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MIDNIGHT.

I love to muse by the river beach,
When the stars are shining o'er me;
When the breaking waves doth a moral teach,
As it dashes in light before me.
The air is like a lifeless sea
Of pure and silvery light,
And the waters glaze transparently,
Illumined by the queen of night.
The created waves as they dash on high,
And dissolve in pearls of foam,
Appear as a carpet spread gaily,
Where the giant sea-gods tread.
The stars that glauced up so peacefully,
Seem set in the river's bed,
And the restless leaves of the poplar tree
Make music o'er my head.
On such a night did the Indian woo,
And win his dusky bride;
On such, did he vow to be ever true,
As they sat by this river's side.
She look'd upon the studded sky,
As he told his flattering tale;
Her dark eyes sparkling brilliantly,
When seen by the moon-beams pale.
He pointed to the evening star—
"This reflected at my feet—
And told her of a home afar,
Where faithful lovers meet.
He told her, when this life was o'er,
That they'd visit that shining tale;
And sit upon that golden shore,
Where he'd revel in her smile.
But list to the sound of that thrilling note!
'Tis the lover's serenade;
And his heart beats quick, that his lay may float
To his own loved blue-eyed maid.
And she is sleeping sweetly now—
Her eye-lids darkly fringed,
While a shade like thought is on her brow,
And her cheek is slightly tinged.
She's dreaming of her own true loves,
By the smile upon her lips;
She dreams of a home like that above,
Where their wings the angels dip.
'Tis the fount of love, as pure and deep
As the faith to spirits given—
'Tis blissful, for this maid asleep
Imagines it like to heaven.
But the winds are rising in their might,
And the clouds stalk blackly on—
I know there'll be a storm this night,
For the sky's pure blue has gone.
And an end I must take of my reverie,
And bid to my lonely bed;
For I hear the tempest demon's cry,
As it echoes over my head.

THE STORY OF FATHER NICHOLAS.

BY M'KENZIE.

Formal precepts and supposititious cautions are indeed frequently offered to youth and experience, in a manner so ungracious as neither to command their attention, nor conciliate their liking. He who says I am to instruct and to warn, with a face of instruction or admonition, prepares his audience for hearing what the young and the lively always avoid as tiresome, or fear as unpleasant. A more willing and a deeper impression will be made when the observation arises without being prompted, when the understanding is addressed through the feelings. It was this which struck me so forcibly in the story of Father Nicholas—I never felt so strongly the evils of dissipation, nor ever was so ashamed of the shame of being virtuous. It was a small town in Brittany, in which there was a convent of Benedictines, where particular circumstances had induced me to take up my residence for a few weeks. They had some pictures which strangers used to visit—I went with a party whose purpose was to look at them—mine in such places is rather to look at men. If in the world we behold the shifting scene which prompts observation, we see in such secluded societies a sort of still life, which nourishes thought; which gives subject for meditation. I confess, however, I have often been disappointed; I have seen a group of faces under their cowls, on which speculation could build nothing; mere common place countenances, which might have equally well belonged to a corporation of Bakers or Butchers. Most of those in the Convent I now visited were of that kind; one however was of a very superior order; that of a Monk, who knelt at a distance from the Altar, near a Gothic window, through the painted panes of which a gleamy light touched his forehead, and threw a dark Rembrandt shade on the hollow of a large black, melancholy eye. It was impossible not to take notice of him. He looked up, involuntarily no doubt, to a picture of our Saviour bearing his cross; the similarity of the attitude, and the quiet resignation of the two countenances, formed a resemblance that could not but strike every one. "It is Father Nicholas," whispered our conductor, who is of all the brotherhood the most rigid to himself, and the kindest to other men. To the distressed, to the sick, and to the dying he is always ready to administer assistance and consolation. No body ever told him a misfortune in which he did not take an interest, or request a good office

which he refused to grant; yet the austerity and mortifications of his own life are beyond the strictest rules of his order; and it is only from what he does for others that one supposes to feel any touch of humanity. The subject seemed to make our informant eloquent. I was young, curious, enthusiastic; it sunk deep into my heart, and I could not rest till I was made acquainted with Father Nicholas. Whether from the power of the introduction I procured, from his own benevolence, or from my department, the good man looked on me with the complacency of a parent. It is not usual, said he, my son, for people at your age, to solicit acquaintance like mine. To you the world is in its prime; why should you anticipate its decay? Gaiety and cheerfulness spring up around you; why should you seek out the abodes of melancholy and woe? Yet though lead to pleasures, I am not insensible to the charities of life. I feel your kindness, and wish for an opportunity to requite it. He perceived my turn for letters, and showed me curious MSS; and some scarce books, which belonged to their convent; these were not the communications I sought; accident gave me an opportunity of obtaining the knowledge I valued more, the knowledge of Father Nicholas, the story of his sorrows, the cause of his austerities.

One evening when I entered his cell, after knocking at the door without being heard, I perceived him kneeling before a Crucifix, to which was affixed a small picture, which I took to be that of the blessed Virgin. I stood behind him, uncertain whether I should wait the close of his devotional exercise, or to retire unperceived as I came. His face was covered with his hand, and I heard his stifled groans. A mixture of compassion and curiosity fixed me to the place. He took his hands from his eyes with a quickened movement, as if a pang had forced them thence: He laid hold of the picture, which he kissed twice, pressed it to his bosom, and then gazing on it earnestly, burst into tears. After a few moments, he clasped his hands together, threw a look up to Heaven, and muttering some words which I could not hear, drew a deep sigh, which seemed to close the account of his sorrows for the time, and rising from his knees, discovered me. I was ashamed of my situation, and stammered out some apology for my unintentional interruption of his devotions. "Alas!" said he, "be not deceived; these are not the tears of devotion; not the melttings of piety; but the wringing of remorse. Perhaps, young man, it may stand thee to know the story of my sufferings and of my sins; ingenuous as thy nature seems, it may be exposed to temptations like mine; it may be the victim of laudable feeling perverted, of virtue betrayed, of false honour and mistaken shame."

My name is St. Hubert; my family ancient and respectable, though its domains, from various untoward events, had been diminished much within their former extent. I lost my father before I knew the misfortune of losing him; and the indulgence of my mother, who continued a widow, made up, in the estimation of a young man, for any want of that protection or of guidance which another parent might have afforded. After having passed with applause through the ordinary studies which the capital of our province allowed an opportunity of acquiring, my mother sent me to Paris, along with the son of a neighbouring family, who, though of less honourable descent, was much richer than ours. Young Delasserre, (that was my companion's name,) was intended for the army; me, from particular circumstances which promised success in that line, my mother and her friends had destined for the long robe, and had agreed for the purchase of a charge for me when I should be qualified for it. Delasserre had a sovereign contempt for any profession but that of arms, and took every opportunity of inspiring me with the same sentiments. In the capital I had this prejudice every day more and more confirmed. The fierce of every man who had served, the insolent superiority he claimed over his fellow citizens, dazzled my ambition, and awed my bashfulness. From nature I had that extreme sensibility of shame which could not stand against the ridicule even of such inferior men. Ignorance would often confound me in matters of which I was perfectly well informed, from his superior proficiency; and the best established principles of my mind would sometimes yield to the impudence of assuming sophistry or of unblushing vice. To the profession which my relations had marked out for me, attention, diligence, and sober manners, were naturally attached; having once set down that profession as humiliating, I concluded its attendant qualities to be equally dishonourable. I was ashamed of virtues to which I was naturally inclined, a bully in vices which I hated and despised. Delasserre enjoyed my popularity from innocence as a victory he had gained. At school he was much my inferior, and I retained every mark of distinction to which he had aspired in vain. In Paris he triumphed in his turn; his superior wealth enabled him to command the respect of superior dignity and show; the cockade in his hat inspired a

confidence which my situation did not allow; and bold as he was in dissipation and debauchery, he led me on as an inferior whom he had taught the art of living, whom he had first trained to independence and to manhood. My mother's ill-judged kindness supplied me with the means of those pleasures which my companions induced me to share, if pleasures they might be called, which I often partook with uneasiness, and reflected on with remorse. Sometimes, though but too seldom, I was as much a hypocrite on the other side; I was self-denied, beneficent, and virtuous by stealth; while the time and money which I had so employed, I boasted to my companions of having spent in debauchery, in riot and in vice.

The habits of life, however, into which I had been led, began by degrees to blunt my natural feelings of rectitude, and to take from me the restraints of conscience. But the dangerous connexion I had formed was broken off by the accident of Delasserre's receiving orders to join his regiment, then quartered at Dunkirk.

At his desire, I gave him the conveyance as far as to a relation's house in Picardy, where he was to spend a day or two on his way. "I will introduce you," said he in a tone of pleasantry, because you will be a favourite; my cousin Santonges is as sober and precise as you were when I first found you." The good man whom he thus characterised possessed indeed all those virtues of which the ridicule of Delasserre had sometimes made me ashamed, but which it had never made me entirely cease to revere.

In his family I regained the station which in our dissipated society at Paris I had lost. His example encouraged, and his precepts fortified, my natural disposition to goodness; but his daughter, Emilia de Santonges was a more interesting assistant to it.

After my experience of the few of her sex with whom we were acquainted in town, the native beauty, the unaffected manners of Emilia, were infinitely attractive. Delasserre however, found them insipid and tiresome. He left his kinsman's the third morning after his arrival, promising, as soon as his regiment should be reviewed, to meet me in Paris. Except in Paris, said he, we exist merely, but do not live. I found it very different. I lived but in the presence of Emilia de Santonges. But why should I recall those days of purest felicity, or think of what my Emilia was! For not long after she was mine. In the winter they came to Paris, on account of her father's health, which was then rapidly on the decline. I attended him, with that assiduity which was due to his friendship, and which the company of Emilia made more an indulgence than a duty. Our cares, and the skill of physicians, were fruitless; he died, and left his daughter to my friendship. It was then that I first dared to hope for her love; that over the grave of her father I mingled my tears with Emilia's and tremblingly ventured to ask, if she thought me worthy of comforting her sorrows? Emilia was too innocent for disguise, too honest for affectation. She gave her hand to my virtues, (for I then was virtuous,) to reward at the same time, and to confirm them. We returned to Santonges, where we enjoyed as much felicity as perhaps the lot of humanity will allow. My Emilia's merit was equal to her happiness; and I may say without vanity, since it is now my shame that the since wretched St. Hubert was then thought to deserve the blessings he enjoyed.

In this state of peaceful felicity we had lived! something more than a year, when my Emilia promised to add to the many endearing titles she had already blessed me with, that of Father; on that occasion my anxiety was such as a husband who doats on his wife may be supposed to feel. In consequence of that anxiety, I proposed our removing to Paris, where she might have a better assistance, than our province could afford, in those moments of danger which she soon expected. To this she objected with earnestness, from a variety of motives; but most of my neighbours applauded my resolution; and one, who was the nephew of a farmer-general, and had purchased the estate on which his father had been a tenant, told me, the danger from their country *accoucheurs* was such, that nobody who could afford to go to Paris would think of trusting them. I was a little tender on the reproach of poverty, and absolutely determined for the journey. To induce my wife to consent, I had another pretext, being left executor to a friend who had died in Paris, and had effects remaining there. Emilia at last consented, and we removed to town accordingly.

For sometime I scarce ever left our Hotel: It was the same as which Emilia and her father had lodged when he came to Paris to die, and leave her to my love. The recollection of those scenes, tender and interesting as they were, spread a sort of melancholy indigestion over our mutual society, by which the company of any third person could scarcely be brooked. My wife had some of those sad presages which woman of sensibility often feels in the condition she was in. All my attention and solicitude were

excited to combat her fears. "I shall not live," she would say, "to revisit Santonges; but my Henry will think of me there, in those woods in which we have so often walked, by that brook, to the fall of which we have listened together, and felt in silence what language, at least what mine, my love, could not speak. The good Father was overpowered by the tenderness of the images that rushed upon his mind, and tears for a moment choked his utterance. After a short space he began with a voice faltering and weak—"Pardon the emotion that stopped my recital—You pity me; but it is not always that my tears are of so gentle a kind—The images her speech recalled, softened my feelings into sorrow; but I am not worthy of them. Hear the confessions of my remorse."

The anxiety of my Emilia was at last dissipated she presented me with a lovely Boy: On this object of a new kind of tenderness we gazed with inexpressible delight. We proposed returning to the country as soon as the re-establishment of her strength would permit.—Mean-time, during her hours of rest, I generally went out to finish the business which the trust of my deceased friend had devolved upon me.

In passing through the Tuilleries, in one of those walks, I met my old companion Delasserre; he embraced me with a degree of warmth which I scarce expected from my knowledge of his disposition, or the length of time for which our correspondence had been broke off. He had heard, he said, accidentally of my being in town, but had sought me for several days in vain. In truth, he was of all men one of whom I was the most afraid of meeting. I had heard in the country of his unbounded dissipation and extravagance, and there were some stories to his prejudice, which were only not believed from an unwillingness to believe them in people whose the corruptions of the world had familiarised to baseness; yet I found he still possessed a kind of superiority over my mind, which I was glad to excuse by forcing myself to think him less unworthy than he was reported. After a variety of inquiries, and expressing his cordial satisfaction at the present happiness I enjoyed, he pressed me to spend the evening with him so earnestly, that though I had made it a sort of rule to be at home, I was ashamed to offer an apology, and agreed to meet him at the hour he appointed.

Our company consisted only of Delasserre himself, and two other officers; one a good deal older than any of us, who had the cross of St. Louis and the rank of Colonel, whom I thought the most agreeable man I had ever met with. The unwillingness with which I left home, and the expectation of a very different kind of party where I was going, made me feel the present one doubly pleasant. My spirits which were rather low when I went in, from that constraint I was prepared for, rose in proportion to the pleasure around me, and the perfect ease in which I found myself with this old officer, who had information, wit, sentiment, every thing I valued most, and every thing I least expected in a society selected by Delasserre. It was late before we parted; and at parting I received, not without pleasure, an invitation from the Colonel to sup with him the evening after.

The company at his house I found enlivened by his sister and a friend of hers, a widow, who, though not a perfect beauty, had a countenance that impressed one much more in her favour than mere beauty could. When silent, there was a certain softness in it infinitely bewitching; and when it was lightened up by the expression which her conversation gave, it was equally attractive. We happened to be placed next each other. Unused as I was to the little gallantries of fashionable life, I rather wished than hoped to make myself agreeable to her. She seemed, however, interested in my attentions and conversation, and in hers I found myself flattered at the same time and delighted. We played against our inclination, and we won rather more than I wished. Had I been as rich as Delasserre, I should have objected to the deepness of the stakes; but we were the only persons of the company that seemed uneasy at our success, and we parted with the most cordial good humour.

Madame de Trenville, (that was the widow's name,) smiling to the Colonel, asked him to take his revenge at her house, and said, with an air of equal modesty and frankness, that as I had been the partner of her success, she hoped for the honour of my company, to take the chance of sharing a less favourable fortune.

At first my wife expressed her satisfaction at my finding amusement in society, to relieve the duty of my attending her. But when my absence grew very frequent, (as indeed I was almost every day at Madame de Trenville's) though her words continued the same, she could not help expressing by her countenance her dissatisfaction. I perceived (this at first with tenderness only, and next evening excused myself from keeping my engagements. But I found my wife's company not what it used to be: thoughtful,

but afraid to trust one another with our thoughts. Emilia showed her uneasiness by her looks, and I covered mine, but ill with an assumed gaiety of appearance.

The day following Delasserre called, and saw Emilia for the first time. He recalled me gently for breaking my last night's appointment, and told me of another he had made for me, which my wife insisted on my keeping. Her cousin applauded her conduct, and joked on the good government of wives. Before I went out in the evening, I came to wish Emilia good night. I thought I perceived a tear on her cheek, and would have staid, but for the shame of not going. The company observed my want of gaiety, and Delasserre was merry on the occasion. Even my friend the Colonel threw in a little raillery on the subject of marriage. "Twas the first time I felt somewhat awkward at being the only married man of the party.

We played deeper and at later than formerly; but I was to shew myself not afraid of my wife, and objected to neither. I lost considerably, and returned home mortified and chagrined. I saw Emilia next morning, whose spirits were not high. Methought her looks reproached my conduct, and I was enough in the wrong to be angry they did so. Delasserre came to take me to his house to dinner. He observed as he went, that Emilia looked ill. "Going to the country will re-establish her," said I. "Do you leave Paris?" said he. "In a few days." "Had I such motives for remaining in it as you have. What motives? The attachment of such friends; but friendship is a cold word; the attachment of such a woman as—De Trenville." I know not how I looked, but he pressed the subject no farther; perhaps I was less offended than I ought to have been.

We went to that lady's house after dinner; she was dressed most elegantly, and looked more beautiful than I had ever seen her—The party was more numerous than usual, and there was more vivacity in it.—The conversation turned upon my intention of leaving Paris; the ridicule of country manners, of country opinions, of the insipidity of country enjoyments, was kept up with infinite spirit by Delasserre, and most of the younger members of the company. Madame de Trenville did not join in their mirth, and sometimes looked at me as if the subject was too serious for her to be merry on. I was half ashamed and half sorry that I was going to the country; less uneasy than vain at the preference that was shewn me. I was a coward, however, in the wrong as well as in the right, and fell upon an expedient to screen myself from a discovery that might have saved me. I contrived to deceive my wife, and to conceal my visits to Madame de Trenville under the pretence of some perplexing incidents that had arisen in the management of those affairs with which I was entrusted: Her mind was too pure for suspicion or for jealousy. It was easy even for a novice in falsehood, like me, to deceive her. But I had an able assistant in Delasserre, who now resumed the ascendancy over me he had formerly possessed, but with an attraction more powerful, from the infatuated attachment which my vanity and weakness, as such as her art and beauty, had made me conceive for Madame de Trenville.

It happened that just at this time a young man arrived from our province, and brought letters for Emilia from a female friend of hers in the neighbourhood of Santonges. He had been a miniature-painter, and came to town for improvement in his art. Emilia, who doated on her little boy, proposed to him to draw his picture in the innocent attitude of his sleep. The young painter was pleased with the idea, provided she would allow him to paint the child in her arms. This was to be concealed from me, for the sake of surprising me with the picture when it should be finished. That she might have a better opportunity of effecting this little concealment, Emilia would often hear, with a sort of satisfaction, my engagements abroad, and encourage me to keep them, that the picture might advance in my absence.

She knew not what, during that absence, was my employment. The slave of vice and of profusion, I was violating my faith to her in the arms of the most artful and worthless of women, and losing the fortune that should have supported my child and her to a set of cheats and villains.—Such was the snare that Delasserre and his associates had drawn around me; it was covered with the appearance of love and generosity. De Trenville had art enough to make me believe that she was every way the victim of her affection for me. My first great losses at play she pretended to reimburse from her own private fortune, and then threw herself upon my honour for relief from those distresses into which I had brought her. After having exhausted all the money I possessed, and all my credit could command, I would have stopped short of ruin; but when I thought of returning in disgrace and poverty to the place I had left respected and happy, I had not resolution enough to retreat. I took refuge in desperation, mortgaged the remains of my estate, and staked the pro-