

ness of that chateau in which he was born, in which his father had died, that had been lost through his fault. Frequently his heart turned towards Valtravers with sorrow. To wish it otherwise were exacting too much of human resignation; it would also be exaggerating too much the luxury of the attics, the enchantment of wood-carving. As to Ursule, she regretted nothing, desired nothing. She sang praises of Maurice, and repeated with more energy than ever that he was an angel, an angel of heaven, an angel of the good God. 'Come! come!' said Maurice at times good-naturedly, 'you know there is only one angel here—it is neither I nor you, gross creature.' At these last words, that to her had been at all times the highest expression of the friendship of Maurice for his foster-sister, Ursule burst into tears and sobs; she cried that Maurice was an archangel. During the pleasant season, when they had worked all the week, on Sunday all three weeded their way towards the fields, after Ursule and Madeleine had listened to low mass at the church of the *Missions-trangeres*. It was to them the most beautiful of holidays. They passed the day upon the hill sides, at the bottom of the valleys, dining a *l'avenure*, and returned overflowing with happiness. In this way Maurice revisited, with his beautiful cousin, those woods of Luciennes and Celle, in which, two years before, he had shaped his plans of suicide. Under the chestnut groves that he had filled with his soul's sorrow, by the border of the little lake, fringed with alders and tremulous poplars where death had appeared to him, he listened to the music of life in his breast.

CHAPTER XV.

SAINT ELIZABETH.

Meanwhile it happened that this young man was seized with a strange malady. Since some time he experienced in the presence of Madeleine an inexplicable trouble. One might have seen him alternately turn pale and redden under her glance, and tremble at the sound of her voice. At evening, while she embroidered, he remained whole hours contemplating her in silence; it was no longer the furious or scornful air that he formerly possessed. When he entered her room his blood flowed violently to his heart. If Madeleine entered his, he welcomed her with the embarrassment and awkwardness of a child. At times he wept without divining the cause of his tears. In his sleep he listened to the almost imperceptible noise of an enchanted work that

was making in him. What was passing within him? Maurice had later a vague revelation.

Through the agency of Marceau, Maurice had received the order for a great figure. It was in honour of a Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, that a rich baronet, faithful to the traditions of his family, which had remained Catholic, designed to decorate the Oratory of one of his chateaux in Lancashire. The young artist had accepted this work with all the more eagerness, because his mother had borne the name of this saint, and he combined both of them in the same sentiment of veneration. However, despite the very real knowledge that he owed to the instruction of his father, despite the dexterity with which he handled the chisel, at the moment of attacking the oak he felt himself seized with a profound self-distrust. He, who hitherto had played with all difficulties with a confidence that might pass for presumption, he hesitated; he dared not strike his chisel into the wood; he was astonished at his own timidity, for he did not yet know that distrust of self is a sign of true talent. He interrogated the recollection of all the sculptured figures that he had seen in churches; none of them realized the ideal of a queen and saint, none had the nobility and chastity that belonged to this character. Time slipped away. He outlined at first the draperies and the hands. The ambition to produce at last a work capable of establishing his renown and meriting the approbation of his cousin sustained his courage, and at the same time rendered him more severe towards himself. He was never content with the fold that he had just finished; he found that the material had never enough flexibility, that the movement of the body had never enough grace. The hands occupied him long; he endeavoured to give them a regal elegance. It is thus that *chefs-d'œuvre* are created; the multitude that admire them never suspect the labour they have cost. When the hour arrived to commence the head, his hesitation redoubled. However, he set himself at work, and soon the chisel obeyed the impulse of a mysterious thought. The forehead was rounded without effort, the eyes were modelled as if by enchantment; softly shielded under the shadow of their orbits, they expressed the rapture of a soul in prayer. The lips, full of indulgence and goodness, were half-opened as if to afford passage to the balmy breath: the hair, divided upon the forehead into two masses, descended upon the cheeks and then raised over the ears, formed a frame for the graceful oval of the face. After some moments of silent contemplation, Maurice retouched

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