroundings. Felix put spurs to his horse, eager now to diminish the distance between himself and Du Plessis, and to put an end to the uncertainty which tormented him. The sun was still high in the heavens as Felix came in sight of the well-remembered scene.

Once more as on that fateful evening, he saw the winding river glisten in the sun, and the fields and woods stretch in green luxuriance on either hand; there lay the village, the old Church too; there rose the hill behind, with its wide-spreading beeches; but, he looked in vain for the grey walls and pinacles that had crowned the hill. Had the trees grown so as to hide them from him? No, he could not deceive himself; the Chateau Du Plessis was a thing of the past.

Felix groaned within himself; true, he was not unprepared for this, but yet it seemed to smite him with a fresh wound of pain and shame. Was it not his father, who had deprived Claire of her inheritance?

Riding down the hill into the village he put up at the auberge, a quiet, sleepy place enough now, with a few peasants drinking some *vin du pays* at a table under the trees in front. Felix took a seat near them. The men stared at him with a slow curiosity, evidently without the faintest recognition. "You have had changes among you since I was last here," said Felix leisurely, as he too sipped a glass of the cool, acid beverage. "Where is the citizen Duval?"

(To be concluded.)

THOUGHTS FOR THIRTEENTH SUNDAY
AFTER TRINITY.

No. XIII.

"Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see."

Blessed indeed beyond measure those who see in Christ the anointed Saviour, Him of Whom the prophets foretold that He should save His people from their sins—the Holy One of God! Blessed the eyes that see in every "mighty work" the power of God Himself; that see in Jesus of Nazareth the Only Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth. Yet of those who saw the Master face to face, and heard His gracious words how many would not and could not see who it was that stood in their midst.

"I say unto you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things that ye see, and have not seen them." Looking forward through the ages they beheld Him afar off, but now He stands revealed to the seeing eye. God made Flesh, dwelling among men. The least in Christ's Kingdom is greater in privileges and blessings than the greatest of those who had yearned to see His Day, before the fulness of time had come.

"Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see." Those things are set before us day by day. Jesus, our Redeemer, our King is, as it were, set forth visibly before us. The Church represents Him here in our midst, no longer in types and shadows of a future Saviour, but speaking with His voice who said: "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." To believe this fully is to be *blessed*. We may be of the multitude who saw His mighty works, yet in whom true faith was never kindled; we may be of the pharisees, hard and self-righteous, never coming to prostrate ourselves at His feet in the self-abasement of conscious helplessness and sin; we may in our heart of hearts be of the sadducees, believing neither in Angel nor Spirit, though outwardly conforming to the Faith in the Communion of Saints. All this leaves us outside the circle within which are those blessed ones who, see as St. Thomas saw when he cried, my Lord and my God! Nay, for those who see not with the bodily eye, a greater blessing is promised even than that which filled the soul of the penitent and adoring Thomas. "Blessed are they who have not seen, yet have believed," have seen with the eye of Faith, which pierces through the veil of earthly things and beholds the Lamb of God, slain for the sins of the world.