



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XVII.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1866.

No. 6.

CLARA LESLIE.

A TALE OF OUR OWN TIMES.

CHAPTER X.—Continued.

An expression of deep awe, mingled with surprise passed over Mr. Leslie's features. 'Indeed!' said he, in a tone of calm wonder unmingled with fear; then raised his eyes to Heaven. 'I have loved my Saviour,' he continued; 'I have served Him!' He then closed his eyes, and seemed communing with God. Clara gazed into his face with unutterable affection and awe; presently he turned round to her, and said sadly, 'Alan, poor Alan!'

to watch the last spark of life ebbing fast away. The evening sun streamed through the windows of the bedroom, and lighted up the room with a soft brilliancy ere the sad scene was over. Can one imagine the double agony of Clara as she hoped against hope for Alan's arrival during those last few hours? The eyes of the dying man were now fixed and half open; his chest heaved with a labored breathing; his lifeless arms lay by his side. Clara's hands shook with nervous agitation; Douglas supported her in his arms, her tearful eyes riveted on her father's form, while the long breathing came slower and slower. At last the solemn instant came; the last long sigh, and the naked, trembling spirit stood before its Judge. A thrill, that ran through Clara's frame, and the awful unknown sensation which the first sight of death makes on every mind, told her that all was over. Mr. Wingfield instantly bound up the fallen jaw, and gently said, 'He is gone.' There was a long sigh, and Clara lay fainting in her brother's arms. She had borne up till that moment, and her friends, almost in thankfulness, saw her insipid form carried from the apartment, while they knelt around the bed and thanked God for having delivered the beloved one from 'the miseries of this sinful world,' and place him at once 'in happiness,' as they fondly deemed.

death alone can give. Clara stood long there, every feeling swallowed up in awe—for a corpse was a new sight for her—almost expecting the eyes to open, the pale lips to articulate a sound. But no! that beautiful form was at rest for ever; and so still, so placid looked it in that dim light, that Clara felt she would willingly have laid down in its place, and bade adieu to the world, of which she had now just begun to taste the bitterness. A stealthy step along the passage aroused her; she shrank aside, unwilling to be seen by or speak to any one. The door opened; a slight dark figure glided in, and sunk on his knees with clasped hands by the bed; and Clara's heart sank with anguish as she recognized Alan, and thought of the double weight of grief that sight must now give him. Fearful of intruding on the first burst of his sorrow, she stood motionless, while sob after sob escaped from his bosom. 'O my father!' he exclaimed, lifting his eyes with an expression of mingled awe and resignation, 'hadst thou been still on earth, I should have been at this moment perhaps wringing thy aged heart with grief; but now, in thy place of purification, thine eyes are opened to the great truth that Christ's seamless garb is one; and if messages from this world of sorrow are still borne to cheer thine exile from the face of God, thou wilt rejoice that God has vouchsafed to give to thy child grace to see clearly the path which leads to His presence; and thou wilt still bless thy child!—still bless thy child!' he repeated, his head sinking on his spread hands. He then began repeating that beautiful old Catholic hymn, 'Dies irae, dies illa.'

bricks on the floor, and screaming with delight as his companion (a young girl in a deep black dress, and a curious little mustn cap, with a deep border, on her head) half lay beside him building them up into an airy castle. 'Ah, Douglas must not throw them down,' she exclaimed, as with one flourish of his tiny hand he laid her architecture in the dust. 'See, poor auntie cry;' and she put up her pocket-handkerchief; and then, when the little boy came to peep behind it, suddenly put it away with a playful noise that sent him screaming with laughter to his mother's lap, only to return for some more play. And now the nurse, with the baby in her long white frock, came in, and Clara (our readers will have recognized their old friend) jumped up to hug it before it was given over to its mother. 'Ah, the little Christian! my sweet Madeline!' said she, cradling it in her arms, and walking up and down the room, as if she could not take her eyes off its soft sweet features and bright blue eyes. 'Mildred, I do love this baby so. She is such an innocent little thing! She is so pure! She has never soiled her baptismal robe.'

to the bedside. 'I wish I could get it for you, miss,' she added, as Clara quickly prevented her, 'but I am a poor useless old body, only fit to give every body trouble.' 'Not quite that,' returned Clara gaily; 'you give me pleasure by letting me come to see you, and now you are to eat this nice jelly I have brought you, and I will rub your poor legs, which must want it sadly.' She began her work of charity, in spite of the old woman's exclamation and resistance. 'Oh, miss, this is not work for you to do. I cannot let you do these things for me.' 'Well, then,' said Clara, looking up from the foot of the bed,—where she was already kneeling with her bonnet thrown off and her sleeves tucked up,—with a sweet smile, 'I will not do it for you. You know, whatever we do for the poor in His Name, our Blessed Lord will take as done to Him in that last day.'