



The Black City

George Sand

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Set against the backdrop of France's industrial revolution, this 1859 novel by the controversial, passionately socialist George Sand follows the fortunes of the dynamic, young metal smith Etienne Lavoute, known as Sept-Epees (or Seven Blades), as he strives to free himself not from the working class but from the woes imposed upon it by grasping mill owners. While ambition is the spur that prompts Sept-Epees to purchase a ramshackle factory he is ill equipped to run, love is the secret cause. For Sept-Epees, however misguidedly, would make himself worthy of the orphaned (like him), wise, pretty, and capable Tonine Gaucher. As eloquent in its exposure of the social ills that afflicted French workers at the onset of the industrial revolution as it is poignant in its exploration of love's turbulent course for the prideful Sept-Epees and the proud Tonine, The Black City reflects George Sand's enduring admiration for the struggles and triumphs of the working class as well as her genius in the characterization of strong, clear-eyed, independent women. If in Sept-Epees she embodies the estimable worker who can make of his craft an art, in Tonine she epitomizes the woman whose successes stunningly defy the conventions of the age.



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