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## THE MEDAL, OR THE INFLUENCE OF EARLY IMPRESSIONS.

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(From the Catholic Standard.)

In a small village of one of the southern provinces of France lived the widow Marie Laval, who had an only son, whose tender infancy called forth all those cares and anxieties which usually fill the maternal bosom. Day by day the generous nature of the child developed itself, and the early sweetness of its disposition soothed the labor of his poor mother and gave her hope of having in her old days one whose tenderness would smooth the declining path of her life, and on whom she might confidently rest when no longer able to contend with that world whose troubles were already wearying her. Marie Laval was a pious woman, and none in the village was more noted for the pure and Christian observance of the religious teachings of the good curate, who watched over the inhabitants of the little village with that solicitude which notes the true minister of God. The little Pierre was marked with all the vivacity common to childhood, and with more than the intelligence that commonly belongs to that period of life. Frequent were his lively and eccentric sallies that astonished and delighted the villagers, and which furnished the curate of the village marvels with many anecdotes to delight the rustic circles of his native village.

His mother's heart glowed with maternal pride—the only pride known to her—as she listened to the praise and admiration which daily, and on every side, greeted her boy; though often the tear which joy had summoned to her eye was driven back by the doubt lest Pierre was rash, or that some of his lively sallies might not be altogether such as should demand commendation. Tenderly and fondly as a mother only feels, she watched over his blooming youth, and carefully as a Christian mother she instilled into his bosom those principles of religion which correctly direct the actions of life and fit the soul for that flight to regions destined for its lasting and joyful repose.

The curate of the village, who had early manifested a great degree of interest in the welfare of Pierre, imparted to him the rudiments of education, and found the only reward he sought for his labor in the rapid advancement of his pupil. The pride which the boy felt in the superiority shown by him in rustic sports, was not a little increased, when he beheld his companions, less favored by a cultivated mind, receiving his opinions as the declarations of an oracle. In fact, the labors of the curate and their successful results, were beginning to arouse a suspicion that they were turned from their legitimate object, and instead of begetting that modesty which usually marks the acquisition of knowledge, were arousing in young Pierre an inordinate pride and spirit of self-sufficiency.

Pierre's course of life flowed on in an almost unvaried channel, until he had completed his eighteenth year, when events which had changed the destiny of a great nation, were about to take him from scenes and manners of life which had otherwise probably been allotted to him.

The French revolution had broken out, and although for a time its fierce operations were confined to the metropolis, yet its progress was watched with a deep interest in all parts of France. The discussion of those principles which had caused it, had not been confined to Paris. In fact the revolution in America, which had afforded so many occasions to gratify the national pride by the chivalrous conduct of the sons of France, had also by its successful termination, and the political happiness which it was said to have conferred on Americans, attracted a significant attention to those principles upon which it was founded, and which appear to be congenial to that spirit of liberty and independence, so natural to the bosom of man.

It is unnecessary to speak here of the progress of that movement, of those enormities which attended the early part of its career and aroused at once the terror and pity of the good. Religion was for a while subverted, and infidelity pervaded all classes of society.

The wars in which France was at this time involved, rendered it necessary to resort to the conscription, and among the earliest of the provinces visited was that in which our hero lived. Like most Frenchmen the glory of a soldier's life had often formed the subject of Pierre's thoughts, and when we add to this consideration the daring and adventurous character of the young man, it will not surprise us if Pierre felt but little apprehension at the prospect of being transferred to that mode of life which would appear so well suited for him. To true that the thoughts of parting from his affectionate mother, the kind curate, and all those friends who appeared inseparably connected with every remembrance of pleasure, and all the joys of his

boyhood and his early manhood, would fill his breast with pain, and for a while change the course of his thoughts. But his predilections for a military life came with a renewed force as often as news arrived of another one of those many victories which were covering the arms of France with an imperishable laurel and throwing around her banners that light of military glory, which time can never dim, and that shall forever excite the wonder of the world.

The officers to whom was allotted the duty of enrolling conscripts arrived in the little village in which Pierre lived. The work went steadily on, and Pierre with others was called on to take his chance for the army. The lots were drawn and the heart of Pierre bounded with joy as he found that he had been enrolled, and he looked with wonder on the joyful visages of many of those who had escaped his fortune, so great was his idea of the noble career and the glorious excitement of a soldier's life. Pierre started rapidly for his cottage to make the necessary preparations for his departure, but as he drew within sight of it, somehow his heart beat more slowly, and his foot lost its elasticity. It was now that Pierre was to taste of sorrow; a hundred painful thoughts flew rapidly through his excited brain, in all of which his mother appeared stricken with sorrow at the loss of him. In vain he endeavored, with a desperate exertion, to change the current of his feelings by calling to his mind that he was about to enter on a glorious career; in vain he tried to fancy himself returning from the wars covered with honor and titles, and the joy with which his mother would meet him in the day of his pride. But still he could see, he could feel nothing, but the grief of that mother to whom he was so tenderly attached. As he reached his door he stopped before entering, and sitting down, he buried his face in his hands and gave himself up to the bitter reflections that were overpowering him.

Who shall describe the agony which filled the heart of Marie when she learned, from her pale and weeping son, the misfortune that had fallen on her. For a long time Pierre's endeavors to comfort and alleviate her sorrows were fruitless. But what his filial exertions could not accomplish, she sought from Heaven, and the prayers which she addressed to the Great Consoler were not unheard.

The day of departure arrived, and Pierre was about to join his companions and as the roll of the drum broke the stillness of the village, Pierre knelt and besought the blessing of his parent. With an aching heart she turned her streaming eyes to heaven, and prayed the Father to watch and guard her son. Then taking from her neck one of those small religious medals, bearing an image of the Blessed Virgin, she gave it to him and besought him as often as he looked upon it, to remember those religious principles she had so often taught him in the innocent days of his childhood. As Pierre took it, he read aloud, with fervor, the short, sweet prayer with which the medal was encircled: 'Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us.'

Pierre joined his comrades. The scene was one of interest. Here might be seen some family group, the head of which was taking what was felt to be, and perhaps sadly true, a lasting farewell. Others, reckless in their feelings, and bound to their early home by no tender ties, were manifesting a wild and half joyous excitement, which contrasted strangely and even painfully with the groups to which we have referred.

We will pass over the early part of Pierre's military life, nor will it be necessary to note the despondency which preyed upon him as often as he thought of his mother. New scenes, new modes of life, and the turmoil and the dangers of the camp, gradually brought with them new feelings.

Some years have elapsed from the time of his departure, when a great and painful change might have been observed in Pierre. Constant intercourse with those who were devoid of religion, and who had substituted for it a blind belief in fatality, had done much to weaken the religious faith of Pierre. He heard constantly the most sophistical reasons advanced to sustain this horrid doctrine, and often found it difficult to combat them; he was shut out from those who might have confirmed his wavering faith, and we must acknowledge, that these bad teachers often found a strong advocate in that human pride, which gratified its possessor by inducing him to believe that in differing from so many of his fellow creatures, he was evincing a superior knowledge. As might be expected, Pierre was a brave soldier. Was a breach to be entered, who so brave as Pierre? Who was first in the forlorn hope? Pierre. He was the pride of his regiment, and his comrades looked upon his rapid promotion as a settled question. Proud as he was of praise, and honored as he was, yet Pierre was not happy. Pierre had grown infidel, and the great consolation in all troubles was wanting. He grew gloomy and irritable,

and that light and gay temperament which had endeared him to his companions had fled. He no longer maintained his accustomed respect to his superiors, and was so regardless of discipline, that for some breach of it he was sentenced to a punishment, that had for him no other severity than the humiliation it was about to inflict.

A regard, however, for his former exemplary conduct and his constant gallantry, induced the commander of his regiment to pardon him. But Pierre felt disgraced by the sentence, and as the regiment was on the eve of an undertaking which was deemed desperate, Pierre resolved that it should be his last, and that on the field he would at the same time end his life and retrieve his character.

The engagement was, as expected, of the most sanguinary character. Pierre was in the foremost ranks. The dead and wounded fell around him as the regiment advanced, and more than once the advancing column wavered under the deadly fire of the enemy, but the voice of Pierre in its mad excitement, was heard above the din of battle, and that voice which, in many an action had cheered his drooping comrades, was not heard in vain. The noble conduct of Pierre on that bloody day, reasserted, if necessary, the justness of his claim to the title of 'the brave Pierre,' which his comrades had long before conferred on him. At last the enemy were routed, and as the cry of victory burst from the conquerors, Pierre fell, desperately wounded. He was carried to the hospital, and there for a long time his life was despaired of.

Pierre's regiment had taken up its line of march, and Pierre had taken, as he believed, a last farewell of his companions. Left among a few strangers, and racked with pain, his mind was filled with the most torturing reflections.—He was one day thinking upon his late disgrace. At any time, this was a most painful subject, but more so now, when his mind was weakened by long sickness, and his feelings rendered most painfully acute. The very departure of his regiment, necessary as it was, he looked upon as an abandonment of him as one disgraced. His life had become burdensome to him, and the resolution which he had formed upon the eve of his last engagement, again possessed him. Regardless of his old religious training, forgetful of the happiness with which it had surrounded him, the wretched Pierre, determined to manifest his belief in fatalism by a very consistent display of the tendency of that belief. Pierre was about to become a suicide. By some means or other he became possessed of a weapon, and when left to himself, he determined to end his wretched being. He did not look long for an occasion. Raising himself, as well as he was able, from his pallet, he was tearing open the bosom of his shirt, when his hand became entangled in a cord, and as he was rudely disengaging his hand, the cord broke, and he held the medal, which his tender mother had placed around his neck upon his departure from home. He paused for a moment but that pause was the salvation of Pierre. He thought of his mother and of his parting from her. He beheld her again with tearful eyes, praying Heaven to guard and protect him. And remorse wrung his heart as he reflected how he had disregarded her last admonition to remember the religious principles she had taught him in his youth. His heart softened and tender feelings made it throb with the same pulse it had known in his better and happier days. In fancy, he once again lived through the days of his innocence, his mother, and the good old curate, the simple-hearted friends of his youth all stood before him, and he felt he might again be happy. He looked upon the medal and almost mechanically read the words which it bore: 'Mary, conceived without sin pray for us.' Again he reverted to the time when he knelt at his mother's feet and received her blessing, and the old feeling overcoming him, he cried out with fervor: 'Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us.' Tears streamed from his eyes, as the influence of his early religious impressions gradually stole over him and trembled with horror as he considered the dreadful fate, from which he had escaped. He began now to be more cheerful, and the gloom which had oppressed him gradually disappeared before the light that was breaking upon him. His now tranquil mind helped to advance rapidly his cure, and in about a month he was able to rejoin his regiment. The desperate bravery he had shown and the great service he had rendered, in the engagement to which we have referred, did not go unnoticed by his superiors. He was received with joy by his old companions, and it was remarked with satisfaction that he had recovered his former cheerfulness of spirits. Pierre was promoted for his conduct in the last action, and what is rare upon such occasions, there was no envy expressed by his less fortunate comrades, so much was he beloved by them. We shall not follow him further through his military career, nor stop to tell how he advanced from step to step, until he had attained an exalted rank in the army. But we may remark that he has been

frequently seen to pore over the medal, especially before a battle.

Upon the conclusion of one of his most successful campaigns, he visited his mother, for the first time since he left her, a weeping conscript. How shall we describe the joy of that meeting? Maternal joy like maternal sorrow, begs the power of description. Shortly after this visit, he retired from the army, and his heart has bounded with gratitude as often as he has related the terrible fate he escaped, by having the force of true religion and the good teaching of his youth, revived by means of THE MEDAL.

## THE UNFORGIVEN SISTER.

It was a pretty scene in the rich parlor that winter afternoon. A little girl with shining golden curls, and radiant eyes in which gleamed a world of love and beauty, sat upon a richly-embroidered cushion, which she had thrown from the sofa. In her lap she held a little dog, and by her side lay a wreath of bright hot-house flowers. With these latter she was decking the bright silver collar worn around the neck of the former, with many a crow of delight as the little dog snapped playfully at the flowers, alternately looking wistfully into the face of his little mistress.

Yet at that moment the door opened, and one made her appearance there who did not see the beauty of the picture. Her first exclamation was: 'Why, Minnie! you naughty, naughty girl! What are you doing?'

The sunshine was gone from the child's face in an instant. She jumped hurriedly up from her seat on the cushion, with a look of sorrow and fright on her face, while the little dog scampered beneath the sofa, and stood peeping timidly forth.

Little Minnie had not suspected, until that moment, that the bouquet that she had taken belonged to her sister; and even then she did not know how rare and costly it was; although she knew that she had done something wrong, and felt very sorry for it. So, after standing timidly a moment in the centre of the room, where she had risen from the cushion, she approached the other, and said: 'Dear sister Edith, you will not be angry with me, will you? Please forgive me. I did not mean to do wrong.'

'No, Minnie,' was the reply of the other, 'I shall not forgive you! Indeed you have been very naughty, and I do not love you!'

Not love her! Not love that frail, beautiful but, the pride and light of the house? Ah, Edith Somerville! less than human you must be, to stand there, and say that, with those beseeching, tearful eyes upturned to yours.

But Edith was very much vexed just then, and heeded not the pleading look that she drove away from the sinless little face. She was too much taken up with thinking of her bouquet.—It was one just sent from the green house, and which she was to wear at a grand ball that evening. So she bent angrily down to the floor, and commenced gathering up the flowers, finally catching hold of the little dog's leg, and pulling him roughly from his hiding place beneath the sofa, to get those which were in his collar.

'Please don't hurt my dog!' said the little Minnie, with tremulous lip. 'He has done nothing naughty.'

'Though said in the kindest of tones, this still further irritated Edith, and she replied sharply: 'Go into the nursery. You are very naughty, and I do not love you.'

Minnie tried to say something more; but the swelling in her throat choked her, and she went silently from the presence of her sister Edith, to cry bitterly at her thoughtless act, and her sister's cruel rebuke.

Meanwhile Edith busied herself in preparing for the ball. At last she was ready, and then grouped the flowers together in her bosom, not without noticing that the loveliest bud was crushed and broken.

At the garden gate, just as she was stepping into the carriage, she heard a pleading voice behind her, and, looking back, saw little Minnie standing half-way down the walk, the bright December moon shining full and radiantly down upon her. She had run out bare-headed, to ask again for her proud sister's forgiveness. Very pretty, she looked to the moonlight, her bright hair sparkling its soft beams.

'Please, Edith,' said the timid voice—'please say you forgive me before you go. I am so sorry.'

Who but one bent on gratifying her own pleasure at all hazards, could have withstood this second appeal? Yet so will pride and self-love harden even the least obdurate hearts unless religion sheds its peaceful and benignant influence, here, to counteract the baleful wickedness of the former. Although her heart softened a little as she saw the frail child standing just the other side of the gate, yet she thought it would not do to show sister feelings now, after the spectacle of the afternoon, and thought, moreover, a little

discipline was needful; so she only said: 'There, there; run into the house, Minnie. You'll catch cold. Don't worry me now about my forgiveness. You've been very naughty, and I don't think you have had time to repent properly.'

'And with these heartless words, she stepped into the carriage, the footman closed the door, and away they rattled down the street.

Edith did not have the pleasant time that she anticipated. Somehow, a little moonlit face in the gravelled walk constantly appeared between her and the brilliant constellations of light that flashed on all sides in the ball room; and a little childish voice, full of piteous, tender pleading, seemed to ceaselessly ring in her ears, and drown the music that swelled around her on all sides.

When at last the ball began to draw towards its close, Edith hailed it with delight, inasmuch as it would enable her to forgive and kiss the little sister to whom she had refused that boon a few hours previous. But she soon recollected, with a pang, that she had promised to go home with her aunt, Lady Hanbury, to Kew, after the ball, and stay a couple of days. How long a time that seemed. How far off was the propitiation thus placed.

Edith spent two miserably restless days at the house of her aunt, and then started to seek again the shelter of her own roof. She paused an instant at the gate, almost dreading to go in, yet could not tell why. She knocked at the door nervously, yet Hope all the time whispered that Minnie would be the first to bear the noise. But no. Where could she be? Where the little form that usually bounded to meet the elder sister? All silent. No one to meet her. Even the kitten, that usually frisked about her in such joy, hardly noticed her; now merely raising its head, and opening its great, yellow eyes, as it lay on the lounge. Was she so great a criminal, then? Ah, how the conscience lashes the soul when a wrong action has been done. Poor Edith suffered enough then to have been spared the great retribution that was to follow, if it had not been otherwise ordered.

Edith still stood in the centre of the room, listening to the whispering of that dreadful foreboding, when another opened, and her mother stepped softly across the threshold.

'Ah, Edith!' she said, starting at the unexpected sight, and a soft smile playing over features that looked wan and careworn; 'I am glad that you have come. We were just going to send for you.'

'Why?' almost gasped she. 'Is anything—'

is Minnie—'

Minnie is very ill. The doctor says her life hangs on a very slender thread. She has the brain fever.'

'Oh, how monstrous my wickedness seems to me now. Let me see her at once, and ask her forgiveness for—'

'Alas! it would be useless. She knows no one, and understands nothing that is said to her.'

'But I must see her.'

'Not now, when you are so discomposed.—Everything must be very quiet around her.'

'But how long has she been ill?' inquired Edith, in an unsteady voice.

'She was taken the very night you went away. We missed her shortly after you had gone, and could not find her for a long time. At last she was discovered quite by accident, sitting in the arbour near the gate, sound asleep. She had been crying about something, we thought; but she was so sleepy we did not question her, and in the morning she was out of her mind. She keeps continually calling for you, and beseeching your forgiveness for something she has done.'

'My forgiveness!' groaned the unhappy Edith. 'It is I who should ask hers. An she sat down in the arbour on that cold night, and went to sleep. Oh, how shall I ever forgive myself?'

'Then, with many a groan and flood of tears, Edith told her mother the story, sparing herself in no particular.

'You did very wrong, Edith,' was all the mother said, although her heart was sorely tried.

'She is very sensitive, and the least thing affects her. Her wrong was at most a negative one, and yours a positive. If she should never recover, you—'

'Never recover!' screamed Edith. 'But she must. I should—'

'Nay, my daughter,' said the mother, calmly, 'Do not add impiety to your sins. She is in the hands of a higher Power than we. If He wills it, she may still remain with us; if not, she will only have gone where she will have escaped a great deal of sin and suffering.'

Edith went to the bedside, and passionately repeated little Minnie's name, coupling its fervent utterance with a piteous appeal for forgiveness; but the tones awakened no response save a vacant stare of the large blue eyes, now so blank in the fever of delirium. Then, a moment later, the lips moved, and said: 'Sweet sister, Edith, please forgive me. You do love me, if I was naughty?'

All that dreary night and the next day, Edith