

Family Department.

"I WILL GO."

The bright stars of the morning together have sung,
And their sound through ethereal regions hath rung:
All beauteous and shining their hosts have adored
The Great God of Creation, and owned Him their Lord.
They perceive the gold-molten outpourings of light
From the far "land of morning" are coming in sight,
And in modesty veiled, are retiring with grace
As the sun, their gay bridegroom, advances apace.
Their miniature likenesses, pearly and fine,
Are disposed upon leaflets in dewdrops that shine
On the vesture of earth, who, now verdant and bright,
Stands prepared to come forth decked in splendours of light.

The day's first rosy blushes are mantling around
On the goodliest tents upon Canaan's fair ground,
And the hills, dales and meadows luxuriant show,
As the morn's rising beauties and radiance grow.
Here the clustering grape and the olive tree green,
Luscious fig and cool orange, abounding are seen:
Close around and between they each boundary grace,
And, in shading the tents, lend new charms to the place.
Sharon's beautiful rose, in profusion and bloom,
With the valley's fair Lily,—yield pleasant perfume:
And with freshness adorned by the moisture of night,
Give a nod to the breeze, and rejoice in the light.

Holy Vigil and lone faithful Abraham keeps,
In the grove, near the tent where his Isaac yet sleeps:
Neither doubtings nor fears his firm purposes shake,—
He believes God will never His promise forsake:—
And to Him doth he gladly the fatlings present,
Whose death well foreshadows Time's most wondrous event.
He petitions that Isaac's long pathway of life,
May be brightened and smoothed by a suitable wife;
Lovely forms the rich plains all around may afford,
But the wife that is prudent must come from the Lord.
Like as incense, his prayer to the heaven ascends,
And is registered there ere his sacrifice ends.
Winged Gabriel waits Dread Jehovah's behest,
To make Abraham glad ere he sinks to his rest.

Eleazar the Steward, as are ended the rites,
Drawing nigh, his loved Master's instructions invites:
Ere he starts on some mission, to him yet unknown,
All apart from each thought or desire of his own.
The Master, commanding,—yet gracious and kind,
Sends him forth to bring Isaac a wife to his mind:
Who with piety, gentleness, goodness, and truth,
Shall shed peace on his age, and give joy to his youth.
Three long years hath the tent of loved Sarah remained,
Like as when her fair hands its arrangements maintained.
In the Cave of Macpelah her ashes repose,
But her Isaac, as yet, sad and sorrowing goes.

Ten camels, with housings rich, gorgeous, and fine,
And men, whose rich garments doth these far outshine:
With provisions a store—sure all ready to start,
To accomplish the wish of the Patriarch's heart.
Choicest treasures of silver and gold are brought forth,
Well befitting a Prince of Great Abraham's worth:
For gifts, and for dowry of maiden, whose voice
Shall assent to the call to make Isaac rejoice.
Soon departing in peace, with an Angel to guide,
They pass through many lands, nor in any abide:
And at length they draw near to where Bethuel reigns,
A Prince among Shepherds, and the Lord of the Plains.

The round Sun is descending in floods of red light,
And the orange grove's treasures hang golden and bright:
While the palm and spread sycamore, graceful and tall,
A concealment and shelter afford for them all.
Eleazar's petition is heard ere it ends,
For a damsel draws nigh while the suppliant bends:
A Virgin, and lovely,—young and gentle, and kind,
Light and graceful her form—well adorned is her mind,
A large pitcher she bears,—to the well down she glides,
Gives a drink to the men, and the camels besides:
And, sent forth by the Lord, His designs to unfold,
Accepts the rich bracelets, and the earrings of gold.

With a kind hospitality all are received,
And the servant gives thanks as his fears are relieved:
Fair Rebekah, attending with grace on each guest,
And earnestly listening—hastes not to rest.
She is learning the story of Abraham's state,
And of Isaac's long sorrow—so heavy and great:
And when asked on the morrow, "Say, wilt thou depart?"
"I WILL GO," is the ready response of her heart.
"Wilt thou go from the home of thy childhood's glad hours?
From the scenes which thou lovest—thy garden and flowers?
From thy Father—whose fondness so plainly is shown?
And the Mother whose heart and whose voice are thine own?
Wilt thou leave that kind Brother, who reared by thy side,
Doth regard thee with love overflowing, and pride?
Wilt thou leave thy dear Sister? who cannot but mourn,
When to far distant land thou art gone to sojourn.
Wilt thou go from all these? from companions, and friends?"
"I WILL GO—FOR THE LORD GOD OF ABRAHAM SAYS."

How many fair maidens are both loving and true,
To their parents and friends—dear Rebekah—like you.
And as gentle and timid as fawn on the lea,—
Yet will fearlessly pass over mountain and sea.
A fond Isaac implores; and the desolate tent
Is wanting an inmate. In loneliness bent,
Some kind son of loved mother is looking for rest,
And though flocks may abound, yet he still is unblest.
Much he longs for a Helpmate, meet, youthful, and fair,
And he prays that some Angel may send him one there.
Then how glad is his heart, when with gracious assent,
The long wished-for Rebekah approaches his tent—

And modestly veiled—stretches forth her fair hand,—
Heals his sorrows—and makes him a home in the land.

Kind woman! thy mission is holy and pure;
They who know thy true worth are of greatness made sure.
In all lands where due honour is given to thee,
Man is raised to distinction,—is noble, and free.
Then slight not the maiden, who is moved to depart,
With the man who has promised to give her his heart:
Who, forsaking the joys which she valued before,
Seeks a home where she sees friends and parents no more.
May a blessing go with her—her God for her send;
To His voice, by His Angel, her spirit attends:—
To become, like Rebekah—A WIFE—is her pride;
And she hastens to comfort, to help, and to guide.

W. M. B.

CLAIRE.

A TALE.

(Written for the Church Guardian.)

By T. M. B.

(Continued.)

At the time, indeed, when his children were yet so young as to be playing 'hide and seek' with Claire du Plessis in the pine woods beyond the Chateau, Antoine Duval's ambition did not extend beyond the fixed purpose of making his position as *Intendant* to the Count du Plessis one of positive advantage to himself, that in all cases was to be its primary object, beyond which his thoughts at that time did not carry him, but, as the years rolled by, bringing increased prosperity to himself, the horizon widened. Visions, indistinct indeed, of something altogether beyond his former aspirations, sometimes possessed his mind. That mysterious ferment which was taking place in the busy centres of life and thought began to spread in an inexplicable way even to such "haunts of ancient peace" as the valley du Plessis. The rustics at the village inn over their rough, acid wine, the youths on the village green, even the women as they sat about the public fountain in the cool of the evening, or gathered round some pedlars of 'small wares' from the great city, seemed all to have a consciousness, vague and undefined, of SOMETHING, some approaching change. Things began to be spoken of, in rude, imperfect speech, it is true, which to these simple and hitherto unawakened minds, had not before existed; confused ideas of right and justice began to be mooted, taking shape as time went on, until at last they became condensed into a vision by which some men were dazzled and intoxicated, a vision of Liberty. What must be the liberty which would follow long, long centuries of servile, dumb submission? What form would it take in the thoughts of men who, like their fathers for generations beyond generation, had borne a yoke which brought them well-nigh to a level with the oxen they toiled with in the field? Either it would have no meaning to their embroiled minds, or it would burst upon them with that dazzling light which must confuse and confound all social laws and relations.

While Marthe and Felix and the little *demoiselle* were growing out of childhood into boy and girlhood, becoming, as years went on, more and more endeared to and associated with each other, Antoine Duval watched the progress of events, political and social, in his country, and noted the ripening of ideas and feelings in the minds of the peasants of the *seigneurie*, scarcely conscious meanwhile of the shape which his own unscrupulous ambition was acquiring.

When Felix was about fifteen the *Intendant's* wife died. Her health had been failing for a long time, but she had grown more and more calm and silent as her illness gained upon her. Neither her husband, who felt for her as much affection as he was capable of, nor her children, who loved her tenderly, realized, till the very last, that she was about to leave them. Her death to the latter was an intense grief, while to the *Intendant* it was the removal of the solitary influence which had, to some extent, curbed his growing cupidity and unprincipled ambition.

The dying woman's last words to her boy were the ground of his determination, when he should reach man's estate, to leave Du Plessis and endeavour to carve out a life for himself altogether removed from his father's influence. "My child," the pale lips had said, as the boy, speechless with grief, knelt beside her, "it has always been my prayer and hope that you would not take your

father's place—that your life would be different. I want my son to be a good man—that first of all. I was proud of my boy and hoped for much for him. Think of your mother's last words: go to Leyden, my home, find my people. My cousin Van Traegt will help you. Study, if possible, at the University. Remember what I have tried to teach you. I leave Marthe in your care. God bless my boy."

Day by day Felix had repeated those words to himself and had set himself, day by day, to work out their accomplishment. He had inherited to the full the quiet determination of his mother, as well as her power of endurance.

Wrapped up in his own schemes the *Intendant* was unconscious that his son's thoughts and purposes were already tending in a very different direction. He only regarded Felix as a property of his own, to be dealt with as he might think best. When the boy was old enough to wear it, he dressed him in the dark-green livery of the Count's foresters, and, when next his master visited du Plessis, Duval, in his most servile manner, introduced the handsome lad to him as one of his retainers. "Ma foi," the Count had said, as he stooped from his horse and, putting one finger under the youth's chin, had raised the brown, bashful face into view, "the boy must be like his mother. he has too good a face for your son, Antoine." Duval bowed low at the dubious compliment and then muttered an oath between his teeth as the Count rode on. But Felix flushed crimson, with a feeling he himself did not understand. Claire was to him dear as a sister, but Claire's father had treated him with the good-natured indulgence that might be accorded to a dog.

A year or two had passed, before, with a caution worthier of an older head, Felix began to speak of Leyden. The *Intendant* was not a harsh father; and liberty that was compatible with his unquestioned authority his children were welcome to, but a plan formed without reference to him would have no chance of success. Therefore this long-cherished scheme of Felix must not appear such. The *Intendant* sitting by the blazing fire one autumn evening, in the room which Marthe's housewifely instincts always made cheerful and homelike, was beguiled into speaking of his visit to Leyden years before, when he had wooed and won his wife. "Ah," said Felix, "I wish father, you would let me go to Leyden! Winter is coming on, I should be doing nothing at home. Going there would teach me many things." "Tiens," said Duval, "a young rascal like you! You think I have been working like a slave that you may squander my hard earnings!" "No father, only let me go and I shall find means to support myself there for a while." And he was encouraged by some unwonted expression in his father's face to add: "I should like to see our mother's old home," and, to his own great astonishment, Felix then and there obtained his father's consent.

The month or two before his departure had flown as if on wings. Felix had gained his earnest purpose, but it was really more a matter of principle than choice, this leaving home, leaving his sweet sister Marthe and Claire du Plessis.

How hard the parting would be he had never realized; his strong, calm nature, capable of warmest, tenderest affection had, as it were, struck deep root in this home of his happy boyhood. Marthe was his second self—and Claire—well Claire was the embodiment of all that his young soul imagined of loveliness and grace and sweetness.

And it was Claire who said: "You are right Felix, if I were a man and in your place I should not be content to be the *Intendant's* son and forester to the Count du Plessis." And as he stood before her, his face pale and set with the effort to control his sorrow, he said: "Mademoiselle, I shall remember your words of encouragement." Never before had he called her anything but Claire. Had they not grown up together, since the day that little Marthe had taken him with her to the castle? Was it, as Marthe said, that he thought it more manly? or that in the self-revelation of his grief poor Felix suddenly saw what he had before been utterly unconscious of, the great gulf which yawned between the *Demoiselle* du Plessis and the son of her father's *Intendant*?

(To be Continued.)