

The Madonna of Mailleras.

(TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF MELLE DES ARGES BY

ANTOINETTE LE BLANC.

“NO, Lizzie, no, I won't go to school to-day, the young lady said she was coming, and I want to see her,” and Jean fought like a little tiger, trying all the while to draw his hand away from his sister's grasp.

“But I say you must go, Jean, for I have a great deal of work, and cannot keep you here all day.”

“O! I will be so good, dear little sister.” And Jean, raising himself on his tip-toes, held up his fat, rosy face, for his sister's morning kiss.

“Well, well, go this morning, and stay until twelve, while you are away I will do the bulk of my work, then after dinner, you need not go back again. Miss Marie won't come until nearly evening, so you will be in plenty time to see her.” And Lizzie, who had let herself be won over by her brother's pleading, now took his hand, and went half way with him, as she had done every morning since he had begun going to school. Lizzie, whose baptismal name was Louise, but whom the family called thus, was a girl of fourteen or fifteen years of age. Her mother being dead, she had the sole charge of her little brother, for her father, an able workman, being employed in one of the neighboring factories, went out early in the morning, and came home quite late in the evening, to have supper with them. The young girl, having been so well brought up by her good mother, was unusually serious for her age; and, moreover, a splendid housekeeper. She kept their

home as it should be, neat and clean, and carefully watched over her brother, whom she loved with a maternal love. Lizzie lived with her father and brother in a dear little cottage near the village of Mailleras, which is situated on the banks of the Gartempe, in that portion of Poitou which borders on the Berry. Their house pointed on the road which leads from Blanc to Montmorillon, an old-fashioned town which, like all others in the province, is gradually losing its old-timed aspect, by enlarging its streets and re-building its houses in accordance with the more modern styles. Hardly twenty years ago, Montmorillon was surrounded by immense tracts of land, through which flowed the waters, of the Gartempe; but little by little, civilization, which leaves no piece of ground uncultivated, took possession of the wild plains, without a thought for the poor, wild, rose bush, or prickly broom now in flower, which, it is true, bring forth no fruit, but which imparts a wild sort of beauty, that is not without its charms.

When twelve o'clock rang, Lizzie went out to the door to see if Jean were coming. The road was deserted, and she went back into the house, wondering what made the child so late, for he was very seldom kept in after hours. It was after one when he came in, his face was red from crying, and he seemed very much ashamed of himself. “What is the matter with you?” asked Lizzie, when she saw him.