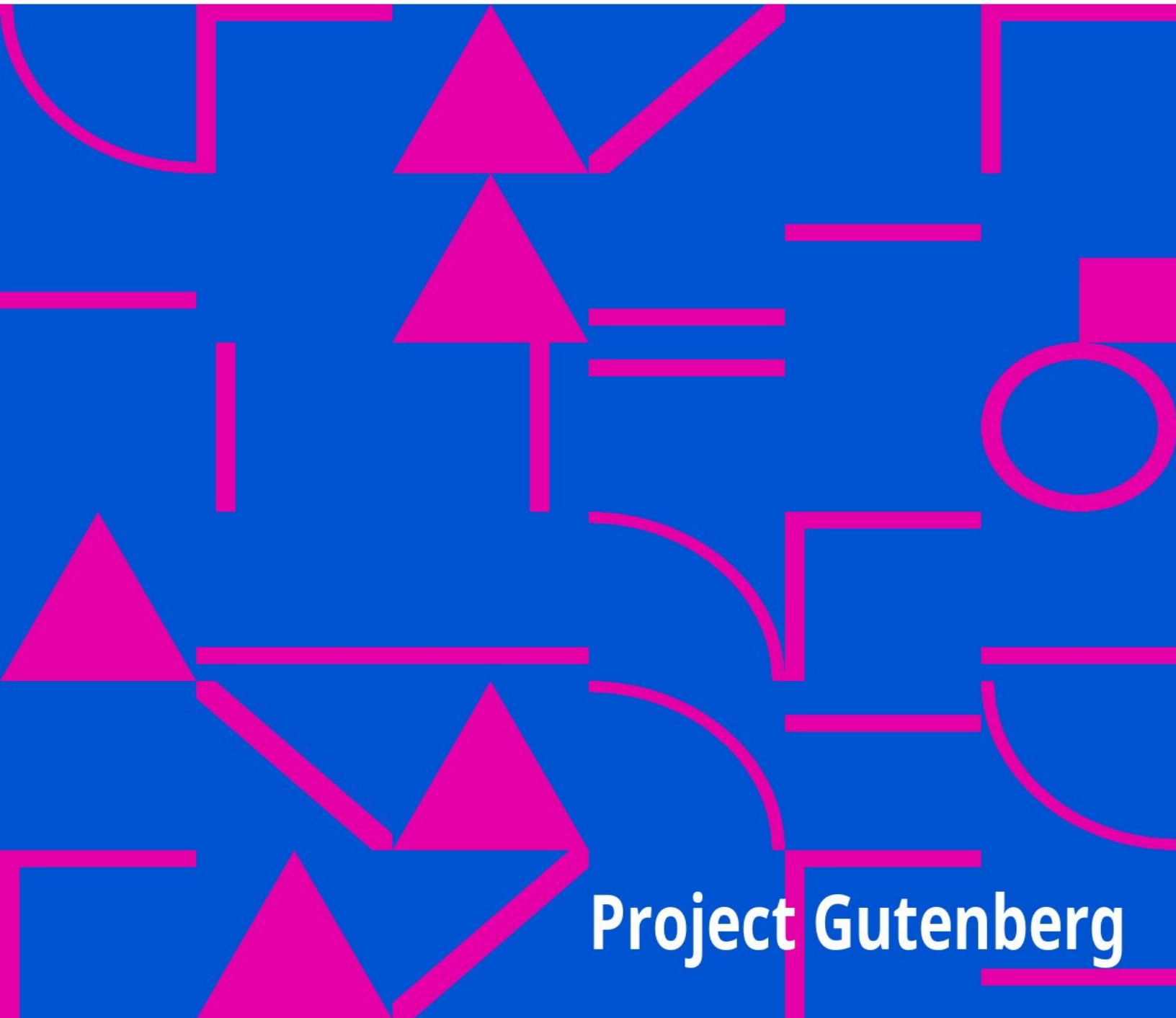
Joan of Arc, the Warrior Maid

Lucy Foster Madison



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JOAN OF ARC

The Warrior Maid

By Lucy Foster Madison
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With Illustrations & Decorations by
Frank E Schoonover

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Joan of Arc

THE WARRIOR MAID

INTRODUCTION

In presenting this story for the young the writer has endeavored to give a vivid and accurate life of Jeanne D'Arc (Joan of Arc) as simply told as possible. There has been no pretence toward keeping to the speech of the Fifteenth Century, which is too archaic to be rendered literally for young readers, although for the most part the words of the Maid have been given verbatim.

The name of this wonderful girl has been variously written. In the Fifteenth Century the name of the beloved disciple was preferred for children above all others; so we find numerous Jeans and Jeannes. To render these holy names more in keeping with the helplessness of little ones the diminutive forms of Jeannot and Jeannette were given them. So this girl was named Jeannette, or Jehannette in the old spelling, and so she was called in her native village. By her own account this was changed to Jeanne when she came into France. The English translation of Jeanne D'Arc is Joan of Arc; more properly it should be Joanna. Because it seems more beautiful to her than the others the writer has retained the name of Jeanne in her narrative.

It is a mooted question which form of the name of Jeanne's father is correct: D'Arc or Darc. It is the writer's belief that D'Arc was the original writing, when it would follow that Jacques D'Arc would be James of the Bow or James Bowman, as he would have been called had he been an English peasant. For this reason the Maid's surname has been given as D'Arc; though there are many who claim that Darc is the nearest the truth.

Acknowledgments are due to the following authorities into the fruit of whose labours the writer has entered: M. Jules Quicherat, "Condamnation et Réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc"; H. A. Wallon, "Jeanne d'Arc"; M. Siméon Luce, "Jeanne d'Arc à Domremy"; M. Anatole France, "Jeanne d'Arc"; Jules Michelet, "Jeanne d'Arc"; Monstrelet's "Chronicles"; Andrew Lang, "The Maid of France"; Lord Ronald Gower, "Joan of Arc"; F. C. Lowell, "Joan of Arc"; Mark Twain, "Joan of Arc"; Mrs. Oliphant, "Jeanne D'Arc"; Mrs. M. R. Bangs, "Jeanne D'Arc"; Janet Tuckey, "Joan of Arc, the Maid," and many others.

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University, New York City, for information upon a point for which search had been vainly made.

That this book may make a little niche for itself among other books upon the most marvellous girl the world has ever known, is the wish of

THE WRITER.

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JOAN OF ARC

CHAPTER I

A Children's Festival

"*There is a fountain in the forest called*

The Fountain of the Fairies. An ancient oak,

The goodliest of the forest, grows beside."

Southey. "*Joan of Arc,*" *Book II.*

"Who-oo-ee!" The gleeful shout came from the lips of a little girl who stood, with her hands cupped about her lips, on the edge of a streamlet which divided the village of Domremy into two parts.

She was a slight little maiden, of some twelve summers, and as she gave the call she danced about in the warm sunshine as though unable to keep still from the mere joy of being. Her hair was very dark and very abundant. Her eyes were wonderful for their blueness and the steadfastness of their gaze. Her face, though comely, was remarkable not so much for its beauty as for the happiness of its expression. She stood still listening for a moment after sending forth her call, and then, as the Sabbath quiet remained unbroken, she sent forth the cry again in a clear, sweet voice that penetrated into the farthest reaches of the village:

"Who-oo-ee!"

This time the shout was caught up instantly, and answered by many voices. The village wakened suddenly into life, as there poured forth from the cottages a goodly number of boys and girls who came running toward the little maid eagerly. She shook a finger at them reprovingly.

"Oh, but you are late," she cried. "Here it is ten of the clock, and we were to start at nine. The day will be half gone before we get to the Tree. I was afraid that you had gone off without me."

“Gone without you, Jeanne D’Arc,” exclaimed one of the girls. “Why, we couldn’t have any sport without you. I had to wait for my mother to fix my basket—that is the reason that I was late.”

“And I! And I!” chimed several other children in a chorus.

“Why didn’t you pack them yourselves?” demanded Jeanne, who seemed to be a leader among them. “I did mine, and Jean’s and Pierrelot’s too.”

“But where are the boys?” asked a lad. “They are not here.”

“They ran back to get more nuts,” answered the little girl. “Jean said that we must be sure to have plenty. There! They are coming now. Let’s get into line, and be ready to start as soon as they get here.”

Gleefully the children formed a line, and then took up their march toward the great wood which stretched in primeval abundance half a league to the westward of Domremy.

In all France there was not a more delicate, tranquil landscape than that of this broad valley of the Meuse, which extended in unbroken reaches between low hills, softly undulating, crowned with oaks, maples and birches. The trees were leafless now, and there were still ridges of snow to be seen among the hills, but already there were monitions of Spring in the air. The buds were swelling, springing grass carpeted the fields, and there was no longer ice in the river, which rippled its apple-green waters in the sunshine.

Along the valley the banks of the Meuse were dotted with many hamlets, villages and towns, and among them was Domremy, which nestled upon its western side in the county of Champagne. It was the greyest of the grey hamlets in this borderland. It consisted of a castle, a monastery, and a score of cottages which were grouped about a small church, but it was well favoured by Nature in that the meadow lands which lay around it were rich and fertile beyond those of most villages, and the vineyards which covered the southern slopes of the hills were famous all over the countryside.

It was the first fine day of March, 1424, and “Laetare Sunday.” “Laetare Sunday” the fourth Sunday in Lent was called, because during the mass of the day was chanted the passage beginning, “Laetare, Jerusalem”; but the children called it “The Day of the Fountains,” for upon this day the annual “Well Dressing” of the Spring which lay at the edge of the forest was observed, and the Fairy Tree was decorated. In short, upon this day the children of the valley held high festival.

So, merrily they marched toward the wood; the boys carrying baskets of lunch, for they were to picnic, and the girls bearing garlands that were to be used for the decoration. It was a joyous party, for it was Spring; and all young things rejoice in Spring. There was a sweetness of leaf mold in the air that came to the senses with the penetrating quality of incense. A tender mist lay on the hills, and over all spread the radiant sky. The happy children laughed, and sang, and jested as they went, for the mild air animated them with a gentle intoxication.

And the little maid called Jeanne D'Arc was the blithest of them all. Hither and thither she darted, lightly as thistle down, seeming literally to bubble over with happiness. All at once she stooped, and plucked a long blade of grass, holding it up for inspection.

"See, Mengette," she cried addressing a girl near her. "How long the grass is! And how warm the sun is! Oh, is not God good to give us so fine day for our pleasure?"

"He is good; yes," assented the girl addressed as Mengette. Then as the little maid darted away she turned to the girl by her side: "Jeanne is so religious," she commented with a shrug of her shoulders. "She cannot even play without speaking of God. I wish that she were not so good. And you wish it too, do you not, Hauviette?"

"Wish that Jeanne D'Arc would not be so good?" exclaimed Hauviette, who was a staunch friend of Jeanne's. "Why, she would not be Jeanne D'Arc if she were not good."

"I do not mean for her not to be good exactly," demurred the first girl. "I meant that I wished she were not so pious."

"Mengette, if the Curé should hear you," breathed the second girl in shocked tones. "He would make you say many Ave Maries."

"And who is to tell him what I say?" demanded Mengette, an expression of anxiety flitting across her face.

"Not I, Mengette, but I fear some of the others hearing such words may speak of them to the good Curé."

"But the others speak as I do," protested Mengette. "There is not one of them who does not think that Jeanne D'Arc is too pious."

"Attend," cried one of the lads at this moment using the peasant's expression to attract attention. "Let's see who shall be first to reach the tree. He who does so

shall hang the first wreath."

A gleeful shout went up at the words, and there followed a quick dash for the tree, which began before the speaker had made an end of what he was saying. Among the others Jeanne D'Arc threw up her head, laughing merrily, and darted forward. So fleet and light of foot was she that she soon distanced her companions. Easily could she have gained the goal had there not come a cry from Mengette, who at this instant stumbled and fell prone upon the grass. Like a flash Jeanne turned, and, seeing that Mengette had risen, and was standing bent over as though in pain, ran back to her.

"Are you hurt, Mengette?" she asked anxiously. "'Tis pity that you fell. Where is the pain?"

"In my knee," sobbed Mengette. "And now I shall have to lag behind; for walk fast I cannot. Do you run on, Jeanne. You were like to win the race, so fleet of foot were you. In truth, it seemed as though you were flying. Myself, I will reach the tree when I can."

"Nenni," replied Jeanne, using the strong peasant negative. "I will walk with you. 'Tis not far now, but the way would seem long to you should you traverse it alone when in pain. There! lean on me."

With a sigh of relief that she was not to be left by herself Mengette leaned heavily on the arm of her friend, though the latter was younger and smaller than she. She thought naught of this. It seemed natural to her playmates to lean upon Jeanne D'Arc. So, slowly, with much groaning on Mengette's part, the two friends came presently to the Fairy Tree, where the rest of the party were already assembled.

On the border of the Bois Chesnu (the woods of oaks), stood an ancient beech tree overhanging the highroad. "In Spring," said the peasants of the valley, "the tree is as fair as lily flowers, the leaves and branches sweep the ground." It had many names, but was usually spoken of as l'Arbre-des-Fées. Once upon a time, when the lords and ladies of Bourlemont dwelt at the castle which stood before the village, it had been called "The Ladies' Tree." For then the high born dames and their cavaliers feasted and danced about it with each renewal of Spring. But the castle had long been deserted, so the children had come to claim the tree for their own.

They called it The Fairy Tree, because it was believed that in the olden time the fairies used it for a trysting place. So now, with bursts of song and laughter, the girls hung their garlands upon its ancient branches, then joining hands the lads

and the lassies formed a ring, and circled around the tree, singing gayly.

It was a pretty sight: pastoral and innocent,—one that would have delighted the heart of a Corot. The singing children dancing about the tree, the red homespun frocks of the girls and the blue smocks of the boys making pleasing bits of color against the dark forest stretching behind them, and the distant village nestled on the banks of the apple-green river. Perhaps the festival was a survival of paganism; perchance a remnant of the tree worship of the ancient Celts interwoven with a traditional holiday; but the Church recognized it. On Ascension Eve the priest came there, and chanted the Gospel of Saint John to exorcise the spirits, so that neither fairies nor anything evil could harm the little ones of his flock.

After the ceremony of hanging the wreaths was completed a cloth was spread upon the grass, and the contents of the lunch baskets placed thereon. There were nuts, hard boiled eggs, and little rolls of a curious form, which the housewives had kneaded on purpose. In the midst of the preparations there came the clamor of bells drifting from the linked villages of Domremy and Greux, chiming the midday angelus.

Instantly little Jeanne, who was among the girls busied about the lunch arose and, turning toward the church of her own village, joined her palms, bending her forehead to them. Mengette, who had taken no part in getting the lunch ready because of her lamed knee, and who sat in the shade of the beech upon the grass, leaned over and poked Pierre, one of Jeanne's brothers, in the side.

"Do as your sister does, Pierrelot," she cried, pointing toward the reverent little maiden.

"Myself, I am not so devout," he made answer. "Neither Jean, Jacquemin, nor I feel as Jeanne does, but such things are to her liking. My mother grieves that I am so slack in the matter. But Jeanne loves the church. She is a good sister."

"And a good friend also, Pierrelot," nodded the girl emphatically, remembering how Jeanne had come back to her while the rest of the party had gone on. "She might have been first at the tree, and so have won the right to hang her wreath first. Instead, she came back to help me."

"Jeanne," called Hauviette suddenly, as the angelus ceased to chime, and the devout little maid turned again toward her companions, "do you not wish that we could have our 'Well dressing' upon Thursday instead of 'Laetare Sunday'? 'Tis said that then the fairies hold their tryst."

“Pouf!” ejaculated Pierre, or Pierrelot, as he was usually called. “You would not find them an you did come. There are no fairies now. My godfather Jean says that there have been no fairies at Domremy for twenty or thirty years. So what would be the use of coming here Thursday?”

“But my godmother says that one of the lords of the castle became a fairy’s knight, and kept his tryst with her here under this very tree at eventide; so there must be fairies,” spoke Hauviette with timid persistency. “What do you think, Jeanne?”

“They come no more,” replied the little maid gravely. “Godmother Beatrix and the Curé both say that they do not. They came in the olden time, but for their sins they come no longer.”

“Perchance they hold their meetings further back in the wood,” suggested another girl. “That may be the reason that they are not seen.”

“I shall see,” cried one of the boys rising, and starting toward the forest that extended its dark reaches behind them. “If there be fairies there, I, Colin, shall find them.”

“Do not go, Colin,” exclaimed Jeanne in alarm. “You know that there is danger both from wolves and wild boars.”

Few dared enter the wood, so thick it was, and the wolves it harbored were the terror of the countryside. So greatly were they feared, and such was the desire to be rid of the menace, that there was a reward given by the mayors of the villages for every head of a wolf, or a wolf cub, brought to them. So now a protesting chorus arose from the children as Colin, with a scornful “Pouf!” threw his shoulders back, and swaggered into the wood.

“’Tis time for the ‘Well dressing,’” declared Jean, another one of Jeanne’s brothers. “Let Colin look for the fairies if he will. Let us go to the Spring. ’Tis what we came for.”

“And so say I,” chimed in another boy.

“And I. And I,” came from others. As this seemed to be the desire of all there was an immediate stir and bustle. The remnants of the lunch were hastily gathered up, and put in baskets; some of the wreaths were taken from the tree, and then the line of march was formed. Just as they were ready to start, however, there came a shrill shout from the forest:

“A wolf! A wolf!” cried the voice of Colin. “Help! Help!”

Stock still stood the frightened children. Again the cry came. At once there was a stir in the line, and a babel of excited voices broke forth as Jeanne D'Arc was seen running pell-mell into the forest in the direction from which the voice of her playmate came.

Colin was standing in the midst of a blackthorn thicket when she reached him. There was no sign of wolf, or animal of any kind, and he burst into a peal of laughter as the little girl glanced about in amazement. As the sound of his mirth reached the waiting children they too, knowing from it that naught was amiss, ran into the wood. The mischievous boy doubled up, and rocked to and fro in glee.

"Oh, but you were well fooled," he cried. "Look at Jeanne's face. You were afraid. All but her, and what could she have done to help me an there had been a wolf?"

"She could have done all that you deserve to have done, Colin," retorted Pierre, who was a manly little lad. "Shame upon you for crying out when there was naught to cry for. 'Twould serve you right should a real wolf set upon you. Your mother shall know how you sought to frighten us."

"'Twas but in sport," muttered Colin, somewhat crestfallen. He had thought that the jest would be treated as great fun, and now here they stood regarding him reproachfully. "'Twas but in sport," he said again, but there was no answering smile on any of the faces around him. The matter was of too serious a nature to admit of jesting.

THE GOOSEBERRY SPRING

For a brief time only did the children stand about the boy, and then with one accord, though no word was spoken, they formed their line again, and started for the Spring. Colin followed after shamedfacedly.

At first the march was a silent one, for the incident had thrown a damper upon their spirits, but soon it was forgotten, and once more their voices rose in song and mirth. The boys and girls who were at the head of the party went rapidly, and suddenly caught sight of a streamlet of pure water springing from a wooded hole in a wooded hill, by the side of a wooden bench which formed a resting place about the middle of the slope. The streamlet at first spread into a basin

which it had excavated for itself; and then, falling in a small cascade, flowed across the path where a carpet of cress had grown, and disappeared in the reeds and grasses. All about the margin of the Spring were gooseberry bushes intertwining their branches of greyish green, and these gave it the name of Gooseberry Spring.

It was believed that the water had miraculous healing powers, so the children in turn knelt by the side of the basin, and drank deeply of the limpid water. For one drink from this wonderful Spring, it was said, was an insurance against fever for a whole year. The garlands which had been carried from the Fairy Tree were now spread around the “Well,” a ring was formed, and the children danced and sang as they had done about the tree. The sun was setting before the games were ended, and the rustic festival was over. Then, tired but happy, the little folk set their faces toward home.

On the outskirts of the village Jeanne and her brothers met Jacques D’Arc, their father, who was driving his flocks and herds from the commune for the night. He was a peasant of sturdy appearance, an upright man, unusually strict and careful of the behaviour of his children. Jeanne’s firm chin and wistful mouth were inherited from this parent. Now as they ran to help him in his task he greeted them briefly:

“There is company,” he told them. “Your Gossip[1] Beatrix has come, Jeanne, and two soldiers of France who have escaped from the Burgundians. By our Lady, this being upon the highroad has its drawbacks! ’Tis getting so that no day passes without some wayfarer stopping for bite and bed. The house is overrun.”

“But you like it, father,” reminded Jeanne, slipping her hand into his. “For do not the wayfarers bring you news of all that happens beyond the mountains?”

“That is well enough,” admitted Jacques grumblingly. “But even so, no man likes his house always full. There! let the matter rest. We must hasten with the cattle. The night grows apace.”

“And mother will have need of me to help her,” cried Jeanne, quickening her steps. “With so much company there will be much work to be done.”

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[1] Gossip—A name usually given to godmothers.

CHAPTER II

THE KNIGHT'S STORY

"By a Woman Shall France Be Lost; By a Maid Shall It Be Redeemed."

Old Prophecy. MERLIN, THE MAGICIAN.

The house where Jeanne D'Arc lived was a stone cottage with the roof sloping from a height on one side half way to the ground on the other. In front there were but two windows, admitting but a scanty light. Close by the door, as was usual in that country, were piles of faggots and farm tools covered with mud and rust. The enclosure served also as kitchen garden and orchard.

Beyond the cottage, scarce a stone's throw distant, only separated from it by a small graveyard, stood the village church, and north of both buildings there was a square towered monastery.

A streamlet that flowed down into the Meuse trickled noisily by the cottage and church, dividing them from the other houses of the village. Perhaps it was because of this fact that the church seemed to Jeanne to belong more to her and to her family than it did to the other inhabitants of Domremy. Born under its very walls, she was lulled in her cradle by the chime of its bells, and cherished a passionate love for them in her heart. Involuntarily the little girl paused with her hand on the latch to cast a lingering, tender glance at the church before opening the door of the cottage. Before she had crossed the threshold a tall woman, who was stirring the contents of a large iron pot which hung on a tripod before the fire, turned quickly at the sound of her sabots, and seeing that it was Jeanne hastily left her task and drew the maid once more without the door. It was Isabeau Romée,[2] the wife of Jacques D'Arc. In marriage the wife always retained her maiden name, so Jeanne's mother was always spoken of as Isabeau Romée of Vauthon, her native village. She was mild in manner, but her usual

serenity was at this moment disturbed by anxiety.

“Right glad am I that you have come, Jeanne,” she remarked. “Your Gossip Beatrix has been asking for you. She came this afternoon. And but a short time since two men-at-arms came, asking for supper and bed. Gentles they are, who have but escaped from the hands of the Burgundians, having been prisoners for many months. Sup them I will right gladly, but bed them I can not. The house is full. It galls your father that we must refuse them.”

“And why not bed them, mother? Let little Catherine sleep with you, and I can lie upon the floor before the hearth. Then the gentles may have my bed.”

“But you are wearied from your play, my little one, and to-morrow we go to the river to wash the clothes. You will need a good rest.”

“Fear not, mother; I shall sleep well,” answered Jeanne cheerily. “If the poor men have but escaped from prison perchance they have had naught but the cold stones of a dungeon to lie upon. Do let it be as I say, mother.”

“As you will then, my little one. In truth it would have grieved me sorely to refuse the bed, but I knew not what to do. You have a good heart, child. Go now, and carry in more faggots for the fire. The night grows chill, though the day was so warm. A bundle will not be too much for the chimney. Then bring forth the drinking cups and the knife for cutting the bread and put them upon the table. I will go to the oven for another loaf.”

“The dear child,” mused the mother as Jeanne obediently gathered up a large bundle of the faggots and turned toward the cottage. “The dear child! Ever ready is she to give up her own comfort for that of others. May our Lady watch over her!”

Meantime Jeanne had hastened into the house, and had thrown her bundle of faggots into the great chimney, over which hung a white stone mantel shaped somewhat like a pent house. On one side of the hearth flags sat an elderly woman who was amusing Jeanne’s sister, Catherine, a child a few years younger than she. Jeanne returned the woman’s warm greeting affectionately, then drew the deal table before the hearth, glancing as she did so at the two men who sat at the far end of the hearth flags.

One was a man of thirty-five or so; the other looked to be ten years his junior. That they were well born was apparent from their bearing and manner, but their armour and clothing were in sad condition. Their hucques[3] were in tatters, and only the closest inspection revealed that they had been of velvet. They wore no

helmets, and many plates were missing from their rusty armour, leaving their bodies fair marks for arrows or cross bolts. Noting all this Jeanne was startled to observe that from the right arm of the younger knight a tiny stream of blood trickled through the steel sleeve. She was a timid girl with strangers, therefore it was a full minute before she could muster courage to approach the young man.

“You bleed, messire,” she said, touching him shyly on the shoulder.

“Eh? What?” The young man started quickly, for he had been dozing in his chair. “Oh! The wound?” following her glance at his arm. “’Tis naught. The scratch has but broken out anew.”

“It should be dressed,” asserted the little girl with concern. “I like not to see French blood flow.”

“She speaks truth, Bertrand,” interjected the older man. “A green wound tingles and burns, and there may be many a fray before us ere we behold Châlons. Here! I will be your squire for the nonce, and unbuckle your armour. ’Tis a good little maid!”

The young man addressed as Bertrand rose, and let his friend assist him to remove his armour, protesting against the need of it as he did so. Jeanne meantime brought a basin of water, and when the knight had pushed back the sleeve of his doublet she washed the blood from the wound gently. Then, with all the deftness that Isabeau had taught her—for many were the wounded who had experienced their services—she applied a compress of oil, and bandaged the arm with bands of serge.

“I thank you, my little maid,” spoke the young man gratefully. “It does in truth feel better, and though but a scratch, was indeed painful. What is your name?”

“Jeanne, messire.”

“I will remember it, Jeanne. Who taught you to be so deft in such matters?”

“My mother, messire.” Jeanne blushed at being so interrogated.

“You have a gentle touch. If my arm does not heal quickly under such ministration it does not belong to Bertrand de Poulengy.”

Jeanne blushed again and withdrew quickly, carrying the basin with her. After placing a tall flagon, the wooden drinking cups, and the knife for cutting the bread upon the table she went to her godmother’s side, and sat down.

As she did so her father and mother entered. Upon her arm Isabeau carried a

large ring of black bread, while Jacques brought another armful of faggots. They were a hard working, devout couple who strove to bring up their children,—of which there were five: three sons, Jacquemin, Jean, and Pierre; and two daughters, Jeanne and Catherine,—to love work and religion. Jacques D'Arc was a doyen; that is, a village elder; the chief man in Domremy after the mayor. He was of such substance that he was enabled to raise his family in comfort, and to give alms and hospitality to the poor wandering friars, and other needy wayfarers then so common in the land.

"Sit up, messires," cried Jacques as his wife emptied the contents of the iron pot into a platter which she set on the table. "Eat, for you must be hungry. Ay! and thirsty too, I doubt not."

"By our Lady, but that hath a welcome sound, honest Jacques," cried the elder knight, starting up eagerly. "We are both hungry and thirsty. Neither of us has broken his fast since morning, and then the repast was but meagre. Bertrand, man, does not the flavor of that stew assail your nostrils deliciously?"

"It does indeed, Louis. Methinks that I shall do justice to it. The Duke of Lorraine does not regale his prisoners on such fare."

"You were prisoners to the Duke of Lorraine?" questioned Jacques as he and his guests drew up to the table. The women and children sat apart waiting to eat later.

"Ay! and have been for these many weary months, Jacques. It seems like a miracle that we did at last escape, but so it has fallen out."

"Tell of the manner of your taking and escape, if it please you, messire," spoke Jacques. "'Twill enliven the hour, and we are of the King's party here."

"Right well do we know that, Jacques D'Arc, else we would not have tarried here. Domremy is well known to be for the King."

"Ay! for the King and France. Save for one man the entire village is against the Burgundians and the English invaders."

"'Tis good to hear such report, Jacques. And now if you wish to hear the tale it pleases me well to tell it. Know then that in August last, I, Louis De Lude, and Bertrand de Poulengy here with six other men-at-arms did set forth from the town of Châlons for that of Tours, being sadly in need of armour. You must know that for armour there be none in all France that can compare with the smiths of Tours. Through fear of being set upon by either the enemy, or marauding bands, we travelled at night, avoiding the frequented roads and the

towns known to be in possession of the hostile party. Thus we went for ten days with no untoward event happening, and on the morning of the eleventh day we broke into gratulation, for then we came in sight of the walls of Tours.

“The sun was an hour high, and all the gates of the town were open. Through them the country folk were passing with milk and fruit for the market. The sight was a welcome one to travellers weary of the road and road fare. With cries of pleasure we spurred our horses forward. When within a half league of the city the joyous exclamations died on our lips, for suddenly the gates were closed, leaving us and a few poor market people outside. The country people ran distractedly toward the town, uttering loud outcries as the watchman appeared on the ramparts, shouting something that we were not near enough to understand. Wondering at the action of the town, and the apparent terror of the people we wheeled, and saw the cause.

“The frequented road from the town wound a short distance away between two low hills, and over the green shoulder of one of these a dozen bright points caught and reflected the morning light. Even as we looked the points lifted, and became spears. Ten, twenty, thirty, still they came until we could no longer count them. We turned to make a dash back in the way we had come, and behold! springing up in front of us were other spears. We were caught; and, outnumbered though we were, there was nothing for it but to fight. And fight we did, for in a moment they were upon us.

“’Tis hard to know just what is happening when one is in the thick of combat. There were yells and wild cries as the two forces came together in a huddle of falling or rearing horses, of flickering weapons, of thrusting men, of grapples hand to hand. Who it was fell, stabbed through and through, or who still fought single combat I could not tell. It was over presently, and as I yielded up my sword in surrender I glanced about me; and lo! of our little band but three remained: Bertrand here, Jean Laval, and myself. We had fallen into the hands of Sabbat, the freebooter, the terror of Anjou and Touraine.

“He did not take us to his garrison at Langeaís, but retreated to those same low hills by the road, and there cast us into a pit to be held for ransom. Ransom? In sooth, he deserved none, for he took from us the livres we had for our armour. One hundred and twenty-five livres tournois did Bertrand and I have each for that purpose, and he took them. Ay! and likewise he robbed our comrades who were dead. But our armour they left us, because it was old. Three months we

stayed in that pit waiting for ransom, with bread and water for our daily fare. And truly it was the bread of sadness and the water of affliction. Jean died of his wounds, but Bertrand and I came through.

“And then it fell upon a day that some of my Lord Duke, Charles of Lorraine’s, retainers passed by the robbers’ lair on their way from Tours to Lorraine. Sabbat’s men set upon them even as they had done upon us. But the Duke’s men worsted them, and carried away not only many freebooters as prisoners but those also who were held captive by the marauders. Finding that Bertrand and I were Armagnacs, of the King’s party, they took us to the ducal palace at Nancy to be held for ransom. We were thrown into a dungeon there to await the return of the messenger to our friends, but whether money was ever sent either to Duke Charles or to Sabbat we know not. All that we know is that we lay waiting, waiting in that vile dungeon for weary days. So the time went by; long months that sapped our vigour, but which whetted our appetites for vengeance.

“We were not upon parole, though my Lord Charles had striven to put us there, so we watched for a chance to escape, as is the right of every prisoner. It came at length. Two days ago the old man, who was our keeper, came to us at eventide bearing the black bread that formed our meals. He had not brought the water, and Bertrand made a cry for it, grumbling loudly because it had not been fetched, saying that he was athirst. It confused the old man, because he had in very truth forgot the water, which he was loath to acknowledge. For this reason he neglected his usual caution of backing out of the dungeon with his face toward us, and turned his back upon us. Instantly we sprang upon him, and easily overcame him. We bound him with his own garments, and then, possessing ourselves of his keys, went forth boldly. To our amazement we found our way into the courtyard without encountering any one. There were sounds of revelry from the palace, and creeping near we found that it was the anniversary of his birthnight, so Duke Charles held high carnival. It was the night of all nights favorable to an escape.

“The guard was relaxed so, unchallenged, we succeeded in placing a scaling ladder against the ramparts, and up we went. When we had reached the top, however, we were seen, and a shower of arrows were shot at us, wounding Bertrand. Two lance lengths high were the walls, but we dropped from them to the outside, landing, by God’s grace, on the edge of the moat. We crept close to the walls, and the fast falling darkness hid us from the view of the archers on the top.

“Doubtless they thought that we had fallen into the water, for presently the hue and cry died down, and we heard no sound that denoted that search was being made for us. Then cautiously we crossed the moat, fearful of its waters, but Saint Catherine, the friend of escaping prisoners, was with us, and reaching the other side we went forth free men once more. How we obtained horses and the manner of coming here have nothing of mark to relate. We did obtain them, and we came. And that, honest Jacques, is the tale. A common one in France.”

“Ay, messire; but too common,” agreed Jacques, shaking his head mournfully. “Truly, France has fallen upon evil days.”

“It has! It has! And to none other than Isabella of Bavaria do we owe them. By that infamous treaty of Troyes by which Charles, the Dauphin, was disinherited in favor of Henry Fifth of England the Queen lost us France.”

“She lost us France,” acquiesced Jacques. The younger knight spoke abruptly:

“I was at Troyes when that treaty was signed. ’Twas four years ago, and of April

the ninth day. Well do I remember it; for at the same time the ceremony that betrothed our Lady Catherine to Henry of England was celebrated. The King, our poor mad King, was brought from his retreat to be made to sign the treaty, and the streets and the ramparts of the town were filled with people desirous of seeing him. The Dauphin was there, looking like death, and well he might; for the kingdom which was his by right, as well as his sister's, was to be given to the butcher of Agincourt. His mother, Queen Isabella, was here, there, everywhere, flaunting a robe of blue silk damask and a coat of black velvet into the lining of which the skins of fifteen hundred minevers had gone. Shamelessly she made a gala day of the matter, and after the ceremony caused her singing birds, goldfinches, siskins, and linnets to be brought for her entertainment. And now, the Duke of Bedford is Regent of France, holding it for Henry Fifth's son; and the Dauphin, who should be king since his father is dead, lies in retreat in Bruges. Isabella lost us France. The shameless woman!"

"Shameless indeed, Bertrand, but take courage. Have you never heard that though a woman should lose France, from the march of Lorraine a Virgin shall come for its redemption?"

"'Tis Merlin's prophecy, Louis. 'A Maid who is to restore France, ruined by a woman, shall come from the Bois Chesnu in the march of Lorraine,' is the reading. Pouf! What could a maid do in such matters? I believe it not."

"Nor I," ejaculated Jacques. He laughed outright suddenly. "Why, the Bois Chesnu is our own wood out there," and he jerked his thumb over his shoulder. "Messire, 'tis a prophecy that will fail."

"Scoff not, ye doubters," cried Louis. "With God all things are possible. For my part, I would a Maid would come to the healing of France. But there! 'tis long since I have slept on aught but stones, and fain would I lie upon a bed. Good Jacques, if you have such a thing, show me it, I pray you. I am weary."

"Then come, messires." Jacques lighted a candle and led the way to an upper room, while Isabeau opened the doors of the cupboard bed on the far side of the room, and made it ready. Then she drew her children round her to hear their prayers and the Credo. After which the family went to their beds.

But Jeanne lay down upon the floor before the hearth.

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[2]

Romée. So called by reason of a pilgrimage achieved either by her or some member of her family to Rome.

[3]

Hucques—Cloaks worn over the armour.

CHAPTER III

THE WAVES OF WAR REACH DOMREMY

"*Bright shone the sun, the birds sang cheerfully,*

And all the fields seemed joyous in the Spring:

But to Domremy wretched was that day;

For there was lamentation, and the voice

Of anguish, and the deeper agony

That spake not."

SOUTHEY. "*Joan of Arc.*" *Book I.*

The condition of France in this year of grace, 1424, was deplorable in the extreme. For more than one hundred years war had raged between England and France. The kingdom which had been strong and splendid under the great Charlemagne had fallen into disintegration. Unity had no existence. By the treaty of Troyes, signed by the mad King, Charles VI, influenced by his unscrupulous queen, Isabella of Bavaria, Henry Fifth of England was made Regent of France during the lifetime of Charles, and assured of the full possession of the French throne after the mad King's death, thus disinheriting the Dauphin. Of the fourteen provinces left by Charles Fifth to his successor only three remained in the power of the French crown.

It was Henry Fifth's fond hope that by this treaty and by his marriage with a French princess the war would cease, and France would lie forever at the foot of England. For a time it seemed as though these hopes were to be justified. Then, in 1422 both he and the French king died, and the war broke out again.

The Duke of Bedford, Henry Fifth's brother, assumed the regency of France until the young son of Henry Fifth, Henry Sixth, was old enough to be crowned. Charles, the Dauphin, meantime declared himself king and rightful heir, and many upheld his claim. But there were some, among them the Duke of Burgundy, the most powerful of the princes of France, who because of private injuries suffered at the hands of the Dauphin, sustained the claim of the English. Thus the country presented the sad spectacle of French princes warring against each other and the king more furiously than they did against the invader. Frenchmen were not Frenchmen; they were Burgundians, Armagnacs, Bretons, or Provencaux. The country was torn in pieces with different causes and cries. Bands of mercenaries and freebooters ravaged and pillaged the people with a cheerful disregard of the political party to which they belonged.

Under such conditions the distress of the country was great. Many regions were depopulated; in many the wild wood had over run the cultivated soil; in others agriculture could be practised only near castles and walled towns. Under the sound of the warning horn or church bell the cattle would run of themselves to places of refuge. When the country was so harried and devastated it behooved the villages and towns to keep a watchman ever on the lookout for the glitter of lances that the inhabitants might have time to gather their cattle and retreat to a place of safety.

Nor had the march of Lorraine and Champagne, as the valley of the river was called, been exempt from the common woe. It was long an object of contention between monarch and duke, but had finally passed into the hands of the crown, so that its people were directly subject to the King. The march was not only the highroad to Germany, but it was, too, the frontier between the two great parties: near Domremy was one of the last villages that held to the Burgundians; all the rest were for Charles, the Dauphin. In all ages the valley had suffered cruelly from war: first, the war between duke and monarch for its possession; and now, the war between the Burgundians and the Armagnacs. At a time when the whole of Christendom was given up to pillage the men-at-arms of the Lorraine-Marches were renowned as the greatest plunderers in the world. Therefore, life at Domremy was one perpetual alarm. All day and all night a watchman was stationed on the square tower of the monastery, and the inhabitants held themselves ready to fly at a moment's warning. And yet men sowed and reaped; women spun and wove; children romped and sang; and all the occupations of a rural people went on.

In the midst of these anxieties life at the house of Jacques D'Arc seemed calm

and serene. March passed, and dewy April too had been gathered into the Book of Months. It was May. The trees were masses of foliage, the meadows starry with wild flowers, and the greenish water of the winding river was almost hidden by the dense clumps of rushes that grew upon its banks. Vallis Colorum, the Valley of Colors, the Romans had called it, and truly in this fair May it was so radiant, and fragrant, and flowery that it well deserved the designation.

“Jeanne,” said Jacques D’Arc one morning as the little girl rose from the breakfast table and took her place before the spinning wheel, “you can not spin to-day. I need Pierrelot in the field, so that you must mind the sheep. Seedtime is short, and if we do not get the sowing done soon we can not reap a harvest.”

“Very well, father,” said Jeanne, rising. Taking her distaff, for the time spent in watching the flock was not to be passed in idleness, she went at once to the fold to lead out the sheep. Usually the stock of the villagers was kept in sheds attached to the houses, but the D’Arc family kept their animals in a separate building. It was still early, but the sheep were to be taken to the uplands, which lay beyond the common that could not now be used for pasturing because of the growing hay, so an early start was necessary.

There were already several little shepherdesses on the upland, and Jeanne waved her hand to Hauviette and Mengette, who were nearest. They too had their distaffs, and soon the three friends were seated together near the oak wood pulling the threads for spinning, chatting gaily, and ever and anon casting watchful glances at the browsing sheep. They were careful little maids, knowing well the value of the flocks they tended.

It seemed as though all of the inhabitants of the village were out in the open, so many men, and boys, and women were there engaged in sowing the fields, or busied in the vineyards on the hill slopes. The morning was almost past when the quiet of the peaceful scene was broken by a hoarse shout from the watchman on the square tower of the monastery:

“The Burgundians! The Burgundians are coming! To the fortress for your lives.”

As his voice died away the bells of the church sounded the alarm. Noisily they pealed in a harsh and terrifying clamor, those bells which in turn celebrated the births, tolled for the dead, and summoned the people to prayer. Instantly the fields and vineyards became scenes of commotion and confusion. Hoarse shouts and cries rent the air. Men, women, and children ran frantically toward the village, carrying their farm tools, and driving the cattle pell-mell before them. From the cottages there poured forth the aged, the old men and women who

could no longer work in the fields and who therefore cared for the young children and the houses while their juniors did the outside work. Both the old people and the children bore whatever of value they could carry from the cottages, and thus burdened all ran toward the castle.

As the watchman gave his cry Jeanne, Mengette, and Hauviette sprang excitedly to their feet. Dropping their distaffs the two latter girls, leaving their flocks, ran toward the fields where their elders were, forgetful of everything but their own safety. But Jeanne stood still, a little line of perplexity wrinkling her forehead. Sheep are nervous animals, and these had lifted their heads as though startled, and were beginning to bleat piteously. Once among the plunging, bellowing cattle nothing could be done with them. Should they break and run into the forest they would be devoured by wolves. If they scattered in the meadows they would become the booty of the attacking party. In either case her father would be the loser. Only a second did she remain inactive, and then, clear and sweet, she sounded the shepherd's call:

"Cudday! Cudday! Cudday!"

Bell-like her voice rose above the confusion. The old bell-wether of the flock recognized the tones of his shepherd, and started toward her. Jeanne turned, and started toward the village, stopping frequently to sound the call:

"Cudday! Cudday! Cudday!"

And quietly, confidently the old bell-wether followed her, bringing the flock with him. Half way to the village she met Pierre, who came running back to her. The lad was breathless and panting, but he managed to gasp:

"Father says, father says to leave the sheep, Jeanne."

"Nenni, nenni," returned Jeanne. "I can bring them in safely."

At this moment there came a ringing shout from Jacques D'Arc:

"Leave the cattle and sheep, friends! Make for the castle! The foe is upon us."

The terrified people glanced down the highroad along which the raiding party was approaching. There was but scant time to reach the fortress, and, as Jacques D'Arc had seen, it could only be done without encumbrance. Leaving the animals forthwith the villagers broke into a run, while Jacques hastened to his children.

"Father, I know that I could—" began Jeanne, but her father interrupted her vehemently,

“Talk not, but run, my little one. There is no time to lose.”

The castle stood on an island formed by two arms of the Meuse. Belonging to it was a courtyard provided with means of defense, and a large garden surrounded by a moat wide and deep. It was commonly called the Fortress of the Island. It had been the abode of those fair ladies and brave lords who were wont in the olden time to dance about the Fairy Tree. The last of the lords having died without children the property passed to his niece. The lady married a baron of Lorraine with whom she went to reside at the ducal court of Nancy, thus leaving it uninhabited. Wishing to have a place of retreat from attacks of marauding parties Jacques D’Arc and another man, on behalf of the villagers, leased the castle from the lady for a term of nine years.

The precaution had been useful on many occasions, but upon this bright, May morning it proved futile so far as the property of the villagers was concerned. The approach of the marauders was too rapid to permit the poor people to do more than to reach the castle in safety. Jacques D’Arc and his two children were the last to cross the drawbridge, which was instantly drawn up, and the gate was closed. They were safe, for it was a place that ten could hold against ten hundred.

Through the loop-holes the villagers beheld the scene that followed. With terrifying cries the raiders rode into the hamlet. Some rounded up the cattle and sheep preparatory to driving them off; others hitched oxen to carts and drove them to the middle of the village, where still others piled the furniture from the cottages into the carts. Silent and tearless the hapless inhabitants watched while the hearths of their homes were torn up, and mantels demolished in the search for hidden treasure. Even the church was not exempt from the pillage. And then, that no part of misery might be spared to Domremy, the plunderers applied the torch to the houses.

Women wrung their hands, some dry-eyed, others with sobs and cries at sight of their blazing homes, while men gnashed their teeth, enraged that they were powerless to prevent the disaster. At length the ruffian band departed, carrying their booty with them.

Scarcely had they passed from view before the men were out and across the drawbridge, and on to fight the flames. Some of the cottages were too far consumed to be saved, but after the flames were extinguished a few were found that could be used with some thatching.

Among these was the house of Jacques D’Arc.

CHAPTER IV

THE AFTERMATH

"*Sweet she is in words and deeds,*

Fair and white as the white rose."

"*La Mystère du Siège d'Orléans.*"

There was anguish in the eyes of Isabeau Romée as she crossed the drawbridge from the castle, and went slowly with her children to the ruined village. Other women about her wept, or gave vent to their despair in loud outcries; hers was the deeper grief that knows not tears.

And in what a state of desolation was the hamlet and its surroundings! The men-at-arms had plundered, ravaged, and burnt. Unable to exact ransom from the inhabitants, because of their timely arrival at the castle, it was evidently the design of the marauders to destroy what they could not carry off. The newly sown fields were trampled; the blossoming orchards blasted; those houses that had been rescued from the flames were badly damaged, and the entire village and its neighbour, Greux, had been sacked and pillaged. Upon what were the people to live? That was the question that confronted them. Jacques D'Arc came to his wife as she stood in front of their cottage.

"The house still remains to us, Isabeau," he said comfortingly. "The roof can be thatched so that we can soon be in it again. We will send to our market town of Neufchâteau for bread and grain. Did you look well to the money?"

"Yes, Jacques." Isabeau took a bag from the folds of her gown, and handed it to him. It contained a small sum of money hoarded against just such an emergency as the present. Her husband took it with brightening countenance.

"Come now, 'tis not so bad," he said. "We will send at once for the grain, that the fields may be resown without delay; and for bread that we may live. We shall do well."

“Yes,” agreed his wife, but she looked at her children. And then, as though with that look her woe must forth, she turned upon him in a passionate outburst: “In all your life, Jacques, in all my life we have known naught but war. Must my children too live always in the midst of strife? Must they too sow for soldiers to reap? Build, for men-at-arms to burn? Be hunted like wild beasts, and killed if they cannot pay ransom? Must they too count on nothing; neither their goods, nor their lives? Oh, Jacques, must France always be torn by war?”

“You are beside yourself with sorrow, Isabeau,” chided Jacques but the gentleness of his tone took away the sting of the words. “’Tis no time to give way now. There is much to be done. We can but take up our burden, and do the best we can. With God lies the issue.”

“True, Jacques, true.” Isabeau pulled herself together sharply. “You are right; ’tis no time for grief. There is indeed much to be done. Jeanne, do you take your little sister, and care for her while I see if aught of our stores has been overlooked. Many will there be for whom provision must be made.”

With this the brave woman gave the little Catherine into Jeanne’s keeping, while she went into the cottage. Resolutely winking back her own tears Jeanne took the weeping little girl to a tree, and sat down under it, drawing the child into her lap. Pierre followed her, Jacquemin and Jean going with their father to help him. Soon Mengette and Hauviette joined the D’Arc children, and presently all the boys and girls of the village found their way there, comforting each other and the little ones in their charge in whispers. Childhood is elastic, and soon under the familiar companionship fright wore away, and the young folks began to relate their experiences in subdued but excited tones.

“I saw a black Burgundian as big as a giant,” declared Colin. “Had I had a crossbow and bolt I would have killed him.”

“Pouf! You were afraid just as the rest of us were,” uttered Pierre scornfully. “Why, even the men did not try to fight, so many were the enemy. And if they could do naught neither could you.”

“The men could not fight without weapons, Pierre,” spoke Jeanne quickly. “They had none in the fields.”

“Myself, I shall be a man-at-arms,” went on Colin boastingly. “I shall wear armour, and ride a horse; and I shall go into France to help drive the Godons[4] out of it.”

Jeanne looked at him with sparkling eyes.

“Yes,” she cried eagerly. “’Tis what should be done. Oh! I would like to go too. Why do they not stay in their own country?”

“You?” Colin began to laugh. “You are a girl, Jeanne D’Arc, and girls go not to war. They can not fight.”

“I could.” A resolute light came into the little maid’s eyes, and her lips set in a firm line. “I know I could.” At this the others joined Colin in his laughter, and the boy cried gaily:

“I should like to see you. Oh, wouldn’t the Godons run when they saw you?”

Jeanne opened her lips to reply, but just then she heard the voice of her mother calling to her. So, shaking her finger at Colin, she rose obediently and went toward the cottage. Near the door stood her father gazing intently at a long rod that he held in his hand. So absorbed was he that he did not heed her approach. The little girl touched him lightly on the arm.

“What is it, father?” she asked gently. “Are you grieving over the cattle and the goods?”

Her father looked up with a start.

“I grieve, yes, my little one. But ’tis not so much about present ills as a future burden which we must bear. I know not how it is to be met. This rod, as you know, is the taille stick, and in July comes the tax which I must collect from Domremy and Greux. I like not to think about it, so heavy will it seem after the misfortune that has come upon these two villages.”

There were many duties that fell to the village elder (doyen), especially in troubled times. It was for him to summon the mayor and the aldermen to the council meetings, to cry the decrees, to command the watch day and night, to guard the prisoners. It was for him also to collect taxes, rents, and feudal dues. An ungrateful office at any time, but one that would be doubly so in a ruined country. Jeanne knew that it was her father’s duty to collect the taxes, but she had not known that it might be a distasteful task. Now she looked curiously at the stick.

“Why does it have the notches upon it, father?” she asked.

“’Tis to show the amount due, my little one. There are two tailles:[5] la taille seigneuriale, which is paid serfs to their lord; and la taille royale, which is paid to the King. We, being directly subject to the King, pay la taille royale. The gentle Dauphin has much need of money, Sire Robert de Baudricourt of

Vaucouleurs has told me. But the impost will be hard to meet after what has befallen us." He sighed.

At this moment Jacques D'Arc was not a prepossessing sight. His clothes were dusty and begrimed with soot; his face and hands were black; but through the soot and grime shone the light of compassion for the burden which the people would have to bear. Jeanne saw naught of the soiled clothing or the blackened face and hands; she saw only that her father was troubled beyond the loss of his goods and cattle. Quickly she threw her arms about his neck, and drew his face down to hers.

"I would there were no tax, father," she said wistfully.

"I would so too, my little one," sighed he. "But there! wishing will not make it so. You have comforted me, Jeanne. But your mother is calling. Let us go to her."

With her hand in his they went into the house, where Jacques deposited the stick in a corner. Isabeau met them, a pleased expression illuminating her countenance.

"See," she cried, holding up a great loaf of black bread. "'Twas in the back part of the oven where it was not seen. Take it to your playmates, Jeanne, and give to each of them a piece of it. Children bear fasting but ill, and it will be long ere we have bread from Neufchâteau!"

Jeanne took the loaf gladly and hastened to her playmates. She knew that they were hungry, for none of them had eaten since early morning. Her appearance with the bread was greeted with cries of joy. Bread was a commonplace the day before; now it had become something precious. So little are blessings prized until they are gone.

The loaf was large, but even a large loaf divided into many pieces makes small portions. These were eaten eagerly by the children, and the youngest began to cry for more. Jeanne had foreseen that this would be the case, so had not eaten her share.

Quietly now she divided it among the smallest tots, giving each a morsel. Shamefacedly Pierre plucked her by the sleeve.

"You have had none," he remonstrated. "And I—I have eaten all that you gave to me."

"That is well, Pierrelot." His sister smiled at him reassuringly. "I shall eat when

the bread comes from the market town. We must go to the castle now. Mother said that we were to go there after we had eaten. Every one is to sleep there to-night."

"But there are no beds," broke in Colin in an aggrieved tone.

"No, Colin; there are no beds, but even so floors are better than the fields. There would be no safety outside the walls on account of the wolves."

"Wolves?" Colin whitened perceptibly, and the children huddled closer together. "I did not think of wolves. Is there in truth danger?"

"The men fear so, because some of the cattle and sheep were trampled to death by the others, and their carcasses may draw them. We are to use the castle until the houses are thatched."

The arrangements were as Jeanne had said. The nights were to be spent in the safety of the castle's confines, while the days were to be devoted to the rebuilding of the village, and the resowing of the fields. Thus did the peasants with brave resignation once more take up their lives. For, no matter how adverse Fate may be, life must be lived; misfortune must be met and overcome.

And the times that followed were such as to try the endurance of the unfortunate inhabitants of Domremy to the utmost. It was the season of the year when there was a scarcity of provisions everywhere. From early Spring until the reaping of the new crops the stock of food in a rural community is at its lowest; so, though many villages of the valley shared their stores with their unfortunate neighbors their own needs had to be taken into consideration, therefore it came about that Famine reared his ugly head in the linked villages of Greux and Domremy. Many of the cruelly despoiled peasants died of hunger.

One day Jacques D'Arc gathered his family about him. They were in their own home by this time, but its furnishings were of the rudest. Before Jacques on the table lay a single loaf of bread, and by it stood a pail of water. He looked at them sadly.

"'Tis our last loaf," he said, "and, of provision we have naught else. So this is our last meal, for I know not where another can be forthcoming. We will eat to-day; to-morrow we must do as we can. Take in thankfulness, therefore, what lies before us."

With this he cut the loaf into seven parts, giving a portion to his wife first, then one to each of his children except Jeanne. Hers he kept beside his own. When all had been served he turned to her.

“Come here, my little one,” he said.

Timidly, for there was something in his tone that she did not understand, the little maid went to his side. Jacques encircled her with his arm.

“Have you broken your fast to-day, my child?”

Jeanne blushed, and hung her head as though guilty of wrong doing, but did not reply.

“You have not,” he asserted. “Yesterday Pierre saw you give all of your portion to your sister. The day before you kept but a small part for yourself, giving Catherine the rest. Is it not so?”

“Yes, father; but I go to the church and pray; then I do not need food.” Jeanne took courage as she told this, and raising her head looked at him bravely. “I do not feel very hungry.”

“Fasting is good for the soul, my child, but too much of it is ill for the body. Stay, therefore, beside me that your father may see you eat your share.”

“But, father,” she began protestingly. He interrupted her:

“Eat,” he commanded. When Jacques spoke in that tone his children knew that resistance was useless, so silently Jeanne ate her portion. Nor would he permit her to leave his side until every crumb was swallowed. She did not sit again at table, but went to the open door and gazed down the highroad through tear-blinded eyes. Her heart was very full. Father and child were in close accordance, and she knew that he suffered because of his family’s misery. So down the valley she gazed wishing that she might do something to help him.

The valley had regained much of its loveliness. The trees had leaved again; the fields were green with the new crops, and the gardens gave promise of later abundance. There were still black gaps among the dwellings, however; significant reminders of the visit of the marauders. Suddenly as the little maid stood leaning against the door, something down the road caused her to start violently, and lean forward eagerly.

“Father,” she cried shrilly.

“Yes, Jeanne,” he answered apathetically.

“There are cattle and sheep coming down the highroad. They look like ours. What does it mean?”

Instantly Jacques sprang to his feet and hastened to the door. One look and he

gave a great shout.

“They are ours,” he cried in ringing tones. “Friends, neighbours, come and see! The cattle have come back.”

From out of the cottages ran the people, incredulity turning to joy as their sight verified Jacques’ cry. The wildest excitement prevailed as the flocks and herds in charge of a number of soldiers commanded by a young man-at-arms drew near. From him they learned what had happened.

When the lady of the castle, she who had gone to live with her spouse at the ducal court of Nancy, heard of the raid that had been made upon the villages, she protested to her kinsman, the Count of Vaudemont, against the wrong done to her, as she was the lady of Domremy and Greux.

Now the place to which the chief of the marauding band, Henri d’Orley, had taken the cattle and plunder was the Château of Doulevant, which was under the immediate suzerainty of the lady’s kinsman. As soon, therefore, as he received her message he sent a man-at-arms with soldiers to recapture the animals and the booty. This was done; not, however, without a fight, in which the young commander was victorious; and so he had brought the cattle home.

With tears and cries of joy the husbandmen welcomed them. There was food in plenty, too, so the village rejoiced, and life bade fair to be bright once more. Only the wise ones shook their heads ominously. For were they not likely to lose the beasts forever on the morrow?

Thus the days passed in the valley; nights of terror; dreams of horror; with war everywhere around; but Jeanne grew and blossomed as the lily grows from the muck of a swamp.

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[4]

Godons—A term applied to the English.

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From this word we have the English term “tally.”

CHAPTER V

JEANNE'S VISION

"*Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes.*"

ST. MATTHEW 11:25.

The summer gave place to winter; winter in turn was succeeded by spring, and again it was summer. Though there were raids in distant parts of the valley, and wild rumors and false alarms, Domremy was mercifully spared a second visitation. A strict watch was still kept, however, for glitter of lance along the highroad, or gleaming among the trees of the forest, but life resumed its tranquil aspect. The men toiled in the fields or the vineyards; women spun and wove, and looked after their households; children played or tended the herds and flocks on the common as of yore.

One warm afternoon in late July Jeanne, with others of her playmates, was on the uplands watching the flocks nibble the short green grass. The boys and girls were scattered over the uplands, but Mengette and Hauviette sat with Jeanne under the shade of a tree. The three friends were never very far apart, and as usual their small fingers were busied with the threads of their distaffs.

It was a delicious afternoon. The air, though warm, was soft and balmy, and fragrant with the perfume of wild mignonette and linden flowers. In the fields the ripened wheat rippled in the breeze like a yellow sea, and scarlet poppies made great splotches of color against the golden heads. The Meuse flowed sluggishly through dense masses of reeds and bushes, almost hidden by their foliage. A lovely scene, for the Valley of Colors, always beautiful, was never more so than in Summer. A busy scene, too; for men and boys were working in the fields and vineyards, either cradling the ripened grain, or tying up the vines, heavy with bunches of grapes.

“The sheep grow restless,” spoke Jeanne suddenly, as she noticed that some of the animals were beginning to stray apart from their fellows. “They have nipped the grass clean here. ’Tis time to move them.”

“And I grow sleepy,” cried Mengette, yawning. “We have been here since early morning, so ’tis no wonder. If I keep on pulling threads from this distaff I shall do like Colin yonder: lie down on the grass and go to sleep.”

“He ought not to sleep while he has the sheep to attend to,” declared Hauviette, shaking her head. “They might stray into the vineyards, or the forest, and he would be none the wiser.”

“He knows that we would not let them if we saw them,” said Jeanne. “I think he depends on us to look after them, though his flock is the largest one here. He ought not to be sleeping if we move our sheep away.”

She arose as she spoke and went quickly over to where Colin lay stretched out on the grass. Jeanne had grown taller in the year that had passed. “She shot up like a weed,” her mother commented as she lengthened the girl’s red woolen frocks. There had come an expression of thoughtfulness into her face, and her eyes seemed larger and brighter, holding a look of wonderment as though she were puzzling over many things; but there was no change in her gayety and high spirits. The sleeping boy opened his eyes drowsily as she shook him.

“Wake, Colin,” she cried. “Wake, and attend to what I tell you. We are going to take our sheep further afield. You must wake to look after yours.”

But Colin pulled away from her grasp, and settled down for another nap. Jeanne shook him again vigorously.

“You must wake, you lazy boy,” she cried. “What would your father say to you should aught happen to the sheep? And we are going to move ours.”

Colin sat up reluctantly at this, rubbing his eyes, and muttering discontentedly. So drowsy did he appear that Jeanne realized that some sort of expedient must be used to rouse him.

“There stands a cluster of linden flowers yonder on the edge of the forest, Colin. They are unusually pretty, and I want them. Your mother wants some, too. I heard her tell you to bring her some from the fields. See if you can get to them before I do.”

“It’s too hot to run,” murmured the boy. “It’s just like a girl to want a race when it’s hot. I’d rather sit still.”

“But that is just what you must not do if you want to keep awake,” persisted Jeanne, who knew that Colin would go to napping again if she left him as he was. “Come on! You never have beaten me at a race, and you can’t do it to-day.”

“Aw! I’ve never tried very hard,” grumbled Colin, getting to his feet reluctantly. “I’ll run, but I’d much rather stay here. I don’t see why girls want to pester a fellow so, anyway. And why do you want to take the sheep elsewhere? They’ll do well enough right here. Where did you say the flowers were?”

“Yonder.” Jeanne indicated a large cluster of the yellow linden flowers growing near an oak thicket on the edge of the wood. These flowers grew in great abundance around the village. “Girls,” turning toward her friends, “Colin thinks that he can beat me running to that bunch of linden blossoms.”

“The idea,” laughed Mengette teasingly. “Why, he can’t beat any of us; not even little Martin yonder, who is half his size,” indicating a small boy whose flock browsed just beyond Colin’s sheep. “We’ll all run just to show him. Besides, it’s the very thing to keep us from getting sleepy. Get in line, everybody. Come on, Martin. I’ll be the starter. There! You will all start at three. Attention! Attention! One, two, three,—Go!” And laughing merrily they were off.

Now Jeanne often ran races with her playmates. It was a frequent diversion of the children when they attended the animals on the uplands, care being always exercised to run in a direction that would bring no alarm to the flocks. Jeanne was very fleet of foot, as had been proven on more than one occasion. This afternoon she ran so swiftly, so easily, so without conscious effort on her part that it seemed as though she were upborne by wings. Reaching the flowers quite a few moments ahead of her companions she bent over them, inhaling their perfume with a sense of rapture that she had never before experienced. Hauviette was the first one after her to reach the goal.

“Oh, Jeanne,” she cried, gazing at her friend with wonder. “I never saw any one run as you did. Why, your feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground.”

“Jeanne always runs as though she were flying,” spoke Mengette now coming up. “Anyway I’m glad that Colin didn’t beat us. He’s ’way behind us all, for here is Martin before him. For shame, Colin,” she cried, laughing, as the boy lumbered up to them. Colin was not noted for fleetness of foot. “Not only did Jeanne outstrip you, but Hauviette, Martin and I did likewise. All of us got here before you. You didn’t stand a chance for those flowers, even if Jeanne had not run.”

“I wasn’t waked up enough to run well,” explained Colin, rousing to the need of

defending himself.

“Jeanne,” broke in little Martin suddenly, “go home. Your mother wants you. I heard her calling.”

“Mother wants me,” exclaimed the girl in surprise. “Why, that’s strange! I never knew her to call me before when I was out with a flock. Something must be the matter.”

“Maybe there is,” said the lad. “Anyway I heard her calling, ‘Jeanne! Jeanne!’ just like that.”

“Then I must go to her,” cried Jeanne. With this she turned and left them, hastening in some alarm to the cottage. Her mother glanced up in surprise from her sewing as she came through the door.

“Why, child, what brings you home so early?” she cried. “Has anything happened to the flocks?”

“Did you not call me, mother?” asked Jeanne innocently. “I thought that something was wrong.”

“Call you? No. What made you think that I called you?” questioned Isabeau sharply. “You should never leave the sheep alone on the uplands. The other children have enough to do to mind their own animals without attending to yours. What made you think that I called you?”

“Martin said that he heard you,” Jeanne told her simply. “He must have tried to trick me, because I beat him and Colin in a race. I will go back to the sheep.” She started to leave the room as she spoke.

“Martin is a naughty lad,” exclaimed Isabeau with some irritation. “Nay, Jeanne; do not go back. Pierre has just come from the fields, and I will send him. You can be of use here. I have let you tend the sheep because your father has been so busy that he could not spare the boys, and because of it your sewing has been neglected. Do you, therefore, take this garment and finish the seam while I attend to Catherine. She is fretful of late, and does not seem well. Go into the garden, where it is cool. I will speak to Pierrelot.”

Obediently the little maid took the garment that her mother held out to her, and going into the garden sat down under an apple tree. She was quite skillful in sewing. Her mother did exquisite needlework, and wished her daughter’s ability to equal her own. Jeanne wished it too, so took great pains to please Isabeau.

It was quiet in the garden. Quieter than it had been on the uplands. There had been merry laughter there, and songs and jests from the children. Here there were only the twitter of birds, the rustle of the leaves in the breeze, and the humming of gold belted bees for company. So quiet was it that presently some little birds, seeing that they had nothing to fear from the small maiden sewing so diligently, flew down from the apple tree and began to peck at the grass at her very feet. Jeanne smiled as she saw them, and sat quite still so as not to frighten them. Soon a skylark rose from the grass in the meadow lying beyond the orchard, and in a burst of song flew up, and up into the air, mounting higher and higher until he shone a mere black dot in the sky. Still singing he began to descend, circling as he came earthward, dropping suddenly like an arrow straight into the grass, his song ceasing as he disappeared.

Jeanne had let her work fall into her lap as she watched the flight of the bird, now she took it up again and began to sew steadily. The air was still athrill with the skylark’s melody, and the child sewed on and on, every pulse in harmony with her surroundings. All at once something caused her to look up.

There was a change of some kind in the atmosphere. What it was she could not tell, but she was conscious of something that she did not understand. She glanced up at the sky, but not a cloud marred its azure. It was as serene, as dazzling as it had been all day. Bewildered by she knew not what she picked up her sewing again, and tried to go on with it, but she could not. She laid down the garment, and once more glanced about her. As she did so she saw a light between her and the church.

It was on her right side, and as it came nearer to her it grew in brightness. A brightness that was dazzling. She had never seen anything like it. Presently it enveloped her. Thrilled, trembling, awed, too frightened to move, the little maid closed her eyes to shut out the glory that surrounded her. And then, from the midst of the radiance there came a voice; sweeter than the song of the skylark, sweeter even than the chime of the bells she loved so well. It said:

“Be good, Jeanne, be good! Be obedient, and go frequently to church. I called thee on the uplands, but thou didst not hear. Be good, Jeanne, be good.”

That was all. The voice ceased. Presently the light lessened; it faded gradually, and soon ceased to glow. The little girl drew a long breath, and fearfully lifted her eyes. There was naught to be seen. The garden looked the same as before. The little birds still pecked at her feet, the leaves still rustled in the breeze, the church wore its usual aspect. Could she have fallen asleep and dreamed, she asked herself.

At this moment Isabeau called to her from the door of the cottage:

“Take Catherine, Jeanne,” she said. “I do not know what ails the child. She frets so. I will brew a posset. Do you attend to her a few moments. Why, what ails you, my little one?” she broke off abruptly as Jeanne came to her. “Is aught amiss? You look distraught.”

Jeanne opened her lips to reply. She thought to tell her mother of the wonderful thing that had happened, and then, something in Isabeau’s expression checked the words. Perhaps the good woman was unduly worried. She was in truth overburdened with the cares of her household. Little Catherine was ailing, and an ailing child is always exacting. Whatever it may have been, Jeanne found the words checked on her lips, and was unable to relate what had occurred. A girl trembling on the brink of womanhood is always shy and timid about relating the thoughts and emotions that fill her. The unusual experience was such as needed a sympathetic and tender listener. The mother was too anxious over the younger child to be in a receptive mood for such confidences. So when she said again:

“Is anything amiss, Jeanne?” The little girl only shook her head, and said in a low tone:

“No, mother.”

“I dare say that the trick that Martin played upon you has upset you,” commented Isabeau. “You ran the race, and then ran home thinking that something was wrong with us here. It was a mean trick, though done in sport. I shall speak to his mother about it. The boy goes too much with that naughty Colin.”

Jeanne started. The voice had said that it had called her on the uplands. Could it be that that was what Martin had heard?

If so, then it could not have been a dream. It had really happened. She found voice to protest timidly:

“Perhaps he did not mean to trick me, mother. Perhaps he really thought that he heard you calling me.”

“Pouf, child! How could he, when I did not call? There! a truce to the talk while I brew the posset. I hope that Catherine is not coming down with sickness.”

She hurried into the kitchen, while Jeanne, wondering greatly at what had taken place, took her little sister into the garden, and sat down under another tree.

CHAPTER VI

JEANNE'S HARSH WORDS

"*The miracle of this girl's life is best honored by the simple truth.*"

SAINTE-BEUVE.

So, half from shyness, half from fear of ridicule, the child told no one of her strange experience, but often did the thought of the happening come to her, and she wondered what it could mean. Indeed so much did she dwell upon it that Mengette rallied her upon her abstraction.

"What has come over you, Jeanne?" asked the latter one day when she and Jeanne in company with other girls and women were at the river engaged in one of the periodical washings of the village. "Twice have I spoken to you, yet you have not answered. Has your mother been scolding you?"

"Mother scolding? Why, no!" Jeanne glanced up in surprise. "There is naught the matter, Mengette. I was just thinking."

"Of what?" questioned her friend, but as Jeanne made no reply she lowered her voice and said with some asperity: "You are thinking too much, Jeanne D'Arc. You are not a bit like yourself, and every one is noticing it. Why, when you come to a washing you come to laugh, to sing, to talk, and to have a good time; but you do naught but mope." And Mengette gave the garments she was washing a vicious thump with the clothes-beater.

"Well, I haven't moped so much but that my clothes are as clean as the ones you are washing," retorted Jeanne, holding up some linens for inspection, and regarding her friend with a quizzical glance. "Mengette, those poor garments will be beaten to a thread if you pound them much harder."

Mengette let her paddle drop, and pushed back her hair with her wet hands.

“I’d willingly beat them to a thread to hear you laugh, Jeanne. Now come up closer, and I will tell you something that Hauviette told me last night. I don’t want any one else to hear it.”

So, wooed for the time being from her thoughts, Jeanne moved her washing table closer to her friend’s, and the two girls were soon deep in a low toned conversation, punctuated by many peals of merriment. All along the bank of river the village women and girls kneeled over their box-shaped washing tables, open at one side, set in the water’s edge, talking as they worked, or sometimes singing roundels and catches. As Mengette had said, the pleasure of washing lay in the meeting of many women and girls, and in the chatting, laughter and news-telling between the thump, thump of the clothes-beaters. The sound of the paddles could be heard along the valley as they beat and turned and dipped and turned again the coarse garments of their families. Thus labor that would have proved irksome performed by two or three alone was lightened by the communion and fellowship of the many.

It was pleasant by the river, despite the heat of the day. Bluebells and tall white plumes of spiræa vied with the brownish-yellow of mignonette and the rose of meadow pink in embroidering a delicate tracery of color against the vivid green of the valley. The smell of new mown hay made the air fragrant, and hills and meadows smiled under a cloudless sky. The workers laughed, and sang, and chatted, plying always the paddles; but at length the washing was finished. The sun was getting low behind the Domremy hills when the last snowy pieces were stretched upon the grass to bleach, and then, piling large panniers high with the garments that were dried the women lifted them to their backs, thrusting their arms into the plaited handles to steady them, and so started homeward. Isabeau Romée lingered to speak to her daughter.

“Leave the tables and paddles, little one,” she said, as she saw Jeanne preparing to take them from the water. “I will send the boys for them, and you have done enough for one day. Know you where the lads are? I have seen naught of them since dinner.”

“Father said that since the hay was cut, and there was no sign of rain, they might have the afternoon for themselves, mother. I think they went somewhere down the river to fish.”

“’Tis most likely,” said Isabeau. “I hope that they will not meet the Maxey boys anywhere. If they do, home will they come all bruised and bleeding, for never do boys from this side of the river meet those from the Lorraine side that there is

not a fight. I like it not."

"'Tis because the boys of Domremy and Greux are Armagnacs, and those of Maxey-sur-Meuse are Burgundians," explained Jeanne, who did not know that ever since the world has stood boys of one village always have found a pretext to fight lads of another, be that pretext the difference between Armagnacs and Burgundians, or some other. "How can they help it, mother, when even grown people fight their enemies when they meet?"

"True; 'tis no wonder that they fight when there is naught but fighting in the land." Isabeau sighed. "Would there were no war. But there, child, let's talk of it no more. I weary of strife, and tales of strife. Since the boys are somewhere along the river they needs must pass the bridge to come home. Do you, therefore, wait here for them, and tell them that they are to bring the tables and the paddles home. I will go on to get the supper."

"Very well, mother," assented Jeanne. So while her mother went back to the cottage, the great pannier of clothes towering high above her head, the little girl rinsed the box-shaped washing tables carefully, then drew them high on the banks; after which she sat down near the bridge to watch for her brothers.

She did not have long to wait. Suddenly there came shouts and cries from the Lorraine side of the river, and soon there came Jean and Pierre, her brothers, followed by other Domremy lads running at full speed, and in their wake came many Maxey boys, hurling insults and stones at their fleeing adversaries.

On Pierre's head was a long, deep gash that was bleeding freely, and at that sight Jeanne burst into tears. She could not bear the sight of blood, and a fight made her cower and tremble. At this juncture there came from the fields Gérardin d'Épinal, a Burgundian, and the only man in Domremy who was not of the King's party. He gave a great laugh as he saw the boys of his own village running from those of Maxey. Then knowing how loyal Jeanne was to the Dauphin, he cried teasingly:

"That is the way that the Burgundians and English are making the 'Little King of Bourges' run. (A term applied to the Dauphin Charles by his enemies.) Soon he will be made to leave France, and flee into Spain, or perhaps Scotland, and then we will have for our Sovereign Lord, Henry King of England and France."

At that Jeanne grew white. Her tears ceased to flow, and she stood up very straight and looked at him with blazing eyes.

"I would that I might see thy head struck from thy body," she said in low intense

tones. Then, after a moment, she crossed herself and added devoutly: “That is, if it were God’s will, Gérardin d’Épinal.”

The words were notable, for they were the only harsh words the girl used in her life. Long afterward Gérardin d’Épinal told of them. Now he had the grace to blush, for he had not meant to rouse the little creature to such passion. With a light laugh he turned and went his way, saying:

“Don’t take such things so much to heart, Jeanne.”

The Domremy boys had reached their own side of the river by this time, and therefore were safe from further attack from their rivals. Now they gathered about Jeanne, for they had heard what she had said to Gérardin.

“How did you come to speak so to him, Jeanne?” cried Jean.

Jeanne hung her head.

“I don’t know,” she answered. “Yes; it was because of what he said about the gentle Dauphin; and too, I think, because of the cut in Pierre’s head.” And with that she put her arm about her brother, and drew him to her. “Does it hurt much?” she asked tenderly. “Come! let me wash it off before we go home. Mother likes not to see blood.”

“And neither do you,” exclaimed Pierre, noting her pale face. “Don’t bother about it, Jeanne. It doesn’t hurt very much.” He shrugged his shoulders with assumed indifference.

“Mother will not like it because you have been fighting,” went on the girl gravely.

“We didn’t mean to, Jeanne,” broke in Jean quickly. “We came to the river to fish, but some of the Burgundian boys came to the other side, and began to call us names, saying that we didn’t dare to come over and fight. We ran back to the village, and told the other boys who came back with us to show the Maxeys that we did dare, but not one of them was to be seen. So we crossed the bridge to the Lorraine side anyway, and—”

“They set upon us,” interrupted Pierre excitedly. “They had hidden in the bushes and behind trees, and as soon as we were fairly among them they threw themselves upon us. ’Twas an ambuscade just like when Roland was set upon at Roncesvalles.”

“And did the Domremy boys give a good account of themselves?” queried Jeanne anxiously. “And how did you get the gash?”

Jean looked embarrassed.

“I did it,” he said at length. “It was like Olivier did to Roland. You see we were all so mixed up when the Maxey boys fell upon us that we couldn’t tell which were our boys, and which were not. So, in striking out with a stick that I carried, I thwacked Pierrelot on the head instead of one of them as I intended. But I made up for it afterward; didn’t I, Pierre?”

Pierre laughed as he nodded affirmation.

“So did I,” he said. “I knew that Jean would feel bad about hitting me, so we both made the Burgundians pay for it. Do we have to carry the tables and the paddles home, Jeanne? Or aren’t you through washing yet?”

“Yes; we have finished, Pierre. Mother said for you boys to carry the tables home, but since you are hurt I will help Jean with them.”

“Pouf! why, ’tis nothing but a scratch,” cried Pierrelot. “And you have been washing, too. I’ll carry my share, Jeanne. Now let’s be getting home. I’m hungry as a wolf.”

“So am I,” declared Jean.

The supper was waiting when they reached the cottage, and the boys’ story of the ambuscade was related again to their father and mother, who listened sympathetically. In the midst of the recital Jeanne slipped out, and went across the garden to the little church to vespers.

There was no one in the church but the Curé, and the good priest smiled as his little parishioner entered. He was always sure of one auditor, whatever the state of the weather, for Jeanne attended all services. In one transept was an image of Saint Catherine, the patron saint of young girls, and before this the child knelt in prayer. It was deemed presumptuous for Christians to address God directly in prayer at this period, so that prayers were made to the saints, who were asked to make intercession for the suppliant. So Jeanne made her supplication to the saint, and then took her seat, for the people were coming in for the service.

Messire Guillaume Frontey, the priest, led them through a short benediction service, and comforted and refreshed,—Jeanne had been much wearied by the day’s work and religion was to her as the breath of life,—the child passed out into the garden.

There was a sweet coolness in the evening air, and the darkness was soft and agreeable after the glare of the summer sun. So pleasant was the night that

Jeanne stopped under an apple tree, loath to enter the warm cottage. Presently, through the darkness, there came the light that she had seen before. A light so bright, so glowing in its radiance that she sank to her knees awed by the luminosity. She was not so frightened as when it had come before, yet still she dared not lift her eyes to gaze upon its wonder. Tremblingly she waited for the voice that she knew would follow. As it spake the bells of the church began to ring for compline. Mingled with their chimes sounded tones so sweet that her eyes filled at their tenderness:

“I come from God to help thee live a good and holy life,” it said. “Be good, Jeanne, and God will aid thee.”

That was all. The light faded gradually, and when it was gone Jeanne rose to her feet.

“It was the voice of an angel,” she whispered in awed tones. “The voice of an angel, and it spoke to me.”

And from that time forth Jeanne D’Arc had no doubt but that an angel had spoken to her. To children, especially religious little ones, Heaven is always very near, and that one of its denizens should come to them does not seem so improbable as it does to mature minds. For some time she stood lost in wonderment at the miraculous happening, then slowly and thoughtfully she went into the cottage, going at once to her own little room.

This room was on the side of the cottage toward the church where the eaves sloped low. From her tiny window she could see the sacred light on the altar, and with hands clasped, Jeanne knelt before the open sash, gazing devoutly upon it. It seemed to her that the threshold of Heaven was reached by that little church.

CHAPTER VII

FURTHER VISIONS

"*Angels are wont to come down to Christians without being seen, but I see them.*"

JEANNE D'ARC'S *Own Words.*

J. E. J. QUICHERAT, "*Condamnation et Réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc.*" *Vol. I.*, p. 130.

From this time forth the Voice became frequent. Again and again she heard it; chiefly out of doors, in the silence and freedom of the fields or garden. In time the Heavenly radiance resolved itself into the semblance of a man, but with wings and a crown on his head: a great angel, surrounded by many smaller ones. The little maid knew him by his weapons and the courtly words that fell from his lips to be Saint Michael, the archangel who was provost of Heaven and warden of Paradise; at once the leader of the Heavenly Hosts and the angel of judgment.

Often had Jeanne seen his image on the pillar of church or chapel, in the guise of a handsome knight, with a crown on his helmet, wearing a coat of mail and bearing a lance. Sometimes he was represented as holding scales. In an old book it is written that "the true office of Saint Michael is to make great revelations to men below, by giving them holy counsels."

In very remote times he had appeared to the Bishop of Avranches and commanded him to build a church on Mount Tombe, in such a place as he should find a bull hidden by thieves; and the site of the building was to include the whole area trodden by the bull. The Abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel-au-Péril-de-la-Mer was erected in obedience to this command.

About the time that Jeanne was having these visions the English were attacking

Mont-Saint-Michel, and the defenders of the fortress discomfited them. The French attributed the victory to the all-powerful intercession of the archangel. Therefore, Saint Michael was in a fair way to become the patron saint of the French instead of Saint Denys, who had permitted his abbey to be taken by the English. But Jeanne knew nothing of what had happened in Normandy.

The apparition was so noble, so majestic in its appearance that at first the little maid was sore afraid, but his counsels were so wise and tender that they overcame her fear.

One day he said to her: “Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret will come to thee. Act according to their advice; for they are appointed to guide thee and counsel thee in all that thou hast to do, and thou mayest believe what they shall say unto thee.”

Jeanne was glad when she heard this promise, for she loved both these saints. Saint Marguerite was highly honoured in the Kingdom of France, where she was a great benefactress. She was the patron saint of flax spinners, nurses, vellum-dressers, and of bleachers of wool.

Saint Catherine had a church at Maxey on the other side of the Meuse, and Jeanne’s little sister bore her name. Often had she repeated the rhymed prayer that was used in the saint’s honour throughout the Valley of Colors:

“Hail, thou holy Catherine,

Virgin Maid so pure and fine.”

Both the saints were martyrs. Jeanne had heard their stories many times from her mother, so she awaited their coming eagerly.

It was in the woods, near the Fairy Tree, that they first came to her. It was a Saturday, the day held sacred to the Holy Virgin, and Jeanne made a little pilgrimage through the forest up the hill path beyond Greux to the Oratory of Our Lady of Belmont. With her tiny savings the child had bought a candle to burn on the altar, and also carried wild flowers to make the holy place as fragrant as the forest at its doors. She finished her orisons, placed her candle on the altar and laid her flowers on the shrine, then slowly started down the hill path. Soon, finding herself near The Gooseberry Spring, she knelt upon its brink for a drink from its pellucid waters. It was very quiet in the clearing about the Spring, and over the grassy space lay a grateful shade. The day was warm, and after her drink Jeanne sat down on a natural seat formed by the gnarled roots of a tree.

Her hands lay loosely, one reposing in the other in her lap. Her head drooped, and she lost herself in thought.

All at once an odour, marvellously sweet, diffused itself on the air about her. It was a perfume the like of which she had never inhaled before. She lifted her head quickly, and drew a long deep breath, glancing around her for the blossoms that emitted such fragrance.

As she did so there came a slight rustling of leaves among the trees, and from the Heavens there seemed to shoot downward a splendid effulgence. An unearthly light that flooded the place with glory. A look of rapture came into Jeanne's face. She rose, and crossed herself devoutly, then curtsied low as from the splendor there issued two shining figures, clad like queens, with golden crowns on their heads, wearing rich and precious jewels. The little maid could not look upon their faces by reason of the dazzling brightness that proceeded from them, but she knelt and kissed the hem of their garments. Gravely the saints returned her salutations, then spoke, naming each other to her. So soft and sweet were their tones that the sound filled her with a vague happiness, causing her to weep.

"Daughter of God," they said, "rise, and listen. We come to teach thee to live well that thou mayest be prepared for thy mission."

Further they spoke to her, but soon the brilliancy began to dim, and Jeanne caught at their garments.

"Oh, do not leave me," she cried entreatingly. "Take me with you."

"Nay," came the answer. "Thy time is not yet, Daughter of God. Thy work is yet to be done."

OFTEN THEY APPEARED IN THE LITTLE GARDEN

With these words the gentle forms disappeared, and Jeanne flung herself upon the place where they had stood, weeping in an anguish of tenderness and longing.

The saints visited her nearly every day after this. She met them everywhere; sometimes in the woods, or near the Spring; often they appeared in the little garden close to the precincts of the church, and especially did they come when the bells were ringing for matins or compline. It was then that she heard the

sweet words that they spoke most distinctly. So she loved the sound of the bells with which the voices mingled. Soon she grew to call the visions “My Voices,” for the appearance of her visitors was always more imperfect to her than the message. Their outlines and their lovely faces might shine uncertain in the excess of light, but the words were always plain.

The piety and devotion of the girl deepened into a fervid wonder of faith. She put aside the gayety of girlhood, and lived a simple, devout, tender life, helping her mother, obeying her father, and doing what she could for every one. It seemed to her that she was one set apart, subject to the Divine guidance. Nor did she tell any one of her experiences, but locked the Divine secret in her heart, showing forth the tenderness and gravity of one who bears great tidings. She became so good that all the village wondered at her, and loved her.

“Jeanne confesses oftener than any of you,” the Curé told his parishioners reprovingly. “When I celebrate mass I am sure that she will be present whether the rest of you are or not. Would that more of you were like her! Had she money she would give it to me to say masses.” The good man sighed. Money was not plentiful in Domremy.

But if she had not money the child gave what she had: flowers for the altars, candles for the saints, and loving service to all about her. She was an apt pupil in the school of her saints, and learned well to be a good child before she conned the great lesson in store for her.

“Jeanne grows angelic,” Isabeau remarked complacently one day to Jacques. “There never was her like. So good, so obedient, she never gives me a bit of trouble. And what care she takes of her little sister! Catherine has been hard to attend this summer, so fretful and ailing as she is, but Jeanne can always quiet her. I know not what I should do without her. I am the envy of all the women in the village; for, they say, there is not another girl so good in the valley.”

But Jacques D’Arc frowned.

“Too quiet and staid is she for her age,” he remarked. “Have you marked, Isabeau, that she no longer dances with the other children? Nor does she romp, or play games with them. And the praying, and the church-going! There is too much of it for the child’s good.”

“Jacques!” exclaimed his wife in shocked tones. “How can you say that? The good Curé commends Jeanne for her devoutness. That can only do her good.”

“Then what is it?” demanded the father impatiently. “Could it be that some one

is teaching the girl letters, that she is so quiet? Learning of that sort works harm to a lass."

His wife shook her head emphatically.

"She knows not A from B, Jacques. Everything she knows is what she has learned from me. I have taught her the Credo, the Paternoster, the Ave Marie, and have told her stories of the saints: things that every well-taught child should know. She is skilled, too, in housework. I have seen to that. And as for sewing and spinning, there is not her equal in this whole valley. There is naught amiss, Jacques. If there is, 'tis more likely the harm that she has received from tales of bloodshed which every passerby brings of the war. Often do I wish that we did not live on the highroad." The good dame shook her head as she glanced through the open door of the cottage to the great road where even at that moment creaking wains were passing laden with the cloths of Ypres and Ghent.

Often instead of wagons there were men-at-arms, and Isabeau feared the glitter of lances. In war it is not assault and plundering that takes the heart and saps the courage, but the ever present dread that they will happen. Fugitives from the wars stopped for bite and sup, and recounted their stories which were often of great suffering. Such tales have effect, and Isabeau herself being influenced by them did not doubt but that her children were moved in like manner.

"The children hear too much of battles, and the state of France," she added.

"Nay; such things make no lasting impression upon children, Isabeau. It is well that they should know something of what goes on beyond the valley. Perchance the child is threatened with the Falling Sickness. She wears no charm against it."

It was an age of superstition. That Jacques D'Arc should believe that a charm could ward off epilepsy was only what all men believed at the time. He was an austere man, but fond of his family, and his daughter's quietness and growing devoutness had aroused in him a feeling of uneasiness.

"There is naught amiss with the child, Jacques," spoke his wife, consolingly. "She would come to me with it if there were. She is becoming more thoughtful as she grows older; that is all."

"I like it not," grumbled Jacques, shaking his head as though but half convinced. "I much fear that something is wrong. It is not fitting that so young a girl should be so pious. Is not that a Friar turning in from the highway, Isabeau?"

CHAPTER VIII

JEANNE RECEIVES A GIFT AND AN ANNOUNCEMENT

"*Great hearts alone understand how much glory there is in being good.*"

A Saying of Old France.

Isabeau glanced toward the man who was nearing the cottage. He was clad in the frock of the Order of Saint Francis, and was carrying a heavy staff.

"'Tis one of the Grey Friars," she exclaimed; "and supper is not yet started. I must hurry to get it upon the table, for he may be hungry."

"If it is a Grey Friar let him get on to Neufchâteau," grumbled Jacques. "They have a house there, and 'tis but five miles further on."

"Jacques," ejaculated his wife reprovingly, "what are you saying? The poor father may be weary. If he were a man-at-arms you would give him welcome."

"If he were a man-at-arms he would have something worth hearing to tell," retorted Jacques. In spite of his words, however, he rose as the friar came to the door, and saluted him but with scant courtesy.

"Pax vobiscum, my son," said the friar humbly. "Perchance for the love of God you will give a poor brother of the Order of the Blessed Francis somewhat to eat, and a place to abide for the night. I have travelled far, and am aweary."

"Enter, father," spoke Jacques shortly. "Supper will soon be upon the table, and a bed shall be made for you."

"Thank you, my son. A benediction upon you, and upon your house," returned the priest so mildly that Jacques' manner softened. He was not usually churlish to guests, unbidden though they might be; but he was anxious and uneasy over his daughter, and her fervid zeal for the church caused him to regard churchmen

with temporary disfavor. At the monk's tone, however, he threw wide the door and gave him a seat with more show of cordiality.

The friar had scarcely seated himself before Jeanne entered, bearing a flagon of fresh water and a cup which she carried directly to him. Bending low before him she said gently:

"Drink, good father. You must be thirsty."

"I am, my child." The Franciscan quaffed the water gratefully, saying, as he gave back the cup: "I have travelled many leagues, even from Rome, where I have been upon a pilgrimage."

"From Rome?" ejaculated Jacques D'Arc, turning round with eagerness. "Hear you that, Isabeau? The holy man has been to Rome. Hasten with the supper; he must be hungry." With this he busied himself to make the priest more comfortable. To make a pilgrimage to Rome cast a glamour of sanctity about him who made it, and exalted him in the eyes of all men.

"THE HOLY MAN HAS BEEN TO ROME"

Jeanne smiled as her father and mother bustled about the friar, and quietly occupied herself with preparations for the supper. It was soon ready, and eaten with all the hearty relish of honest, human hunger. After it was over the best place by the fire was given the friar—already the evenings were beginning to grow chill—and the family gathered around him. As has been said before, in return for their entertainment travellers were expected to regale their hosts with whatsoever news they might be possessed of, or with tales of their travels or adventures. The Franciscan proved to be most agreeable.

He told of his pilgrimage, and described at length the appearance of the holy city. He spoke also of having seen and spoken with the holy Colette of Corbie, that famous nun whose miracles of healing were then the wonder of the Christian world.

At this they crossed themselves, and were silent for a little from very awe from having among them a man who had been so favored. Then Isabeau, who was devoted to sacred things and saintly legends, said timidly:

"Perchance, good father, you have about you a relic, or a ring that hath been

touched by the blessed Sister Colette?”

“Would that I had,” spoke the friar devoutly. “I would cherish it above all things, but I have not. It is true, however, that I have a ring. It hath not been blessed, nor does it possess power to perform miracles. Nathless, it does have great virtue, having been made by a holy man, and by reason of herbs, which have been curiously intermingled with the metal under the influence of the planets, is a sovereign charm against the Falling Sickness.”

Jacques looked up with quick interest.

“Let us see the ring, messire,” he said. “That is, if it please you.”

“It pleases me right well,” answered the friar, drawing a small ring from the bosom of his frock.

It was of electrum, a kind of brass at this time called the gold of the poor. It was an ordinary trifle, but to the peasant and his family it was rich and wonderful. There was no stone or seal, but a broad central ridge, and two sloping sides engraved with three crosses, and the names Jesus and Maria. Such rings were common; sometimes instead of the holy names there were figures of Saints, the Virgin Mary, or a priest with the chalice. A ring, an amulet, a relic that was supposed to be blessed, or to have virtue against disease appealed to the marvel loving part of their natures, so that the people eagerly sought such articles. They desired above all else to possess the precious thing, or that they might touch it with some treasured possession that some of its virtues might pass into themselves. So now Jacques’ eyes met those of his wife’s in a glance of understanding. Isabeau voiced the thought that filled them.

“Would you sell this ring, good father?” she asked.

“Nay; it is not for sale. I but showed it in lieu of a precious relic. ’Tis but a bauble compared to many holy relics that I have seen. Nathless, the ring hath its properties.”

Jacques handed the ring back to him with regret showing plainly on his honest face.

“That I am sorry to hear,” he said. “The little one here hath no charm against the Falling Sickness, and I am minded to buy it for her. She has been o’er quiet of late.”

The friar glanced at Jeanne, who had sat listening attentively to his stories with shining eyes. Then he smiled.

“If it is for this little maid who waited not to be bidden to bring me drink when I was weary and thirsty, I will sell,” he said. “Nay, not sell; but if ye are so minded to give alms for a convent that is being builded by the Sisters of Saint Claire, then may you have it. I know in very truth that it will prove efficacious against the Falling Sickness.” Again the priest smiled at Jeanne. There was naught about the pale purity of her face that denoted ill health, and therefore the good priest might speak with authority.

Jacques drew the girl to him, and taking the ring from the Franciscan fitted it to the third finger of her left hand.

“Do you like it, my little one?” he asked.

Jeanne’s eyes glistened. Like most girls she was fond of pretty things, and she had never had a ring. To her it was very precious.

“Are you in truth going to get it for me, father?” she cried.

“Yes.” Jacques nodded, pleased that she liked the trifle. “Isabeau, give the father the alms he wishes so that we may have the ring for the little one. It is given to you by both your mother and myself, my child,” he continued as Isabeau brought forth the alms for the friar. “Wear it as such, and may it protect you not only from the Falling Sickness but from other ills also.”

At this Jeanne threw her arms about his neck, and kissed him, then running to her mother kissed her also.

“It is so pretty,” she cried. “And see! it hath the two most holy names upon it.” Her glance rested lovingly upon the engraved characters.

“Let us see it, Jeanne,” spoke Pierre. “Sometime,” he whispered as she came to him to show it, “sometime I am going to give you a ring all by myself that shall be prettier than this.”

Jeanne laughed.

“Just as though any ring could be prettier than this, Pierrelot,” she said. “There couldn’t be one; could there, Jean?”

“Nenni.” Jean shook his head emphatically as he examined the ring critically. “I like it better than the one Mengette wears.”

“The Blessed Colette hath a ring which the Beloved Apostle gave to her in token of her marriage to the King of kings,” now spoke the Cordelier. “Many are there who come to Corbie to touch it, that they may be healed of their infirmities.”

Thus the talk went on; sometimes of the Saints and their miracles, then verging to the war, and the state of the kingdom. It was late when at length the family retired.

Jeanne was delighted with the gift. As a usual thing peasants did not bestow presents upon their families. Life was too severe in the valley, and necessities too hard to come by in the ferment of the war to admit of it. When next her Saints appeared, and Saint Catherine graciously touched the ring, Jeanne's joy knew no bounds. Thereafter she was wont to contemplate it adoringly. But, while the ring might be sovereign against epilepsy, it did not rouse her into her oldtime joyousness.

She was very grave, very thoughtful, very earnest at this time. She went on thinking for others, planning for others, sacrificing herself for others, just as always before. She ministered to the sick and to the poor, and gave her bed to the wayfarer as always, performing all her duties with sweet exactness, but she was quiet and abstracted. For her Saints came with greater frequency than ever now, and constantly they spoke to her of her mission.

"What can they mean?" she asked herself. "What is it that I am to do?" But weeks passed before she was told.

The smiling summer merged into Autumn, the season of heavy rains. Brooks rushed down from the hills, and the Meuse was swollen into a torrent, deep and rapid, which overflowed its banks in shallow lagoons. The clouds grew lower, leaning sullenly against the Vosges hills. Fogs came down thick and clinging. The river was rimed with frost. Snow and sleet drove along the Marches, and it was winter. The Valley of Colors lay grave, austere, and sad; no longer brilliantly hued, but clothed in a garb of white which gleamed palely when the clouds were scattered by the rays of a red, cold sun. There was no travel along the highway, and the gray, red-roofed villages were forced to depend upon themselves for news and social intercourse.

To all appearance life in the house of Jacques D'Arc went as peacefully, as serenely, as that of his neighbors, and in no wise differently. There was not one who suspected that Jeanne visited with saints and angels; that she walked with ever listening ear for the Voices to tell her what her divine mission was to be. No one suspected it, for even her youthful friendships continued, and she visited and was visited in turn by Mengette and Hauviette; often passing the night with one or the other of them as has been the fashion of girls since the beginning of time. Both the girls rallied her on her changed spirits.

“Every one says that you are the best girl in the village, but that you are odd,” Hauviette confided to her one day in winter when she and Mengette were spending the afternoon with Jeanne.

The latter glanced up from her spinning with a smile. “And what do you say, Hauviette?”

“I say that you are better than any of us,” answered her friend quickly. “Still,” she hesitated, and then spoke abruptly, “there is a change though, Jeanne. You are not so lively as you were. You never dance, or race with us, or play as you were wont to do. What is the matter?”

“I know,” cried Mengette. “She goes to church too much. And she prays too often. My! how she does pray! Perrin le Drapier told me that when he forgot to ring the bells for compline she reproached him for not doing his duty, because she loved to pray then.”

“Don’t you, Mengette?” asked Jeanne quickly.

“Oh, yes. Why, of course,” answered Mengette. “But I don’t give the sexton cakes to ring the bells when he forgets them. You are getting ready to be a saint, aren’t you?”

Jeanne blushed scarlet at this, and did not speak.

“She is that already,” broke in Hauviette. “Perhaps she does not feel like playing or dancing.”

“That’s it,” spoke Jeanne suddenly, giving her friend a grateful glance. “I don’t feel like it any more.”

“Then we shan’t ask you to do it any more,” declared Hauviette, who loved her dearly. “And you shan’t be teased about it, either. So there now, Mengette!”

“Oh, if she doesn’t feel like it, that’s different,” exclaimed Mengette, who was fond too of Jeanne in her own fashion. “But I do wish you did, Jeanne. There’s not half the fun in the games now as there was when you played. But I won’t say anything more about it. You’ll feel better about it by and by.”

So the matter was not referred to again by the two girls, though the change in Jeanne became more and more marked, as the days went by. Winter was nearing its close when at last she was told what her mission was to be. It was Saint Michael who unfolded it to her.

It was a cold morning, and the little maid had been to early mass. There had not

been many present, and the house was cold, but the Curé smiled tenderly when he saw the small figure in its accustomed place, and Jeanne's heart glowed in the sunshine of his approval. So she did not mind the chill of the church, but started on her return home in an uplifted and exalted frame of mind. To the child, nourished on sacred things, religion was as bread and meat. And then, all at once, the Light came.

It was of unusual splendor, and glowed with hues that stained the snow covered earth with roseate tints like those of the roses of Paradise. From the dazzling effulgence emerged the form of Saint Michael, clothed in grandeur ineffable. In his hand he held a flaming sword, and around him were myriads of angels, the hosts of Heaven whose leader he was. The old fear fell upon Jeanne at sight of his majesty, and she sank tremblingly upon her knees, covering her face with her hands. But when the tender, familiar:

"Be good, Jeanne, and God will help thee," fell from his lips, she ceased a little to tremble.

Then with infinite gentleness the archangel began to speak to her of France, and the "pity there was for it." He told her the story of her suffering country: how the invader was master in the capital; how he was all powerful in the country north of the Loire; how internally France was torn and bleeding by the blood feud between the Duke of Burgundy and the disinherited Dauphin; how great nobles robbed the country which they should have defended, and how bands of mercenaries roved and plundered. The rightful king soon must go into exile, or beg his bread, and France would be no more.

The young girl's heart already yearned over the woes of her distressed country, but now it swelled almost to bursting as she heard the recital from angelic lips. The "great pity that there was for France" communicated itself to her, and she felt it in every chord of her sensitive nature. The great angel concluded abruptly:

"Daughter of God, it is thou who must go to the help of the King of France, and it is thou who wilt give him back his kingdom."

But at this Jeanne sprang to her feet, astounded.

"I, Messire? I?"

"Even thou, Jeanne. It is thou who must fare forth into France to do this. Hast thou not heard that France ruined by a woman shall by a virgin be restored? Thou art the Maid."

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But terrified and weeping the girl fell prostrate before him.

“Not I, Messire. Oh, not I. It cannot be.”

“Thou art the Maid,” was all he said.

With this Jeanne found herself alone.

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CHAPTER IX

THE CHARGE IS ACCEPTED

"I, too, could be content to dwell in peace,

Resting my head upon the lap of love,

But that my country calls."

SOUTHEY. *"Joan of Arc," Book I.*

"Thou art the Maid."

Over and over the young girl repeated the words in a maze of incredulity and wonder. That she, Jeanne D'Arc, should be chosen for such a divine commission was unbelievable. She was poor, without learning, a peasant girl who had no powerful friends to take her to the Court, and ignorant of all that pertained to war. Her judgment and common sense told her that such a thing could not be. True, the ancient prophecy of Merlin, the Magician, said that a maiden from the Bois Chesnu in the March of Lorraine should save France. True also was the fact that from her infancy she had played in that ancient wood; could even then behold its great extent from her father's door. Yet, despite these actualities, it could not be that she was the delegated Maid.

So, while the archangel came again and again urging the high mission with insistency the girl protested shrinkingly. Time after time he said:

"Daughter of God, thou shalt lead the Dauphin to Reims, that he may there receive worthily his anointing."

Again and again Jeanne replied with tears:

"I am but a poor girl, Messire. I am too young to leave my father and my mother. I can not ride a horse, or couch a lance. How then could I lead men-at-arms?"

“Thou shalt be instructed in all that thou hast to do,” she was told.

As time passed, unconsciously Jeanne became filled with two great principles which grew with her growth until they were interwoven with every fibre of her being: the love of God, and the desire to do some great thing for the benefit of her country. Her heart ached with the longing. So it came about that the burden of France lay heavy upon her. She could think of nothing but its distress. She became distrait and troubled.

Gradually, as the Voices of her Heavenly visitants grew stronger and more ardent, the soul of the maiden became holier and more heroic. She was led to see how the miraculous suggestion was feasible; how everything pointed to just such a deliverance for France. Her country needed her. From under the heel of the invader where it lay bruised and bleeding it was calling for redemption. And never since the morning stars sang together has there been sweeter song than the call of country. Ever since the Paladins of Charlemagne, as the Chanson de Roland tells, wept in a foreign land at the thought of “sweet France,” Frenchmen had loved their native land and hated the foreigner. What wonder then, that when the divine call came, it was heard and heeded?

She still resisted, but her protests were those of one who is weighing and considering how the task may be accomplished. Months passed. There came a day in May, 1428, when Jeanne’s indecision ended. She was sixteen now, shapely and graceful, and of extraordinary beauty.

It was a Saturday, the Holy Virgin’s day, and the girl set forth on her weekly pilgrimage to the chapel of Bermont, where there was a statue of the Virgin Mother with her divine child in her arms. Jeanne passed through Greux, then climbed the hill at the foot of which the village nestled. The path was overgrown with grass, vines, and fruit-trees, through which she could glimpse the green valley and the blue hills on the east. Deeply embedded in the forest the chapel stood on the brow of the hill, and she found herself the only votary. She was glad of this, for to-day Jeanne wished to be alone. Prostrating herself before the statue, she continued long in prayer; then, comforted and strengthened, she went out of the chapel, and stood on the wooded plateau. To all appearance she was gazing thoughtfully off into the valley; in reality she waited with eager expectancy the coming of her celestial visitants.

Very much like a saint herself Jeanne looked as she stood there with uplifted look. There was in her face a sweetness and serenity and purity that reflected her spiritual nature. Her manner was at once winning, inspiriting and inspired. She

did not have long to wait for the appearance of Saint Michael. Long communing with her Saints had robbed her of all fear in their presence, so now when the archangel stood before her Jeanne knelt, and reverently kissed the ground upon which he stood.

“Daughter of God,” he said, “thou must fare forth into France. Thou must go. Thou must.”

For a moment Jeanne could utter no reply. She knew that the command must be obeyed. She had sought the retirement of the forest that she might inform her saints that she accepted the charge, and she most often met them in the silence and quiet of the fields, the forest, or garden. She had sought them to tell them of her decision, but at the thought of leaving her father, her mother, her friends, and the valley she loved so well, her courage faltered. Faintly she made her last protest:

“I am so young,” she said. “So young to leave my father and my mother. I can sew; can use with skill either the needle or the distaff, but I can not lead men-at-arms. Yet if it be so commanded, if God wills it, then I—” Her voice broke, and she bent her head low in submission before him.

At her words the wonderful light burst into marvellous brilliancy. It drenched the kneeling maiden in its dazzling radiance, pervading her being with a soft, warm glow. The faith that power would be given her to accomplish what was required of her was born at this instant; thereafter it never left her. When the archangel spoke, he addressed her as a sister:

“Rise, daughter of God,” he said. “This now is what you must do: Go at once to Messire Robert de Baudricourt, captain of Vaucouleurs, and he will take you to the King. Saint Margaret and Saint Catherine will come to aid you.”

And Jeanne D’Arc arose, no longer the timid, shrinking peasant girl, but Jeanne, Maid of France, consecrated heart and soul to her country. The time had come when she must go forth to fulfill her incredible destiny.

Henceforth she knew what great deeds she was to bring to pass. She knew that God had chosen her that through Him she might win back France from the enemy, and set the crown on the head of the Dauphin.

It was late when at length she left the precincts of the chapel, and passed down the hill path, and on to the fields of Domremy. Pierre was at work in one of the upland meadows, and as he wielded the hoe he sang:

“Dread are the omens and fierce the storm,

O’er France the signs and wonders swarm;

From noonday on to the vesper hour,

Night and darkness alone have power;

Nor sun nor moon one ray doth shed,

Who sees it ranks him among the dead.

Behold our bravest lie dead on the fields;

Well may we weep for France the fair,

Of her noble barons despoiled and bare.”

It was the Song of Roland. The song that no French heart can hear unmoved. Jeanne thrilled as she heard it. Did Pierre too feel for their suffering country? Swiftly she went to him, and, throwing her arm across his shoulder, sang with him:

“Yet strike with your burnished brands—accursed

Who sells not his life right dearly first;

In life or death be your thought the same,

That gentle France be not brought to shame.”

Pierre turned toward her with a smile.

“How you sang that, Jeanne. Just as though you would like to go out and fight for France yourself.”

“I would,” she replied quickly. “Wouldn’t you, Pierrelot?”

Something in her tone made the boy look at her keenly.

“How your eyes shine,” he said. “And somehow you seem different. What is it, Jeanne? The song?”

“Partly,” she told him.

“Well, it does make a fellow’s heart leap.” The youth spoke thoughtfully. “It always makes me feel like dropping everything to go out to fight the English and Burgundians.”

“We will go together, Pierrelot,” spoke his sister softly. “We—”

“What’s that about going to fighting?” demanded their father, who had drawn near without being perceived. “Let me hear no more of that. Pierre, that field must be finished by sundown. Jeanne, your mother has need of you in the house. There is no time for dawdling, or singing. Go to her.”

“Yes, father.” Dutifully the maiden went at once to the cottage, while Pierre resumed his hoeing.

The conversation passed from the lad’s mind, but it was otherwise with Jacques D’Arc. He had heard his daughter’s words, “We will go together, Pierrelot,” and they troubled him.

The following morning he appeared at the breakfast table scowling and taciturn, making but small pretence at eating. Presently he pushed back from the table. His wife glanced at him with solicitude.

“What ails you, Jacques?” she queried. “Naught have you eaten, which is not wise. You should not begin the day’s work upon an empty stomach.”

“Shall I get you some fresh water, father?” asked Jeanne.

Jacques turned upon her quickly, and with such frowning brow that, involuntarily, she shrank from him.

“Hark you,” he said. “I dreamed of you last night.”

“Of me, father?” she faltered.

“Yes. I dreamed that I saw you riding in the midst of men-at-arms.”

At this both Jean and Pierre laughed.

“Just think of Jeanne being with soldiers,” exclaimed Jean. “Why, she would run at sight of a Godon.”

But there was no answering smile on the face of their father. According to his belief there was but one interpretation to be put upon such a dream. Many women rode with men-at-arms, but they were not good women. So now, bringing his fist down upon the table with a resounding thwack, he roared:

“Rather than have such a thing happen, I would have you boys drown her in the river. And if you would not do it, I would do it myself.”

Jeanne turned pale. Instantly it was borne in upon her that her father must not know of her mission. She knew that if now she were to tell of the wonderful task that had been assigned to her she would not be believed, but that he would think ill of her.

At this juncture her mother spoke, chidingly:

“How you talk, Jacques. What a pother to make over a dream. Come now! eat your breakfast, and think no more of it.”

But Jacques only reiterated his words fiercely:

“I would drown her rather than have a daughter of mine among soldiers.”

Jeanne glanced at her brothers, but their countenances were grave enough now, for they comprehended their father’s meaning. A sudden sense of aloofness, of being no longer part and parcel of her family, smote her. The tears came and overflowed her cheeks, for she was but a girl after all. To hide her grief she rose hastily, and ran to her own little room.

CHAPTER X

THE FIRST STEP

> "*On the subject of Jeanne's sincerity I have raised no doubts. It is impossible to suspect her of lying; she firmly believed that she received her mission from her Voices.*"
>
> ANATOLE FRANCE. "*Joan of Arc.*"

From this time forth Jeanne's family could not fail to notice the change that marked her bearing and appearance. Her eyes glowed with the light of a steadfast purpose, and the serene thoughtfulness of her countenance was illumined by a brightness that was like the rosy flush of dawn stealing upon the pale coldness of the morning. She was still simple in manner, but her shrinking timidity had vanished, and in its stead had come decision and an air of authority. She bore herself nobly, as became one who had been vested with the leadership of a divine mission. Yet of this outward expression of authority she was unconscious. The thought that filled her to the exclusion of all else was how she was to proceed to accomplish her task. For there were three things that she had to do for the saving of her country:

First: She must go to Robert de Baudricourt at Vaucouleurs.

Second: She must win back France from her enemies.

Third: She must lead the Dauphin to his anointing at Reims. How these things were to be brought to pass she did not know.

The walled town of Vaucouleurs lay some twelve miles to the northward of Domremy, and was the chief place of the district. Its captain, Robert de Baudricourt, was well known throughout the Valley of Colors. He was a blunt, practical man of the sword, who had married two rich widows in succession, and

who had been fighting since he could bear arms, in the reckless wars of the Lorraine Marches. He was brave as a lion, coarse, rough, domineering, an ideal soldier of his time and country. Jacques D'Arc had had personal dealings with him in the Spring of the previous year when he had appeared before him to plead the cause of Domremy against one Guiot Poignant, and he had many tales to tell of the rough Governor. How could she approach such a man?

There was no hope of help at home. That she foresaw clearly as she recalled her father's words concerning his dream. She knew that he would oppose her bitterly. Nor would her mother aid her, deeply as she loved her, to go contrary to her father's will. Neither would they allow her to journey to Vaucouleurs unattended. The maiden made a mental review of the villagers in search of one to whom she might appeal for assistance, but rejected them sadly as their images passed before her. Clearly she must bide her time.

"But I must go soon," she mused. "It is the will of God."

Just at this juncture, when she knew not to whom to go, Durand Lassois, a cousin by marriage whom she called uncle because he was so much older than she, came to Domremy on a visit. Jeanne hailed his advent with eagerness. He lived with his young wife, who was Isabeau's niece, in Bury le Petit, a hamlet lying on the left bank of the Meuse in the green valley, nine miles from Domremy, but only three from Vaucouleurs. Here was the help that she needed, for Durand was fond of Jeanne, and would do her bidding as unquestioningly as a mastiff obeys the child whom he adores.

So when Jeanne, taking him aside, asked him to take her home with him for a visit to her cousin, his wife, he assented readily.

"Aveline will be glad for you to come, Jeanne," he said. "She is not well, and a visit from you will cheer her up."

Jacques D'Arc made some objections when the subject was broached, but Isabeau was pleased and over-ruled them.

"It is the very thing," she exclaimed. "The child has been in need of a change this long while. Nay, now, Jacques, say naught against it. She shall go. I wonder that we did not think of sending her there ourselves."

"It must be for only a week, then," said Jacques.

"A week is better than nothing," spoke Durand Lassois. "Have no fear for her, Jacques. She shall be well looked after."

So a few days later the uncle and niece started for Bury le Petit by way of the hill path beyond Greux. As they walked through the forest, fragrant with the breath of spring, Jeanne said abruptly:

“Uncle Durand, while I am at your house I wish you to take me to Vaucouleurs to see Sire Robert de Baudricourt.”

“You wish me to do what, child?” he asked in open-mouthed amazement.

“To take me to Vaucouleurs to see Sire Robert de Baudricourt.”

“What for?” demanded Lassois, staring at her.

“So that he may send me to the place where the Dauphin is, uncle. I must go into France to lead the Dauphin to Reims, that he may be crowned King there.”

Into the peasant’s honest face there came a troubled expression. Slowly he passed his hand across his brow, then stopped in the path and looked at her.

“It may be that we are walking too fast, little one,” he said gently. “Your mother said that you had not been well, and ’tis known that the sun sometimes plays strange tricks with the wits.”

“I am not daft, uncle, nor hath the sun unsettled my wits.” Jeanne showed neither surprise nor vexation at his words. “Have you not heard that a woman should lose France, and that a Maid should save France?”

“I have heard it,” admitted Durand slowly. “What then, Jeanne?”

“I am that Maid, Uncle Durand. I shall save France.” She spoke in a tone of quiet conviction.

The man drew a long breath and stared at her. He had known the maid all her short life. Knew of her good deeds, her purity and truthfulness; knew that all that could be urged against her was the fault of going to church too frequently. So now, as he noted the clearness of her eyes and the calmness of her manner, he told himself that she believed what she said, and that whatever might be the nature of her affliction it was not madness.

“You must believe me, uncle,” spoke the girl pleadingly, “Have I not always been truthful?”

He nodded.

“I am so now. I am called of God to win back France from her enemies, and to lead the Dauphin to be crowned King at Reims. I go to the Captain of Vaucouleurs that he may grant men to me to take me to the gentle Dauphin. Will

you take me to Sire Robert?”

Lassois did not reply. He could not. He stood for a long moment utterly incapable of speech. Jeanne went on in her soft, clear accents to tell him of her mission and of its divine origin. She was so earnest, she spoke with such assurance of the charge that had been laid upon her that in spite of himself Durand believed her. To the natural mind the wonder is not that angelic visitors come to the pure and good, but that they come so seldom. He leaned forward suddenly, and said:

“I’ll take you to Vaucouleurs, ma mie, if you wish to go. Jacques won’t like it, though. Have you thought of that?”

“I know, uncle, but it is the will of God. I must go,” she told him.

Involuntarily Lassois crossed himself. There was such a look of exaltation about the maiden that he felt as though he were in church.

“I’ll take you, Jeanne,” he said again. “But hark ye, child! there must be no word of your Voices at the house. Neither Aveline nor her parents would believe you.”

“There will be many who will not believe me, uncle,” sighed she. She thought of the dear ones at Domremy who would not, and sighed again. “Even Sire Robert will not.”

“Then why go to him?” he demanded bluntly.

“It is commanded,” she answered. “Later he will believe.”

So the compact was made, and Jeanne had found the way to make the first step toward the fulfilling of her mission, and the journey was finished without further incident. However, it proved not so easy to leave for Vaucouleurs as she supposed it would be. Lassois and his young wife lived with her parents, the wife’s mother being Isabeau’s sister was therefore Jeanne’s aunt. Both mother and daughter welcomed their young kinswoman with delight, and took such pleasure in her society that they were unwilling that she should leave them even for a day. Thus four days went by before Durand was able to fulfill his promise. It was managed at last, however, and the maiden’s heart beat high as they left Bury le Petit behind them, and set their faces toward Vaucouleurs. Being but a three mile journey it was quickly made. Though born and bred in the valley it was the first time that she had ever seen the grim little fighting town where Robert de Baudricourt upheld the Standard of the Lilies against that of the Leopard. Therefore she looked about her with natural curiosity.

The width of the valley lessened here. The hills pressed so closely upon the river that the meadows lay at the very feet of the town. Within the walls the buildings clustered round the base of a hill upon which stood the castle of the Governor and the church, overlooking the vast extent of hills and dominating the valley.

Without difficulty they entered the town, and climbed one of the narrow streets leading to the castle. The gates were open, for the bluff Captain was easy of access to his followers and townsmen. A number of soldiers were scattered about the courtyard burnishing armour, sharpening swords, and all as busy and merry as valiant men-at-arms should be. They cast curious glances at the pair, the rustic countryman and his fair companion, but on the whole were civil enough, permitting them to pass without hindrance into an ante-chamber of the castle.

“Shall I not speak to Sire Robert first, Jeanne?” questioned Lassois, who became all at once awkward and diffident. Secretly he hoped that the Governor would refuse to see his young kinswoman. He feared his ridicule. Jeanne shook her head.

“Let us go together, Uncle Durand. Go thou to thy master, the Sire Robert,” she added, turning to the page who now approached to learn what they wanted, “and tell him that Jeanne, the Maid, who comes with her uncle, would speak with him.”

“Ye must wait,” spoke the page pertly. “My master sits at meat.”

“Nathless thou wilt take the message,” spoke the girl so firmly and with so much of command that the youth’s insolent air became at once respectful. “My lord’s business is of importance. It must be attended to.”

The lad bowed, and left them. Soon he returned, saying:

“The Sire Captain says that you are to come to him. This way.” With this he conducted them through many a windy passage to the banqueting chamber.

A long table extended its length down the centre of the room, and around it were gathered the officers of the garrison. At the far end of this table stood a smaller one elevated above the other by a dais. At this table with three companions sat a brawny, gray-haired man whom Jeanne knew at once was the Governor.

Lassois, shy and ill at ease among so many gentles, stopped short just inside the door, and stood awkwardly twirling his cap in his hand. But Jeanne, who had been wont to tremble and blush before strangers, was in no wise abashed, but with noble and courteous bearing proceeded directly to the small table.

An involuntary exclamation of admiration escaped the rough soldier's lips. The girl was clad in the ordinary red homespun frock of the peasant, and her abundant hair was entirely hidden under the coif worn by all women, but neither the poor dress nor the coif could conceal her beauty. So Robert de Baudricourt's tones were as soft as his harsh voice would permit as he said:

"Thou art welcome, child. What wouldst thou have with me?"

"I am come to you, Sire Robert, sent by Messire," she answered fearlessly, "that you may send word to the Dauphin and tell him to hold himself in readiness, but not to give battle to his enemies."

A gasp of amazement came from Sire Robert. He did not speak, but, leaning forward, he regarded the maiden keenly. With perfect calm and self-possession she continued:

"Before mid Lent my Lord will grant him aid. But in very deed the realm belongs not to the Dauphin. Nathless it is Messire's will that the Dauphin should be King, and receive the kingdom in trust. Notwithstanding his enemies the Dauphin shall be King; and it is I who shall lead him to his anointing."

A moment of silence followed this startling announcement. Across the faces of the men-at-arms stole expressions of pity, then a murmur of compassion ran through the room as Sire Robert asked:

"Who is Messire?"

And Jeanne answered, "He is the King of Heaven."

Now it happened that just before Lassois and Jeanne entered the hall the Governor and his men had been discussing the state of affairs in the country. It was noised about that the English were preparing for a new attack in force on the Dauphin's territories south of the Loire. It was rumored also that the little wedge of loyal territory in which Vaucouleurs lay was to be the object of special attack by the Burgundians. That a young peasant girl, accompanied by a rustic, should calmly inform him that she should straighten out the difficulties of distressed France appealed to Robert as a huge joke. So, at her answer, he gave way to a great shout of laughter in which his men, as in duty bound, joined. Sire Robert had no sentiment, but was possessed of a coarse humour. Again and again the rafters rang with his merriment. When the hilarity had somewhat subsided he beckoned Lassois to draw near.

"Come hither, rustic," he said. "Is this thy daughter?"

“No,” replied Durand tremblingly. “She is the daughter of Jacques D’Arc.”

“So?” Sire Robert scanned the maid with new interest. “See you, my man,” he said. “The girl is daft; clean daft. As witless an innocent as ever it has been my lot to behold. Whip her well, and send her home to her father.”

Whip her? Lassois turned a startled glance upon the Governor as though he had not heard aright. Whip Jeanne, who was so good and sweet? The very idea was profanation. Cowed and frightened he grasped the maiden’s arm.

“Come,” he whispered. “Let’s be going.”

But calmly, courageously Jeanne faced the Governor.

“I go, Sire Robert, but I shall come again. For it is you who are appointed by the will of Messire to send me with an escort of men-at-arms to the aid of the Dauphin. My Voices have said so.”

Mad though they deemed the maiden, the men-at-arms and their Captain were impressed by the girl’s gravity and noble bearing as she spoke. In silence, therefore, they permitted the pair to pass from the room.

CHAPTER XI

A Trying Time

> "*A Prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.*"
>
> St. Matthew 13:57.

At the end of the week Lassois took Jeanne home. It was a return fraught with unpleasantness.

The girl's visit to Sire Robert and her claim that she would lead the Dauphin to his anointing had been discussed and made a matter of sport by the soldiers of the garrison. From them it passed to the townspeople; from the townspeople to the country, and thence to Domremy. The whole valley buzzed with talk of it. Jacques heard the gossip in a passion of shame and anger. Therefore, when Lassois and his daughter entered the cottage he met them with scowling brow.

"What is this that I hear about your visiting Sire Robert de Baudricourt?" he demanded of Jeanne wrathfully. "Why did you go there? What business had you with him?"

Jeanne faced him bravely.

"I had to go," she told him calmly. "It was commanded. Sire Robert has been appointed to give me men-at-arms to take me to the Dauphin that I may lead him to his anointing. I am to save France, father. It is so commanded by Messire, the King of Heaven."

Her father's jaw dropped. He stood staring at her for a long moment, then turned to his wife with a groan.

"She is out of her senses, Isabeau," he cried. "Our daughter's wits are wandering. This comes of so much church going and prayer. I will have no more

of it."

"Shame upon you, Jacques, for speaking against the church," exclaimed Isabeau. "Say rather it hath come from the tales of bloodshed she hath heard. Too many have been told about the fireside. 'Tis talk, talk of the war all the time. I warned you of it."

"Whatever be the cause I will have no more of it," reiterated Jacques with vehemence. "Nay; nor will I have any more going to Vaucouleurs, nor talk of seeking the Dauphin. Do you hear, Jeanne?"

"Yes, father," she answered quietly. "I grieve to go against your will, but I must do the work the Lord has appointed. Let me tell you—"

"Naught! You shall tell me naught," cried Jacques almost beside himself with rage. "Go to your room, and stay there for the rest of the day. And hark ye all!" including his wife and sons in a wide sweeping gesture, "wherever Jeanne goes one of you must be with her. See to it. At any time she may go off with some roaming band of Free Lances. Rather than have that happen I would rather she were dead." He turned upon Lassois fiercely as Jeanne, weeping bitterly at his harsh words, obediently withdrew into her own little room.

"And you, Lassois! why did you not keep her from going to Vaucouleurs? You knew that I would not like it. You knew also that it would cause talk. Why, why did you permit it?"

"Aye, I knew all that, Jacques," responded Lassois, shifting uneasily from one foot to the other. "But Jeanne really believed that she had received a divine command to go to Sire Robert. So believing, she would have gone to him in spite of all that I could have done. Therefore, was it not better that I should take her?"

"Durand speaks truly, Jacques," spoke Isabeau. "The child is clearly daft. I have heard that such are always set in their fancies. What is past, is past. She has been to Vaucouleurs; therefore, it can not be undone. What remains to be done is to guard against any future wanderings." The mother was as greatly distressed as the father, but out of sympathy for his woe she forced herself to speak of the occurrence with calmness.

"True," muttered Jacques. "True. No doubt you could not do other than you did, Durand; but I wonder that you did it."

"Jeanne does not seem out of her senses to me," observed Lassois. "There is a saying, as you well know, that a maid from the Bois Chesnu shall redeem

France. It might be she as well as another. She is holy enough."

"Pouf!" Jacques snapped his fingers derisively. "It is as Isabeau says: she has heard too much of the state of the realm, and of the wonderful Maid who is to restore it. The country is full of the talk. It could not mean her. She is but a peasant girl, and when hath a villein's daughter ever ridden a horse, or couched a lance? Let her keep to her station. Don't let such wild talk addle your wits, too, Durand. Now tell me everything that occurred at Vaucouleurs. The village rings with the affair. I want the whole truth."

Lassois did as requested, and told all of the happening. Finding the girl's parents so incredulous concerning her mission had somewhat shaken his belief in his niece, but the germ that remained caused him to soften the narrative a little. Jacques heard him through in silence. When Durand had finished the telling he bowed his head upon his arms as though the recital were beyond his strength to bear.

He was an upright man, just and honorable in his dealings with others. He stood well in the village, being esteemed next to the mayor himself. He was fond of his children, and had looked after their upbringing strictly. He wanted nothing out of the ordinary, nothing unusual, nothing but what was conventional and right to occur among them. He did not believe that his daughter had received a divine command. He did not know of her Heavenly visitants, nor would he have believed in them had he known. He thought that someway, somehow, she had become imbued with a wild fancy to be among men-at-arms; that, in consequence, she might become a worthless creature. The mere idea was agony. After a time he raised his head to ask brokenly,

"She told the Sire Captain that she would come again, Durand?"

"Yes, Jacques. She believes that she has been commanded so to do. She told you that; and whatever Jeanne thinks is the will of God that she will do."

"She deludes herself," spoke the father shortly, detecting the hint of faith underlying Lassois' tone. "Think you that the Governor would listen to her if she were to go to him again?"

Lassois reflected.

"No," he said presently. "I think he will not pay any attention to her."

Jacques brightened. "That is well," he nodded. "She shall not go if I can prevent it. She shall be guarded well. I shall see to it."

Thereafter a strict watch was kept upon Jeanne's every movement. One of her brothers, or Jacques D'Arc himself, was always with her. Instead of the tenderness that her father had always shown toward her there was now harshness and severity. Her mother too, though far from being cruel, was querulous and often spoke sharply to her. Isabeau knew her child's pure heart too well to believe that the girl was actuated by any but the highest motives. She did think, however, that the child's wits wandered, though the maiden performed her customary duties with care and exactness, and was worried and distressed in consequence.

In the village Jeanne found herself avoided. With the exception of Mengette and Hauviette her friends shunned her. The little hamlet was in a ferment of tattle. Whenever she appeared in any of the narrow streets heads were bent together and fingers pointed mockingly. Often the whispers reached her.

"There goes she who is to save France."

"Jeanne D'Arc says she is to lead the Dauphin to his anointing."

It was a trying time. Jeanne often shed tears over the jeers and taunts, but she wept in secret. Outwardly serene she submitted meekly to the espionage of her own people, and to the gibes of her neighbors. Had it not been for the consolation received from "Her Voices," life would have been unendurable.

"Be patient, Daughter of God," they said. "It will not be long. All will be well. Thy time will come soon."

"Your father grieves over you, Jeanne," spoke Isabeau one day after Jacques, stung beyond endurance by some remark he had heard against his daughter, was taking her severely to task. "He is cut to the heart that you should have gone to Vaucouleurs, and by your talk of the Dauphin. You must not be angry with him."

"I am not, mother," said the maiden sadly. "I know that he does not understand. Nor do you; but you will—in time." She loved her parents dearly, and excused their rigorousness because she knew that they did not believe in her inspiration. Often had she tried to explain matters, but they would not listen.

"We understand only too well, little one," responded Isabeau. "Jacques fears that you are bent upon seeking Sire Robert again. I have told him that you will not." She gave Jeanne a questioning glance as she finished speaking.

"I must, mother. It is commanded."

"Jeanne, give o'er such talk," exclaimed her mother sharply. "Where did you get

such notions? The neighbors say that you got your affliction at l'Arbre-des-Fées. That you have been seen there alone, bewreathing the tree with garlands, and that while so doing you met a wicked fairy who was your fate. Is it true?"

"If there be fairies, mother, I have never seen them, and not in years have I carried wreaths to l'Arbre-des-Fées. I used to go there on Laetare Sunday with the boys and girls, but I go no longer. As to flowers, mother; I carry them only to the altar of Our Lady of Belmont, or offer them here to the Saints."

"There is naught but good in that, so what makes the people talk so?" ejaculated the mother fretfully. "If you would but give up your talk of helping the Dauphin this tittle-tattle might be stopped. As it is, Jacques is distressed that you are so obdurate. He spoke to the Curé about exorcising you for the evil spirit."

"Mother, did my father do that?" exclaimed the girl, the tears springing to her eyes.

"Oh, it is not to be." The good dame herself had not approved this measure. She was in truth almost as much exercised over her husband as she was over her daughter. "Messire Guillaume Frontey would not hear of it, saying, that whatever might be the state of your wits your soul was as pure as a lily, because he confessed you almost daily. I advised Jacques—" Isabeau paused and subjected her daughter to a keen scrutiny, scarcely knowing how to proceed. She was in truth puzzled and a little awed by Jeanne's new attitude and demeanor. Presently she continued abruptly:

"I was married when I was your age, Jeanne."

"Were you, mother?" A slight smile stirred the corners of the girl's mouth. She saw what was coming.

"Yes; and Mengette hath been betrothed since Eastertide. She is to be married after the harvest."

"She told me, mother."

"And of all of the girls of your age you and Hauviette alone remain unplighted. Hauviette hath the excuse of being a little young, but you—you are sixteen, and quite old enough for a home and a husband, Jeanne."

"Mother!" There was such appeal in the maiden's voice that Isabeau, deeming it caused by the suddenness of the announcement, turned quickly with outstretched hands. "You must not talk of marriage to me. I shall remain unwed until my task is finished. I have vowed it to 'My Voices.'"

“Pouf, child! A home of your own, and a husband to look after will soon make you forget such notions, and so I told Jacques. Come now, be reasonable! I know some one who would gladly provide such a home. Let—”

“While France writhes in agony under the heel of the invader there shall be no marriage for me,” spoke Jeanne firmly, turning to leave the room.

“Nathless, whether you like it or not, you shall be married,” cried Isabeau, nettled by the girl’s words. “Your father has determined on it. Your plighted husband comes this evening to see you.”

Jeanne stood aghast. She had not dreamed that her parents would go so far. She stood for a moment without speaking, then she said quietly:

“My faith is plighted to none but my Lord. No man has it, nor shall have it until Messire’s mission is completed. ’Tis useless to speak of it.” Again she started to leave the room.

“Nathless, Colin de Greux will be here this evening,” exclaimed Isabeau thoroughly out of patience.

Colin? The merry nature that lay under Jeanne’s gravity surged upward, and a twinkle came into her eyes. All at once she laughed outright. Her mother glanced at her quickly, surprised and relieved.

“There! That’s better,” she said. “He will be here after supper, Jeanne.”

“It matters not, mother.”

Isabeau’s relief changed to perplexity at the words. There was something in the tone that did not satisfy her, but as it was nearer to an affirmative than she had hoped for she was fain to make the best of the matter; so made no further remark.

Colin de Greux came with the evening. He had grown tall with the years, and was not ill looking. He was still the same easy-going, lumbering, dull sort of fellow whose good opinion of himself rendered him impervious to rebuffs or coldness. He was not the youth that ordinarily Isabeau would have chosen for her child, but Jeanne had never encouraged attentions from the village lads, who now fought shy of her because of her extreme piety. Desperate diseases require desperate remedies. Jacques and Isabeau judged that marriage even with Colin was better than the fancies that filled their daughter’s mind. Beside, where another might be easily repulsed Colin could be induced to continue his wooing. Jeanne saw through this reasoning. She determined to make short shrift of Colin.

When the evening came, therefore, she took a hoe and went into the garden. Colin found her there industriously at work among the artichokes.

“How do you do, Jeanne?” he said sheepishly.

“Very well indeed, Colin.” Jeanne wielded the hoe vigorously, and gave no indication of quitting her seemingly absorbing task.

There came a silence. Had they been with the sheep on the uplands Colin would have been thoroughly at ease. As it was there was something about the maiden’s manner that disturbed his assurance. He had not been wont to feel so in her presence.

“It’s warm out here,” he ventured presently.

“Perchance you will find it cooler in the house,” intimated the girl sweetly.

“The family will be there,” he objected, looking suggestively at a bench under an apple tree. The youths and the maidens of Domremy always sat together when the suitor was approved by the parents. Jeanne’s cool, steadfast gaze disconcerted him.

“Why, yes, Colin, they will be there. You will find them all, I think. Jean and Pierre are with mother. Did you wish to see them?”

This roused Colin.

“No; I don’t wish to see them,” he said angrily. “I wish to talk to you, Jeanne D’Arc.”

“I am listening, Colin.” Jeanne quietly finished the hill which she was hoeing, then began on the next row, which was further removed from the youth, the tall heads of the artichokes nodding stiffly between them.

“But I can’t talk while you are hoeing,” he exclaimed. “And your father told me that I might talk to you.”

Jeanne laid down the hoe, and confronted him.

“Colin,” she said gravely, “mother told me that you would come, and why; but it is of no use. There are other girls in the village who would gladly marry you. I am resolved not to wed.”

“I don’t want any other girl for a wife but you, Jeanne. I have always liked you, and you know it. Besides, your father—”

“You cannot wed a girl against her will, Colin, and I shall not marry you. I am

talking plainly, so that you will understand, and not waste your time."

"But you shall," muttered the boy wrathfully. "Your father tells me that you shall."

Without a word Jeanne turned from him, and flitted swiftly into the church. It was her sanctuary, for Isabeau would not allow her devotions to be interrupted. Sulkily Colin re-entered the cottage.

Urged on by the girl's parents, he was thereafter a frequent visitor, but his wooing did not speed. Somehow all his pretty speeches, all his self-assurance shriveled into nothingness when he was face to face with Jeanne. And serenely the maiden went her way, ignoring alike her father's mandates, and her mother's entreaties to marry the lad.

So sped the days.

CHAPTER XII

A Worsted Suitor

> "*Whatsoever thing confronted her, whatsoever problem encountered her, whatsoever manners became her in novel situations, she understood in a moment. She solved the problem, she assumed the manners, she spoke and acted as the need of the moment required.*"
>
> Andrew Lang, "*The Maid of France.*"

So the days sped. Presently rumours of another and more startling nature ran through the valley. Interest in Jeanne D'Arc, her mission, and Colin's wooing paled before the news. It was noised that Antoine de Vergy, Governor of Champagne, had received a commission from the Duke of Bedford, Regent of France for Henry VI, to furnish forth men-at-arms for the purpose of bringing the castellany of Vaucouleurs into subjection to the English. The greatest alarm prevailed when the report was confirmed, that the Governor had in truth set forth. On the march, as was his custom, Antoine de Vergy laid waste all the villages of the loyal little wedge of territory with fire and sword. Domremy with its adjoining village of Greux lay in the southern part of the castellany, between Bar and Champagne, and was therefore directly in the line of attack. Threatened again with a disaster with which they were only too well acquainted the folk of the two villages met in solemn conclave to determine what was to be done.

Men, women and children were in the assembly that had gathered before the little church to discuss the situation; their pale faces showing plainly that they realized to the full the calamity that menaced them. Life, liberty and property were all at stake, for everything would be swept away by the ravaging Antoine. The very imminence of the danger rendered them calm, but it was the calmness of despair. Resistance to the force that was with Antoine was out of the question, so what could they do?

“And why not retire to the Castle of the Island, my children?” queried Messire Guillaume Frontey, Curé of Domremy. “Surely, it hath proved a good refuge in other times of need. Is it not a secure stronghold?”

“We fear not, father,” responded a peasant. “Sire Antoine boasts that we can not hold it against him, as he knows of a secret passage whereby he can obtain entrance when he so chooses. We have made search for the passageway, but we cannot find it; though it is known to exist, for there be some in the village who have heard of it. Against others we can hold the castle; against him we fear to try.”

“Then may Our Lady preserve ye, my children,” exclaimed the priest solemnly. “What can be done?”

“This,” cried Jacques D’Arc, suddenly elbowing his way through the people until he stood by the Curé’s side in full view of every one. “This, father, and friends: let us, as we fear to try the castle, gather our furniture in carts; then, driving our cattle and sheep before us, go to Neufchâteau which, being a town of Lorraine, will not be attacked. As you know, though it be a Burgundian belonging, its sympathies are with the Armagnacs.”

“That’s it, Jacques!” “Well said!” came from the villagers in a chorus of approval. “When shall we go?”

“Better to-day than to-morrow, friends,” shouted Jacques. “Better now than later. We know not when they will be upon us.”

There were cries of, “Right, Jacques!” followed by a hasty dispersal of the people to gather up their goods and cattle. A scene of disorder and confusion ensued as men and boys ran to the fields for the flocks and herds, which were quickly driven into the highroad, and women and girls stripped their linen chests and cupboards, and hurriedly piled their furnishings into ox carts.

Isabeau was weeping as she worked, for she might find the cottage burned and the village devastated upon her return. She had always known war. Her mother and her mother’s mother had known it. For ninety-one years it had raged, and the end was not yet. France was a wreck, a ruin, a desolation. Throughout the land there was nothing but pillage, robbery, murder, cruel tyranny, the burning of churches and abbeys, and the perpetration of horrible crimes. Seeing her grief Jeanne went to her mother, and put her arms about her.

“Be not so sorrowful, mother,” she said. “Before many years are sped the war will have come to an end. And this is the last time that you will have to flee from

the cottage."

Isabeau brushed away her tears and looked at her daughter steadily. "Why do you speak so, Jeanne?" she asked. "It is as though you knew."

"Yes, mother; I know. It will be as I say. And now let's get the rest of the furniture in the cart. Father grows impatient."

Curiously enough, Isabeau was comforted. She dried her eyes and gave way to grief no more. Jacques came in and seeing Jeanne so helpful, bringing order out of the chaos about her, spoke gently to her in quite his old tender manner. So that Jeanne's heart was lighter than it had been since her return from Bury le Petit. The animals were in the highroad, the ox carts were drawn up behind them laden with the belongings of the villagers, the women and children stood ready, waiting for the word of departure to be given, to take up the line of march to Neufchâteau, when they were thrown into the greatest confusion by the advent of a man-at-arms who rode among them at speed, crying:

"March! March while there is time. Vaucouleurs is attacked, and Sire Antoine hath started a body of men this way."

He was gone before the startled villagers had time to question him. For a time the greatest excitement prevailed, but something like order was restored at length, and with lingering, despairing looks at the homes they were abandoning the village folk started toward Neufchâteau, their market town, lying five miles to the southward of Domremy. The day was excessively warm, and wearily the village folk followed the road through fields of wheat and rye, up the vine clad hills to the town. There were many of them, and their chattels were numerous, but the citizens received them cordially and lodged them as best they could.

Jacques conducted his family at once to the inn kept by a worthy woman, La Rousse by name, whom he knew. The move from Domremy had been made none too soon, for Antoine de Vergy's men swept into the village but a few hours after the departure of its inhabitants, and both Domremy and Greux were laid waste.

To Jeanne the days that followed were tranquil and the happiest that she had known for a long time. As in Domremy she drove her father's beasts to the fields, and kept his flocks. She also helped La Rousse about the household duties, greatly to the good dame's satisfaction, and when she was not helping her hostess, or tending the cattle she passed all her time in church.

During the first few days of the stay in the market town Jeanne saw Colin

frequently, but greatly to her relief he forbore to press his attentions upon her. Then she saw him no longer, and rejoiced thereat. Her thanksgiving was of short duration.

Dinner was over in the common room of the inn one day, and the guests—not numerous as it chanced—had broken up into groups; some lingering at the board where they had eaten, others clustering at small tables scattered about the rush strewn room. The great chamber, with its dusky walls and blackened beams would have looked gloomy enough on a dark day, but the heat and bright sunshine of midsummer made it seem cool and restful.

In the nook formed by the outer angle of the huge projecting chimney, and so somewhat in the shadow, sat Jeanne waiting for the guests to leave the board that she might clear away the dinner. Her father and a man with whom he was conversing were the last ones to rise, and at once the girl came forward to begin her task. As she did so there came the sound of a dagger hilt beating upon the outside door at the further end of the room. Before Jeanne could reach it to open it the heavy door swung open quickly as though thrust inward by a strong hasty hand, and there entered a man garbed in priest's raiment. Reverent always in her attitude toward priests the maiden bowed low before him.

"Is it your pleasure to have dinner, messire?" she asked when she had risen from her obeisance.

"In due time, my child," he replied. "But first, I would speak with a pucelle who is here. One Jeanne, daughter of Jacques D'Arc."

"I am she," spoke the maiden in astonishment. "What would you of me, messire?"

At this juncture Isabeau, accompanied by La Rousse, entered the room. The latter hastened forward to welcome the newcomer when she paused, arrested by his words:

"I come from the Bishop of Toul, Judge of the Ecclesiastical Court having jurisdiction over Domremy and Greux. He cites thee, Jeanne, daughter of Jacques D'Arc, to appear before him to show cause why thou dost not fulfill thy plighted troth to Colin de Greux."

Throughout the long chamber there was a stir and murmur at the words, for Jeanne had become liked and esteemed by the guests, who had heard something of Colin's wooing. La Rousse went to her in quick sympathy, for the girl stood dumbfounded.

So this was what Colin had been about in his absence? And her parents? Were they too concerned in the matter? She turned and looked at them searchingly. Isabeau could not meet her daughter's eyes, but Jacques met her glance steadily. Long father and daughter gazed into each other's eyes; Jeanne, with sorrowful reproach; Jacques with grim determination. Then slowly the girl turned again to the priest.

"When does messire, the bishop, wish to see me?" she asked.

"The second day from now, pucelle. If upon that day cause is not shown why thy pledge to Colin should not be kept the judge will deem that the troth stands, and that thy faith will be redeemed at once."

Jeanne inclined her head deeply in acknowledgment, and started to leave the room. Isabeau ran to her.

"It is for thy good, little one. Now will you be ever near us. And Colin will make a kind husband."

So spake Isabeau, but Jeanne made no reply. As she passed through the door she heard her mother say:

"She is as good as married, Jacques. She is too shy, too gentle to protest against it. She will do whatever the bishop decides without question."

"Be not too sure of that," spoke La Rousse before Jacques could reply. "These gentle maids have a way of turning at times, and Jeanne doth not lack spirit."

"She hath ever been obedient, and will be now," said Jacques confidently. "Save for this wild fancy of going to the Dauphin she hath ever been most dutiful."

"Sometimes the gentlest maid will turn if pressed too hard," repeated La Rousse.

And this was exactly what was happening. Jeanne was filled with sorrow that her parents should uphold Colin in trying to force her into an unwelcome marriage. For a brief time despair gripped her, for it was foreign to her nature and training to protest against those in authority over her, and should the judge sustain Colin it would mean the end of her mission. And then her soul rose up against it.

"I will not be forced into this marriage," she decided suddenly. "I will go to Toul, and tell messire, the bishop, the truth of the matter. I will go."

"Go, Daughter of God, and fear naught," came the sweet tones of "Her Voices." "Fear naught, for we will aid thee."

Before the morning broke Jeanne rose to prepare for her journey. She knew that

at this time the great gates of the archway leading into the courtyard of the inn would be closed, but there was a door, a small one used privately by La Rousse, that opened directly into the street. It was at the back of the inn, and unobserved Jeanne reached it, and passed out. It was ten leagues from Neufchâteau to Toul, and thirty miles was a long journey for a young girl to undertake alone and on foot. Also the distance lay back through the district over which Antoine de Vergy's men had swept with fire and sword. Roving bands of armed men might be encountered, but Jeanne's gentle nature had attained the courage of desperation. She feared the marriage more than aught else, and were the action not protested there would be no evading it. So, upheld by the knowledge that her saints were with her, and an innocence that was heroic, she made the journey. In perfect safety she came at last in the dusk of the evening to Toul in Lorraine, footsore and weary, but with a heart serene and peaceful.

There were many churches in the old town, and, as was her custom, she at once sought a chapel and prostrated herself before the image of the Virgin Mother. Her orisons ended, she went forth in search of food and lodging. Jeanne being a peasant girl had not the wherewithal to pay her way, and so could not go to an inn. But when the condition of the land was such that townspeople themselves might become refugees should their towns be overcome by an enemy its denizens welcomed wayfarers warmly. So Jeanne soon found shelter with humble folk, and, as she was never idle wherever she might be, she gladdened the heart of the dame by helping about the house and spinning. And the next morning she went to the law courts.

Colin was already in the chapel, where the bishop was sitting. His self-satisfied expression gave place to one of surprise at sight of Jeanne, for he had supposed that she would not appear to contest the action. There were many of the Domremy people present also, brought hither as Colin's witnesses.

Colin declared that Jeanne had been betrothed to him since childhood, and the maiden was much amazed when the villagers affirmed after him that they knew such an engagement existed. After they had spoken the bishop turned to the girl kindly and said:

"And where is thy counsel, my child?"

"I have none, messire." Jeanne raised her grave eyes to the kind ones bent upon her. Eyes that were alight with purity and truthfulness. "I need none. I have but to speak the truth; have I not?"

"That is all; but—" The judge paused and regarded the slender maiden

attentively. She was unlike a peasant maid, both in bearing and appearance. Winning and beautiful in the fresh bloom of young maidenhood, she had not the manner of a maiden who would plight her word, and then disregard it. “Proceed, advocate,” he said suddenly. “Let her take the oath. Swear, my child, with both hands upon the Gospels, that you will answer true to the questions that will be asked you.”

And kneeling before him Jeanne laid her small hands upon the missal, and said simply:

“I swear, messire.”

Then she answered concerning her name, her country, her parents, her godfathers and godmothers.

“And now, my child, tell me about this promise of marriage to Colin de Greux,” spoke the bishop.

“Messire, I never promised to marry him,” she answered earnestly. “I have plighted my faith to no man.”

“Have you witnesses to prove this?”

“There are my friends and neighbors, messire. They will answer for this.”

The judge leaned forward quickly.

“They have spoken against you, child. Didst not hear them say that they knew of your engagement to Colin?”

“Yes, messire; but I would question them.”

“Say on,” he said. “It is your right.”

So, one by one, they were recalled to the stand while Jeanne asked of each three questions:

Had he seen her at any of the dances or merry-makings with Colin?

Had he seen her at church, or any public place with Colin?

Had he ever heard her, Jeanne, speak of being engaged to Colin?

To these questions the witnesses were obliged to answer in the negative.

“Messire, would I not, were I betrothed to this man, go abroad with him to church, to dances, or to other public places?”

“It would seem so, my child; but, unless there were cause why should he take

this action?”

“I have ever, messire, found my greatest happiness in going to church, and in prayer. For this reason I have received a command from my Lord, the King of Heaven, to perform a certain task. In pursuance of that command I went to Sire Robert de Baudricourt of Vaucouleurs to deliver to him a message. Because of this journey my parents, who do not believe in my mission, thought that my senses were wandering, and conceived the idea that to cure my fancies a marriage would be a good thing.

“Therefore, with their encouragement Colin came. Messire, the first time that he did so I told him that it was of no use, for marry him I would not. Neither him nor another. Did I not, Colin?”

She turned to the youth so quickly, asking the question with such abruptness, gazing steadily at him the while, that Colin, taken unawares, nodded affirmation unthinkingly. The bishop spoke instantly:

“Colin de Greux,” said he with sternness, “this maiden speaks with the sound of truth. It is our opinion that she hath given no promise. Therefore, do you make oath again, and say whether it was from this maiden, or from her parents that you received her faith.”

“It was from her parents,” confessed the youth sullenly.

“And not from the maid at all?”

“No, messire.”

“The girl hath then plighted no faith to you, and action against her is dismissed. You, young man, and her parents also would do well to let the marvellous child alone. The damsel is simple, good and pious. Nor do I find that her wits wander, for without advocate, or witnesses she hath established her case. Go in peace.”

Jeanne thanked him with tears, and with full heart returned to her abiding place. She had worsted Colin, and set at naught her parents’ wishes by so doing. How would they receive her?

Filled with this thought she trudged the thirty miles back to Neufchâteau.

CHAPTER XIII

FAREWELL TO HOME

"I am by birth a shepherd's daughter,

My wit untrained in any kind of art.

Heaven, and our Lady gracious, hath it pleased

To shine on my contemptible estate: ...

God's mother deigned to appear to me;

And, in a vision full of majesty,

Willed me to leave my base vocation,

And free my country from calamity."

SHAKESPEARE, *First Part*, "*Henry Sixth.*"

To Jeanne's surprise she was welcomed warmly. Certain of the Domremy people who had been Colin's witnesses preceded her into Neufchâteau, and by the time she arrived all the village folk were cognizant of what had occurred. A reaction in her favor had set in; for, not only had she conducted her case without any aid whatsoever, but the bishop had commended her, and had spoken sharply to Colin, who now became the laughing stock of his neighbors. All the world loves a lover, but it has only contempt for the suitor who brings ridicule upon either himself or his beloved.

Isabeau folded her daughter in her arms, holding her close to her heart and shuddering at the thought of the perilous journey the child had made rather than submit to an unwelcome marriage; while Jacques, moved out of his usual

taciturnity, spoke to her with something of pride in his tones. For the first time it occurred to these good people that their daughter differed from other village maidens, and therefore required dissimilar treatment. More than once Jeanne found her parents regarding her with curious, puzzled looks, as though they wondered if she were in very truth their daughter.

La Rousse openly rejoiced at the outcome of the affair, and wished the maiden to remain with her indefinitely. But to this neither Jeanne or her parents would consent. And, after a fortnight's stay, the family returned to Domremy.

Antoine de Vergy had done the work of despoliation thoroughly. Incensed because the villeins had fled with their cattle and belongings, thereby depriving him of booty and ransom which he could not exact from the chief men of the village by reason of their flight, he had ravaged and burned with more than his usual fury. The crops were entirely destroyed; the monastery, once as proud as a fortress with its square watchman's tower, was now nothing but a heap of blackened ruins; the church also was burned, so that the Domremy folk must needs go to the church at Greux to hear mass; and but few cottages were left standing. But the people had their flocks and herds, and their house furnishings; then too it was summer; so, bravely, with the patience engendered by long suffering they set to work once more to rebuild, rethatch, and repair their homes. As before, they lived in the castle while the work went on.

A veritable reign of terror was in all the region about. The misery and discomfort were inconceivable; yet somehow life went on. So the Summer waned, and with the first days of Autumn came the dire intelligence that Orléans, the strong independent old city sometimes called the key of the Loire, was besieged by the English. Should it fall France could not be saved.

The English acted badly in laying siege to the town of Orléans, for it belonged to Duke Charles, who had been a prisoner in their hands since the battle of Agincourt. Having possession of his body they ought to have respected his property, as was the custom. This conduct was regarded as unprecedented treachery, and Domremy buzzed with talk as pilgrims related tales of what was occurring. The English had built, it was said, fortified towers around the city, the very heart of France; and entrenched themselves there in great strength. The Tourelles were taken already, and the city was so invested that its inhabitants were starving.

"Such a thing is unheard of," declared Jacques in the privacy of the cottage. "It is a deed unknown among the very Saracens. Who could guess that lords and

knights of the Christian faith, holding captive the gentle Duke of Orléans, would besiege his own city? The leaguer is a great villainy."

"The leaguer is a great villainy." Jeanne repeated the words to herself, for the tidings of the siege were of the saddest to her. Her attachment to all the Royal House was strong, and especially so to the captive poet. Sorrowfully she sought comfort from her "Voices" who loved the Land of the Lilies.

"Have no fear, Daughter of God," they said consolingly. "Orléans shall be delivered, and by thee. Thy time is at hand. Go into France, and raise the siege which is being made before the city. Go, Daughter of God. Go!"

So they urged continually. But again the valley was shrouded in the cold white garb of winter, and still there seemed no way for her to leave the village. Over her girl heart hung the dread of leaving home and friends, though never once did she falter in her purpose. She was steadfast to that. The yoke of obedience always strong in the mind of a French maiden would not permit her lightly to disobey her parents. Jeanne was much troubled over it. They would never give consent. If she went she must go without it. No longer did they keep watch over her. Jacques had been more considerate of his daughter since she had shown herself capable of such resistance as she had given against Colin. Then too the raid of de Vergy's men-at-arms, the flight to Neufchâteau with the after effects, and now the consternation felt by all loyal Frenchmen over the news of Orléans' plight; these things had driven all thought of Jeanne's fancy from their minds. She had been so dutiful, had submitted so sweetly to the espionage, and had shown no disposition to return to Vaucouleurs even though the journey to Toul had provided opportunity for it had she been so minded, that the parents no longer regarded such a journey as a possibility. Jeanne knew all this.

But they knew that she still had her purpose in mind, for the maiden had talked freely about it. Jeanne knew what she had to do, and longed to be about it. Again and again she sought help from her "Voices." They became peremptory in their commands, absolving her from the obedience due her parents. God's command was higher, and this she must obey. So, certain as to her mission, she was inaccessible either to remonstrance or appeal. Now she looked about for means to accomplish her purpose.

The Old Year glided into the vale of discarded years, and the New Year ushered in January of 1429, which brought Jeanne's seventeenth birthday. The sixth was cold and stormy, but if it was bleak and wintry without, within the cottage it was cheery and comfortable. The family gathered around a great fire of faggots on

the afternoon of that day, each one busied with homely, needful work. Jacques and his eldest son, Jacquemin, were mending harness; Jean and Pierre were shelling corn against the next feed of the cattle; little Catherine, as she was still called, was polishing the copper and pewter on the dresser, while Jeanne and her mother sewed and spun alternately. All at once the crunching of wheels on the frosty snow was heard, followed shortly by a loud “Hallo!” as a vehicle stopped before the door. Jacques laid down his work with an exclamation.

“Now who can it be that fares forth in such weather to go visiting?” he said. “Open the door, Pierre, and see who is there.”

But Jeanne was already at the door before her father had finished speaking, and opened it wide to the visitor. She gave an ejaculation of joy as she saw who stood without.

“Come in, Uncle Durand,” she said. “You look cold.”

“And feel also, ma mie.” Lassois made at once for the great fire. “Jacques, man, you have cause to be thankful that you need not fare from the fireside on such a day as this. Pierre, will you see to the oxen? The poor brutes are well nigh frozen, and so am I.”

“Ye look it, Durand,” spoke Jacques. “There! come nearer to the fire. Isabeau, a hot drink will warm his vitals. Welcome, Lassois, welcome! ’Tis a cold day.”

“It is,” agreed Durand, rubbing his hands before the blaze.

“And how is Aveline?” asked Isabeau, as she placed a hot drink before him.

“She is not well, Isabeau, and the baby is peevish. It is that that brings me here to-day. Her father hath been taken with a distemper, and her mother is all taken up in looking after him. So Aveline wishes that Jeanne might come to stay for a short time. Will you let her go, Jacques?”

Jeanne listened anxiously for her father’s answer. She did not believe that he would give consent. Indeed Jacques was silent a long time before he made reply, but at length he said slowly:

“I see no harm in her going, Lassois. It hath been dreary here this winter, and the work heavy. She may go and stay with you three weeks, since Aveline is ailing. That is, if her mother is willing.”

“Why, yes,” spoke Isabeau quickly. “With a young baby Aveline needs some one with her to look after things. And it will give Jeanne a chance to hear the news. I doubt not but that Aveline will have much to tell her that will be of interest.”

Jeanne was amazed at the readiness with which the consent was given. She had not thought they would let her go, and it caused her wonder. But certainly they could not suppose that she would seek Robert de Baudricourt a second time, or perhaps Jacques relied upon Sire Robert's good sense to send her home if she should seek him. So it was arranged that the maiden should return with Lassois to Bury le Petit the next day.

There was little sleep for the young girl that night. She knew that it was the last time that she would ever be in her own home, for she was resolved to go to Vaucouleurs as soon as Aveline was better. In this she would deliberately disobey her parents, but there was no other way.

"I would rather be torn apart by wild horses than go against their wishes," she said to herself with tears. "But God commands it, and I must go."

Her destiny called, and she followed the summons. All earthly ties must be subservient to her great purpose. Suffering France must be relieved, and it was her mission to give the aid.

Her time had come.

Therefore her good-byes to her parents, brothers, and little sister were very tender. She dared not speak of her mission, and if her loved ones noticed the tenderness of farewells that so short an absence did not seem to warrant they knew not the reason for them. So Jeanne passed from her father's house, and climbed into the cart.

Mengette, whose home was near by, was at the window as Lassois' cart passed. Jeanne waved to her, crying:

"Good-by, Mengette. God bless thee."

All through the village she saw faces of friends and neighbors at the windows, or on their doorsteps, and bade them farewell. But as she drew near the home of Hauviette, and Lassois stopped for her to call to her friend, Jeanne shook her head.

"I can not speak to her, uncle," she said chokingly. "I dare not. My heart would fail me, for I love her too dearly to say good-by."

At Greux as they passed through she saw Colin in one of the narrow streets. Jeanne leaned out of the cart to call to him.

"Good-by, Colin," she said. "God give you good fortune."

“Where are you going?” spoke the youth shamefacedly. He had avoided Jeanne since the meeting at Toul.

“I go to Vaucouleurs,” she dared to say. “Good-by.”

“To Vaucouleurs?” repeated Lassois, turning to look at her as they left Colin behind. “But Aveline, Jeanne?”

“Did you think that I would leave her while she has need of me, Uncle Durand?” asked the maiden reproachfully.

“No, Jeanne; I knew that you would not. ’Twas a second only that I doubted.” Durand swung his goad over the oxen’s backs as he spoke, and the beasts swung into a trot.

But Jeanne turned for a last look at the valley she was leaving forever. Long she gazed at the red roofs of the village; at the ice bound river with its rushes rimed with frost; at the forest, bare and leafless; at the snow covered hills, and white shrouded meadows; at all the familiar objects hallowed by association. Gazed until her tear-blinded eyes would permit her to look no more.

And so down the Valley of Colors for the last time passed Jeanne D’Arc.

CHAPTER XIV

VICTORY OVER DOUBTING HEARTS

"*Yet the true Poetry—herself, like thee,*

Childlike; herself, like thee, a shepherd maid—

Gives thee her birthright of Divinity,

And lifts unto the stars thy starry shade.

Thy brows receive the aureole of her sky;

The Heart created thee—thou canst not die."

SCHILLER, "*The Maid of Orléans.*"

Jeanne stayed at her uncle's house with Aveline until the latter was quite well. Then, there being nothing further to hinder, she asked Lassois to take her to Vaucouleurs.

"Jacques won't like it, Jeanne," feebly remonstrated Durand, knowing full well that notwithstanding the fact he would do as his niece wished. "He didn't before, you know; and neither did Isabeau."

"I must go, Uncle Durand. Though I had a hundred fathers, or a hundred mothers, though I were the daughter of a King, I still should go. It is commanded."

Durand made no further objection, though he knew that both Jacques and Isabeau would censure him for yielding to her. He saw that Jeanne was not to be turned from her purpose, so made ready for the journey. Perhaps, like Jacques, he relied on the common sense of the Sire Robert to send the girl home, for he was cheerful enough when presently they were on their way to Vaucouleurs.

“You will return with me, Jeanne? This visit is for the day only, is it not?”

“No, uncle. I shall stay in Vaucouleurs until the Sire Captain gives me men-at-arms to take me to the Dauphin.”

“And if he does not? What then?”

“He will in time, Uncle Durand. My Voices have said so,” responded the maiden confidently.

Lassois sat for a time without speaking. There was as much awe as affection in the regard he bore his young kinswoman, and when she wore a look of exaltation as on this morning he felt as he did at the ringing of the angelus. But there was a practical side to the affair to be looked after as well as a spiritual, and he wished to be able to put the best face possible on the matter before Jacques; so after a little he queried:

“And where shall you bide at Vaucouleurs? Have you thought of that?”

“Why, yes, uncle. Mother has a friend, one Catherine le Royer, who lives in the town. I shall go to her. I am sure that she will give me welcome for mother’s sake.”

“Now that is well,” spoke Lassois in relieved tones. “I know Catherine, and her husband also. Henri le Royer, the wheelwright, he is. Good people they are, and pious.”

By this time they had reached the little walled town nestling among the low hills of the valley, and again Jeanne passed up the steep slopes of the hill upon which the castle stood.

As before when she had gone to him Robert de Baudricourt sat at meat with his captains. There was no smile on his face this time, however, when, in answer to the request that they might speak with him Jeanne and her uncle were ushered into the great dining hall. No smile, though Lassois was awkward and ill at ease, and Jeanne still wore the red homespun dress, and the village coif of the peasant. There was not the least flicker of amusement in his countenance as he said:

“Well, my little maid, what brings thee here this time?”

Jeanne courtesied low before she replied:

“My Lord Captain, know that God has commanded me many times to go to the gentle Dauphin, who must be and who is the true King of France, that he shall grant me men-at-arms with whom I shall raise the siege at Orléans, and take him

to his anointing at Reims. And you, Sire Captain, must send or take me to him. It is commanded."

For a long time Robert de Baudricourt sat silent, regarding the maiden with a troubled look. She was so earnest, was evidently so sincere in her demand, that he was perplexed. Was she inspired, or possessed? That was what his expression said as he gazed at her. If inspired her aid was not to be despised. If possessed she ought to be dealt with forthwith. In truth he knew not what to say to her. His own situation was far from pleasant. When Antoine de Vergy had raged through the valley the previous Summer he had infested the town of Vaucouleurs, and de Baudricourt had been obliged to yield it to him, though he had not yet given possession.

THERE WAS NO SMILE ON HIS FACE

It was one of those capitulations, common in those days, by which the Commander of a garrison promised to surrender his fortress by the end of a given time. This promise, however, ceased to be valid should the fortress be relieved before the day fixed for its surrender. So Sire Robert's own condition was acute, and if the Dauphin were not in a position to come to his relief he himself would be caught in the coils of the enemy. Any promise of deliverance, however humble, was not to be treated lightly. Therefore, if he did not believe in Jeanne's announcement he at least listened to it readily. At length he said:

"This matter should be given some thought, my little maid. Where do you bide? I would speak with you further concerning this."

There was a stir of surprise among his men, for they noted with amazement that the Captain addressed the maiden as an equal.

"With Catherine le Royer, the wheelwright's wife, messire," answered Jeanne.

"I will speak with you again," repeated Sire Robert. And Jeanne and Lassois, understanding that the interview was over for this time, withdrew.

Catherine and Henri le Royer were folk of Jeanne's own humble station. The good dame welcomed the girl warmly, at first for her mother's sake and then for her own. Jeanne had ever a way with women and girls, and but few days had elapsed ere she had completely won the heart of her hostess by her gentle ways,

her skill in sewing and spinning, and her earnest faith. Together they attended mass at the parish church, spun, sewed, or busied themselves about the house. Sometimes Jeanne climbed the hill to the royal chapel which adjoined the Governor's castle, for there was a wonderful image of the Virgin in the crypt of Saint Mary's before which she loved to pray.

News of her mission, the tidings that a young girl was come, who was appointed by God to save France spread through the town and surrounding country. The people flocked to see her, and those who came believed, won by her earnestness and simple sincerity. They were in no uncertainty at all as to her mission. A little mob hung about the cottage door to see her come and go, chiefly to church. The saying, "France lost by a woman shall be restored by a maid from the Marches of Lorraine," was on every lip. And the excitement grew.

Again and again Jeanne sought the Governor, saying:

"I must to the gentle Dauphin. It is the will of Messire, the King of Heaven, that I should wend to the gentle Dauphin. I am sent by the King of Heaven. I must go even if I go on my knees. My Lord Captain, in God's name, send me to the gentle Dauphin."

But Sire Robert,—though he listened to her readily enough, and, impressed in spite of himself by her intense fervour, perceived a certain seriousness in the business,—remained deaf to her pleadings. He could not believe. What, a young girl fair and lovely as was this peasant maid to deliver France? The thing was absurd; and yet—he dared not send her home lest after all there might be truth in what she claimed. And so the matter rested.

The days dawned and waned, and still the men-at-arms were not provided. Jeanne shed bitter tears over the delay. She believed so implicitly in her Voices that she could not understand why others did not have the same faith. And the fame of her grew and spread, going out into the country even beyond the valley.

One day, as she was on her way to mass, a young man-at-arms pushed his way through the crowd which had gathered to see her to have a word with the wonderful peasant maid.

“Well, ma mie,” he said banteringly, “what are you doing here? Must the King be driven from his Kingdom, and we all turn English?”

“I came hither to the King’s territory, messire, to speak with Sire Robert that he may take me, or cause me to be taken to the Dauphin; but he heeds neither me nor my words. Notwithstanding, ere mid-Lent I must be before the Dauphin, were I in going to wear my legs to my knees.”

The reply was given with such intent seriousness that the young knight was impressed, and he spoke more gently:

“Know you not, maiden, that Louis, the little son of Charles, hath just been betrothed to the infant daughter of the King of Scotland? King James is to send Madame Margaret to France with an army of six thousand men before Whitsunday, which, as you know, is in May. What need, therefore, is there for you, a young girl, to go to the Dauphin?”

“I must go to the Dauphin, messire; for no one in the world, no king or duke or daughter of the King of Scotland[6] can restore the realm of France. In me alone is help, albeit for my part, I would far rather be spinning by my poor mother’s side, for this life is not to my liking. But I must go, and so I will, for it is Messire’s command that I should go.”

“Who is Messire?” asked he.

“He is God,” she answered.

The young man was moved. He stretched out his hands suddenly as though he believed in spite of himself, and laid his hands between hers.

“There!” said he. “I, Jean de Novelonpont, commonly called Jean de Metz, pledge you my word, knightly fashion, my hands in your hands in token of fealty, that God helping me I will take you to the King.”

“You will, messire?” cried Jeanne joyfully.

“On my word of honour I promise it. When will you set forth?”

“This hour is better than to-morrow; to-morrow is better than after to-morrow,” she told him, her face illumined with smiles. It was the first gleam of hope that had lightened the weary days of waiting.

“I will make preparations at once,” he said, moved by her zeal and by her strong sense of the necessity of immediate operations. Then as he started to leave her, he turned.

“Would you travel in that garb, pucelle?”[7] he asked hesitatingly.

Jeanne smiled, divining the difficulties he foresaw were she to retain her woman’s garb in travelling. She had already given the matter thought, and perceived that if she were to live among soldiers she must change the dress she wore. So she answered promptly:

“I will willingly dress as a man. In truth, it would be more seemly.”

De Metz nodded approval, and went his way. After this, because joys like sorrows come not singly, one after another began to believe in her. In a few days another man-at-arms came to her. He was an older man than de Metz and a graver. At his salutation Jeanne looked at him intently.

“Have I not seen you somewhere, messire?” she asked.

“I think not,” he answered lightly. “Methinks I should not have forgotten it had we ever met. Yet stay!” bending a keen glance upon her. “Are not you the little maid who dressed my wounded arm at your father’s house in Domremy?”

“It may be, messire.”

“It is,” he affirmed. “The wound healed quickly, for the treatment was good. So you are that little maid? And now you have come here with a mission? Tell me of it, pucelle. Can you in very truth do as you say: raise the siege of Orléans, and bring the King to his anointing?”

“Not I, messire; but my Lord, the King of Heaven, will do it through me. I am but his humble instrument.”

“Tell me of it,” he said again. “I have talked with Jean de Metz, but I would hear of it from you.”

There was no need for reserve concerning her mission, so Jeanne talked of it freely to him. Indeed she did so to whomsoever wished to hear about it. And when she had made an end of the telling Bertrand de Poulengy placed his hands

in hers as de Metz had done, and pledged her fealty, knightly fashion.

But though the men-at-arms were willing to set forth at once there was still delay; for, being in service with Sire Robert, they could not leave without his consent. Jeanne became impatient, knowing that Orléans could not hold out forever. She was cast down, not through want of faith in her divine mission, but because of the obstacles which unbelieving men like Baudricourt were putting in her way.

“In God’s name, gentle Robert,” she cried one day, meeting him at the foot of the hill where his castle stood, “you are too slow about sending me. This day hath a great disaster happened to the Dauphin. Send me quickly lest a worse befall him.”

“A disaster hath befallen the Dauphin?” exclaimed Sire Robert. “How could you know that a disaster hath befallen him to-day?”

“My Voices have told me,” she made answer. “A battle hath been lost near Orléans. Sire Robert, I must be sent to him.”

“I will see, I will see,” he said, looking troubled. “If this be true, as you have said, then shall you go to him. But is it by evil or by good spirits that you speak?”

Without waiting for a reply he left her abruptly. As Jeanne sat spinning with Catherine le Royer the next morning she was greatly surprised when the door opened suddenly, and the Governor himself, accompanied by Jean Fournier, the parish priest, entered. At a sign from Sire Robert, Catherine quitted the room, and Jeanne was left with the two men. The priest immediately put on his stole, and pronounced some Latin words:

“If thou be evil, away with thee; if thou be good, draw nigh.” With this he sprinkled holy water about the room, and upon her.

Jeanne was hurt when she heard the words, for it was the formula used for exorcism. It was believed that if the village maiden were possessed of evil spirits they would be driven away. Having recited the formula and sprinkled holy water the priest expected, if the girl were possessed, to see her struggle and writhe in the effort to take flight. But there was nothing suspicious in Jeanne’s attitude. There was no wild agitation or frenzy. She had fallen on her knees when the priest put on his stole, and now anxiously, entreatingly, she dragged herself to him. Messire Jean Fournier stretched forth his hand in benediction over her.

“Whatever be the spirit with which she is filled, it is naught of evil,” he said to

Robert de Baudricourt.

With this the two men left the cottage as abruptly as they had entered it. Jeanne burst into tears, and so Catherine found her.

“Messire Jean should not have used me so,” sobbed the maiden as she related the happening to her hostess. “I have confessed to him daily since I came to Vaucouleurs, and he should have known what manner of girl I was.”

“There, there, little one,” soothed Catherine, tenderly. “He but did it to please the Sire Captain. Perchance now that the gentle Robert knows that evil spirits do not possess thee, he will give thee aid.”

The exorcism did in truth help Jeanne’s cause with the Governor. If the young girl were not possessed of evil it followed naturally that the power in her must be good; therefore he was at last willing to aid her. Secretly he had already sent a messenger to the King telling of the maiden, her mission, her saintly way of living, and asking that he might send her to him. He but waited the consent of Charles before starting Jeanne on her journey. This she did not learn until later.

Meantime she was restless. She longed to be about her work, and there seemed naught but hindrances. She felt that she must start, for she must be with the Dauphin by mid-Lent, and the time was short. One day Lassois came to see how she was, and also to bring news of her parents; for Jeanne had sent them a letter praying for their forgiveness and blessing. As she could neither read nor write the Curé had written it for her, and he had added details of the life she was living, her good deeds, her saintly ways, and aught else that he thought would set their minds at rest concerning her. Now she listened eagerly as Durand told her how the letter had been received.

“Jacques has heard a great deal about you from the people, Jeanne. Know you not that the whole countryside is talking of you? He has known all along how you were living, and what you were doing. He is still not reconciled to your leaving home, but he said that so long as you lived a good life you had his blessing and forgiveness. Isabeau wept when she heard the letter, but she sends love, and prays you to make short work of the matter that you may soon be home again.”

“Would that I might, Uncle Durand,” groaned the girl. “But there seems naught but hindrance and delay. I should like to be at home with mother; if my work were done I could be. The time is so short. I can not, I must not wait longer.” She bowed her head and wept. Presently she dashed away the tears and turned to Durand as though an idea had come to her: “Uncle Durand,” she cried, “Will you

take me into France?”

“You mean to walk there, Jeanne?” he asked amazed. “’Tis said to be all of a hundred and fifty leagues to where the Dauphin bides at Chinon.”

“Even so, I must go. If Sire Robert will not give me men-at-arms I must go without them. Will you go with me?”

“Yes,” he assented readily. Had Jeanne not been so preoccupied she would have seen the smile that lurked in his eyes. Lassois was a hard-headed, practical man, and he knew that the plan was not feasible. He hoped that his niece would see it too, so he added: “I will get Alain to go with us. ’Tis a dangerous journey even with men-at-arms for escort. When do we start?”

“At once,” cried the maiden eagerly. “The sooner the better. When the siege is raised, and the Dauphin crowned, I can go back home. And I will not leave them again. Go! get Alain, and let us start.”

Lassois left her, and Jeanne made her preparations quickly. Procuring a man’s jerkin, hose and doublet, she arrayed herself in them, and when Lassois returned with Alain, a friend of his who lived in Vaucouleurs, the three set forth. They had proceeded a league on the road to France when they came to the shrine of Saint Nicholas, and this Jeanne entered as was her wont, and prostrated herself in prayer. When she arose the impatience, the restlessness were gone. She faced her companions with contrition.

“I was wrong,” she said with deep humility. “It is not meet that I go to the Dauphin in this manner. We must go back.”

Durand’s countenance expanded into a broad grin.

“Said I not so, Alain?” he cried, nudging his friend. “I said that she would soon see that it was not fitting that she should go thus. I said that soon we would turn back.”

Alain laughed also as Jeanne gazed at her uncle in astonishment.

“How did you know, uncle?”

“Why see, ma mie; the King would not receive you should you go to him thus humbly; but if you come from the Sire Captain with proper escort ’twill be easy to get his ear.”

“I see,” sighed Jeanne. “I was wrong. We will go back.”

She waited with more grace after this, and presently there came a day when her

patience was rewarded. The messenger from the King rode into Vaucouleurs bearing a letter to the Governor which gave consent to send the young prophetess to him. Sire Robert sent at once for the maiden.

“You were right,” he said. “There was a disaster as you said near Orléans. The Battle of Herrings was lost at Rouvray. Colet de Vienne, the King’s messenger, tells me that Charles will receive you. Therefore, get you ready, for now you shall start for Chinon in a few days.”

Overjoyed Jeanne hastened back to her friends to tell the glad news. The impossible had happened. That which the peasant maid had demanded was granted. She was to be taken to the King, and in the time fixed by herself.

The sweetness, the simplicity, the sturdy purpose of the maiden had won all hearts in the little walled town. Knowledge of her mission had deepened the interest felt in her, so now, as she was in very truth to begin her journey, they took upon themselves the expense of her outfit. A complete suit of masculine apparel was bought, a jerkin, a cloth doublet, hose laced to the coat, gaiters, spurs, a whole equipment of war, while Sire Robert gave her a horse. And Jeanne, with one girlish sigh at the sacrifice, took off her coif, let down her long dark locks, and gave a last look at them; then Catherine cut them round, page fashion, the maiden set on a cap, and was ready.

Jean de Metz and Bertrand de Poulengy were to accompany her, as well as the King’s messenger, Colet de Vienne, and the bowman, Richard, with two lancers, servants of the men-at-arms. These men proposed further waiting, as certain soldiers of Lorraine were infesting the country, but the maiden was not afraid, and said:

“In God’s name, take me to the gentle Dauphin, and fear not any hindrance or trouble we may meet. There hath been too much delay.”

At length, however, everything was in readiness, and on the twenty-third of February, the little company assembled before the gate, La Porte de France, with friends to watch the departure. Among them were the kind Lassois, Catherine and Henri le Royer, Jean Colin, canon of Saint Nicholas, to whom Jeanne had confessed at times.

The women trembled and wept as they looked at the girl, so fair in her young loveliness, and feared for her the perils of the journey. One of them cried:

“How can you set forth on such a journey when there are men-at-arms on every hand?”

But Jeanne turned a happy face toward them, and answered out of the serene peace of her heart:

“I do not fear men-at-arms. My way has been made plain before me. If there be men-at-arms my Lord God will make a way for me to go to my Lord Dauphin. For this I was born.”

Sire Robert also was present, and as he gazed at the bright face of the maiden his grim old heart was touched.

“Swear,” he said, making Jean de Metz kneel before him. “Swear that you will deliver this maiden whom I have confided to your care safely and surely to the King.”

And De Metz answered solemnly:

“I swear.”

And so from each and every man the Governor took the oath. Then belting his own sword about the girl’s slender waist, he said:

“Go! and come of it what may.”

And off into the mists that enveloped the meadows of the Meuse rode the little company down the road into France.

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[6]

“Madame Margaret did not come to France until seven years later. The six thousand men never did come. Jeanne did.”—Andrew Lang.

[7]

Pucelle—virgin, maid.

CHAPTER XV

STARTING THE GREAT ADVENTURE

> "*The character of Joan of Arc is unique. It can be measured by the standards of all times without misgiving or apprehension as to the result. Judged by any of them, judged by all of them, it is still flawless, it is still ideally perfect; it still occupies the loftiest place possible to human attainment, a loftier one than has been reached by any other mere mortal.*"
>
> MARK TWAIN. *Preface—"Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc."*

And so began this strange ride; the strangest that was ever made. There were a thousand perils to be encountered: great rivers to be crossed; great forests infested by wolves to be traversed; trackless spaces of a country, half of which was hostile—full of every danger of war, to be covered.

Jeanne had been told many times of the risks of the journey; but, happy in the knowledge that she was at last on her way to the Dauphin, no peril, no danger seemed formidable. She had no fear of marauding bands, nor did she feel anxiety concerning the conduct of her companions. A great peace filled her soul. She had begun her work. How it was all to end for her she neither foresaw nor asked; she only knew what she had to do. So light hearted did she appear that Bertrand de Poulengy wondered at it. Jeanne noticed him regarding her curiously.

"What is it, messire?" she asked.

"It will be a hard, tiresome ride, Pucelle."

"I know, messire."

"To sit in the saddle long hours is most fatiguing. Have you been accustomed to

riding?”

“No, messire. I never rode at all until I came to Vaucouleurs.”

“You did not? I can hardly believe that, Pucelle.” He gave a glance of frank admiration at the slight, erect figure sitting her horse so martially. “You ride as though born to the saddle, which is well, for the journey will tax your endurance to the utmost. We stop to-night at the Abbey of Saint Urbain for rest and refreshment, but to-morrow and thereafter we shall be obliged to rest in the open fields. We must avoid the frequented roads and the cities held by the English, therefore we can not go to the inns. There will be many dangers.”

“What do you fear, messire?”

“That we shall never reach Chinon,” he answered gloomily. “The hazards are too great. I thought that the Captain would give us more of an escort, but we be but seven all told. Of what avail would such a small number be against an attacking force of freebooters?”

FAR INTO THE NIGHT THEY RODE

But Jeanne turned a smiling face toward him; a face as blithe and bright as that of a fair youth.

“Have no fear,” she said, with calm confidence. “My brothers in Paradise will watch over us.”

“Will you really do what you say?” he questioned.

“I will do what I am commanded to do, messire. My brethren in Paradise tell me what I have to do. It is now four years since my brethren in Paradise and Messire told me that I must go forth to war to deliver the realm of France.”

But Poulengy, De Metz, and their companions had not the maiden’s confidence. Now that the irrevocable step was taken and they were actually embarked upon this wild adventure the chill of reflection was upon them. Was the girl really an inspired prophetess, or a witch? If the former, all would be well with them should they reach Chinon in safety; if the latter, they were liable to come to the gallows for bringing a witch to court. So many doubts and misgivings assailed them as they rode forward.

Far into the night they rode, stopping at length at the Abbey of Saint Urbain on the right bank of the Marne for rest. From time immemorial the Abbey had been a place of refuge, and it gave them a cordial welcome. Jeanne was glad to lay her wearied body upon the rude cot in the house set apart for the use of strangers, but she was up early next morning, and attended conventual mass; then she and her companions took horse again. Crossing the Marne by the bridge opposite Saint Urbain they pressed on towards France.

They were in more dangerous ground now, so they proceeded more stealthily. Bertrand de Poulengy and Jean de Metz, being hardened campaigners and accustomed to such expeditions, knew the by-ways, and were acquainted with the means necessary to travel quietly. Sometimes the days were sunlit, and the nights moonlit; at other times, there was rain, or sleet, or snow, but whatever the weather they rode and rode. Jeanne was always cheerful, always confident, always good-humoured. The King's messenger, Colet de Vienne, Sire Bertrand and Jean de Metz were hot-headed, hot-hearted soldiers of fortune, neither over-scrupulous nor over-pious, but they learned to regard the young girl in their charge with reverence and awe. It was a feeling that strangely combined chivalry and religion. She was so devout, so clean-spirited, that there was nothing to be done but to believe in her goodness, her purity, and her faith. If they did not altogether believe in her visions they believed that she believed, and they came to think of her as nothing less than a saint.

"Truly, Bertrand, she comes from God," declared De Metz one day upon his return from a town where he had gone in search of food. The party dared not enter the place for fear of detection. The news was broadcast over the country that the inspired Maid of Vaucouleurs was proceeding to the King under escort, and the knights feared an encounter with some band of the enemy. "She has not much money; that I know, yet she gave me alms to give to the poor. And this she does whenever we draw near to a town."

"She is a saint," avowed De Poulengy. "I think she must be inspired in very truth, Jean; else how is it that she stands the journey as she does? A little wearied she may be when we stop for rest, but do you note that she starts onward as blithely and gayly as though we had but just set forth?"

"Ay! I have noticed it. 'Tis as though she received manna from Heaven for her recuperation. Through many wild marches I have been, yet this one hath been the most trying. I fear ambuscades, Bertrand, and I would not have harm come to the Maid. I would rather lose life itself than have aught befall her."

“And I, Jean. But I fear that all of our company do not agree with us. I overheard some words that Richard the Archer had with our two varlets this morning which shows their mind in manner most alarming. They also have noted the marvellous way in which the Maid has withstood the fatigues of the journey, and they declare that a mere maiden could not bear them as she does. In truth, they deem her a witch. We must be on our guard against them lest they try some trick against her.”

“The vile caitiffs! Can they not see that she is one of God’s saints?” exclaimed De Metz wrathfully. “I will go to them. I—”

“Nay, Jean; restrain yourself,” counselled the older man laying his hand lightly on the other’s arm. “Be not too severe in your judgment ’gainst the varlets. Time was, and not so long since, when we too were in doubt concerning the maiden. They may intend no harm, but I deemed it the part of wisdom to put you on guard. Let us say nothing, but watch and wait.”

“You are right, Bertrand.” De Metz spoke more quietly. “They may intend no harm, but ’tis well to be on guard. If they should attempt anything—” He paused, touching his sword significantly.

Poulengy nodded, and the two returned to the camp. As they made night marches they rested by day. For this day they had selected for camp a cove that lay between two shoulders of the winding hills on the banks of a swollen stream. Though a cold rain was falling there was no fire for fear of the enemy. The leafless boughs did little to ward off the rain, and there was not much comfort in the chill woods, so the party ate in silence the cold bread and meat which De Metz had obtained in the town. They but waited for the darkness that they might take to horse again. Richard the bowman was sentinel, and after the comfortless meal they all lay down on the wet ground to get what rest they could. They were aroused by a wild shout from the Archer, who rushed among them, crying:

“The English! The English are upon us!”

Instantly the two knights and the King’s messenger were upon their feet, and drawing their swords, threw themselves quickly before Jeanne. She alone was undisturbed, and merely rose to a sitting posture as the men breathlessly awaited the approach of the enemy. The knights’ servants, Jean de Honecourt and Julien, made as though about to flee when Jeanne spoke in her grave, sweet voice:

“Do not flee. I tell you in God’s name, they will not harm you.”

At this Richard the bowman, seeing that she was not afraid, burst out laughing.

With a bound Jean de Metz had reached him, and had him by the throat.

“Varlet,” he cried, shaking the fellow angrily. “Know you not that there are perils enough about us without giving a false alarm? That loud outcry of yours may bring the enemy upon us. I am minded to fling you into that water.”

“I but did it to scare the witch,” muttered Richard sullenly, eyeing the swollen stream with whitening face. The water was dismally cold, and very deep at this point. “I meant no harm.”

But De Metz, enraged by the word “witch,” lifted him bodily, preparatory to carrying out his threat, when Jeanne’s soft tones arrested him:

“Do not so, my friend,” she said sweetly. “The jest was ill timed, ’tis true; but still it was but a jest. He could neither frighten nor harm me. None can do that until I have fulfilled my mission. Let him go.”

“You hear?” De Metz let the man slide slowly to his feet. “But that she pleads for thee thou shouldst drink deep of that water. See to it that thy acts are better, else it shall go hard with thee. Ay! or whoever attempts tricks, be they jest or earnest.”

He glared at the retainers so fiercely that they shrank from his gaze. There was no further attempt to frighten the maiden during the rest of the journey, and it was noted that she had no more devoted servitor than Richard the bowman.

On they rode, and still on. Through gloomy woods, by threatened highways, and over swollen rivers the seven made their way. The enemy’s country was passed in time without mishap of any kind, and then on the morning of the tenth day out from Vaucouleurs they came to Gien on the River Loire. It held for the Dauphin, and Jeanne rejoiced for now, being in friendly territory, she could go to mass. She had felt neither fear nor anxiety during the march, but she had been distressed that she could not attend mass, which she was accustomed to doing every day. Being on God’s errand she wished constantly to ask His help.

“If we could, we should do well to hear mass,” she had repeated wistfully each day; but when the knights told her that it was too dangerous she had not insisted.

Gien was about forty miles above Orléans, and their danger was now almost over. Both Jeanne and the knights talked freely of her errand, and the news spread far and wide that a Maid was come from the borders of Lorraine to raise the siege of Orléans and lead the Dauphin to Reims to be crowned. Everywhere the people were excited over the tidings. In spite of the blockade men often slipped into Orléans, and messengers from Gien soon bore the story into the

besieged city. It raised a great hope there, and its commander, the Count of Dunois, at once sent two of his officers to Chinon, whither he knew that the Maid was bound, to ask the King to send her to them soon.

The news that Jeanne learned concerning Orléans was most disquieting. The Battle of Herrings, fought at Rouvray, had been a most disastrous defeat for the garrison, and had brought both citizens and soldiers to despair. No time should be lost in going to the help of the leaguered city, so, after a short rest, Jeanne rode forward across the sandy Sologne and the flat country of Touraine.

The anxiety of Poulengy and Metz had taken a different turn. Believe in the maiden as they might they could not but wonder what reception they would meet at Court. Charles and his counsellors might think it all a fool's errand, and the knights would be the laughing stock of their comrades. As they had become accustomed to doing they told these misgivings to Jeanne.

"Do not be afraid. You will see how graciously the fair Dauphin will look upon us when we get to Chinon," she assured them confidently.

They were now in a country holding for the Dauphin, and naturally it would be supposed that it was friendly territory; this, however, was not the case. Indeed, it was after the passage of the Loire that they were exposed to the greatest danger. Far and wide the tidings had flown that a girl was coming toward the King with wonderful proffers of aid from Heaven and the Holy Saints. There were people about the King to whom such news was not welcome. Here also in the King's country were freebooters who, when they pillaged travellers, asked not whether they were Armagnacs or Burgundians, and such men would not scruple to waylay the girl at a word from those about the King. So it happened that certain men-at-arms of the French party lay in ambush awaiting the appearance of Jeanne's little company to surprise them. It was the intention to capture the maiden, cast her into a pit, and keep her there under a great stone trap door, in the hope that the King who had sent for her would give a large sum for her rescue. But of all this neither Jeanne nor her escort knew until long afterward.

Being in the Dauphin's territory Jeanne rode fearlessly in front of the little company while the knights, who lacked her confidence, followed close behind, keeping a keen watch the while, for they were passing through a deep wood, and both Bertrand and De Metz were aware of the character of the miscreants who infested it. Suddenly, from out of the inner wood, there burst a party of men who with wild yells dashed forward and surrounded them. There was a clash of steel as the knights met the onset, when high above the noise of swords sounded

Jeanne’s voice, clear and bell-like:

“Hold! Let not French blood be spilled by Frenchmen while the English wait us at Orléans. Forbear, friends! ’Tis not God’s will that you should slay each other.”

Involuntarily the men of both parties stayed their uplifted hands. The leader of the attacking band bent a searching, curious glance upon the maiden, which she met calmly and tranquilly. There was something winning and persuasive and convincing in her manner; something so pure and unearthly in her look that presently the man’s eyes dropped, and he hastily crossed himself.

“Pass on,” he said, and at a sign his fellows fell back, and the seven rode on in safety.

Sire Bertrand leaned over to Jean de Metz and spoke in an awed tone:

“Saw you that, Jean? Those rascals could do naught after she cried out. Truly the child is sent from God.”

“She is in very truth, Bertrand, but it needed not this to prove it. Witness how we have come these many leagues though threatened with dire perils without hap of any kind. ’Tis nothing short of miraculous.”

But Jeanne heard them wondering, and smiled at them.

“Marvel not,” she said. “God clears the way for me. I was born for this.”

And so they came to the green slopes of Fierbois, from which place they would proceed to Chinon, where the King lay.

CHAPTER XVI

JEANNE COMES TO HER KING

"*Be not dismayed, for succor is at hand:*

A holy maid hither with me I bring,

Which, by a vision sent to her from heaven,

Ordained is to raise this tedious siege.

And drive the English forth the bounds of France."

SHAKESPEARE. *Henry Sixth, First Part.*

The King lay at Chinon, just six leagues from Fierbois, and Jeanne decided to write to him, asking permission to come to the town, for neither of the knights dared go further without his consent. Accordingly Sire Bertrand procured a scribe, and the maiden dictated the following letter:

> "Gentle Dauphin,—I have ridden a hundred and fifty leagues to bring you aid from Messire, the King of Heaven. I have much good news for you, and would beg that out of your grace you will allow me to tell it to you in person. Though I have never seen you, yet I should know you in any disguise among a thousand. May God give you long life.
>
> "JEANNE THE MAID."

Colet de Vienne, the King's messenger, took the missive, and at once set forth at speed for Chinon. A day at least must pass before the answer could come back, so Jeanne availed herself of the privilege of hearing mass in the village church dedicated to Saint Catherine, one of her daily visitors.

It was the most famous sanctuary of the Saint, for here she received multitudes of pilgrims and worked great miracles. Her worship was warlike and national, and dated back to the beginning of French history. Jeanne lingered lovingly in the chapel, hearing three masses, and listening with delight to the stories of the miracles.

The next day, having received permission to proceed to Chinon, they mounted and faced toward the town, and the maiden's heart beat fast. She was going to the King at last. That which she had dreamed for four years was being realized. She was going to the King, and her heart sang for joy.

The nearer the company drew to Chinon they saw with amazement that the country became poorer, for the Court and the men-at-arms had stripped it bare. For this reason the Dauphin could seldom abide long at one place, for he was so much better known than trusted that the very cord-wainer would not let him march off in a new pair of boots without seeing his money. There was a song which said that he even greased his old clouted shoon to make them last as long as he might. There were many stories told about his extravagance and consequent poverty. It was a poor prince to whom Jeanne was going.

It had been a long journey, as De Poulengy had said it would be, so that it was the eleventh day after leaving Vaucouleurs that they entered Chinon. It was March sixth, the fourth Sunday in Lent, and therefore Laetare Sunday. In far off Domremy the boys and the girls, the youths and the maidens would be going to the Fairy Tree and the Gooseberry Spring for the "Well Dressing." They would eat their hard boiled eggs with the rolls their mothers had kneaded. Pierre would go and possibly Jean, though he was older than she. The country would be grey and leafless there; here there were already monitions of Spring. So Jeanne mused, but she did not let her thoughts wander long to her far off home and friends, for she was at last in Chinon, where the Dauphin abode.

The town was built upon a meadow beside the river Vienne, and was compactly walled. Behind it rose a high perpendicular ledge on which the castle stood, the finest in the realm of France. Behind its proud walls there breathed that King to whom she had been impelled to come by a miraculous love. Jeanne looked up at it with longing glance, but she must wait until permission was accorded before ascending the steeps which led to it, so, with a sigh, she turned her attention to the town.

Through narrow lanes of overhanging houses crowded to the hill beneath the castle buttresses they went, stopping at length at an inn near the castle kept by a

woman of good repute. It was Lent, so the spits were idle, for at that time no one in Christendom neglected the church's injunction concerning the fasts and abstinences of Holy Lent. So fasting Jeanne retired to the chamber assigned her, and spent the next two days in prayer while she waited to hear from the Dauphin.

Then the messenger, Colet de Vienne, came with the command that the two knights should come to the castle so that they might be questioned concerning the maiden. He said that the King had read the letter of Sire Robert, but would know more before admitting her to audience. Sire Bertrand heard the command with anger.

"Colet, is this in truth the King's desire, or hath he been influenced to it by George la Trémouille? There be those who say that the Favorite cares for naught that is for the good of France, but is all for terms with Burgundy."

"'Tis not for me to say that Charles is not master of his Court, Sire Bertrand," replied the messenger warily. "Still, it might be admitted that La Trémouille does not care to have an inspired Maid appear who will arouse the King from his indolence. And the King hath other advisers of the Royal Council also who wish to know more of the damsel before she approaches him. 'Tis on their advice that he has sent for you."

"But he hath the letter vouching for her from the Captain of Vaucouleurs," exclaimed De Poulengy, with heat. "There will be delay, and yonder lies Orléans waiting the coming of the Maid; for by my faith! I do believe that she can raise the siege. Ay! and Jean here believes likewise. 'Tis our opinion that she hath been divinely commissioned so to do."

"Then why fret about telling the King what ye believe?" asked Colet. "He questioned me, and I spoke freely concerning her goodness, and the safety with which we had made the journey."

"You are right," uttered De Poulengy. "Why fret indeed? 'Tis only because it seems to me that were I King I would seize upon anything that held a hope for so distressed a kingdom."

"'Tis what frets us all, Bertrand," said Jean de Metz. "That is, all who care for the King and France. Know you not that La Hire, the fiercest soldier of the Armagnacs, says, 'Never was a king who lost his kingdom so gay as Charles?' But lead on, Colet. 'Tis the King's command, and we must go to him. Perchance good may come from it after all."

"That it may. And know for your comfort, both, that deputies from Orléans,

having heard of the Maid, are here in Chinon praying that the King may not refuse the aid, but will send the Maid to them at once."

"Now that is good," ejaculated Sire Bertrand. "I can go with better grace now. Come, Jean."

Seldom has a king lived who deserved greater contempt than Charles Seventh. Lazy, idle, luxurious, and cowardly, he was the puppet of his worst courtiers. Most of the money that he could raise was spent in voluptuous living or given to favorites. But at that time however contemptible a king might be, his personality was important to his kingdom. So that Charles Seventh was France to his people; the image and sacred symbol of France.

In his favor it may be said that he was very devout, and his piety was sincere. He was generous to others,—and to himself. He was "well languaged and full of pity for the poor." From time to time he would seem to be moved by the thought that, despite his helplessness and inability to do anything, he was still the man who ought to do all. But he was weak, a slave to his favorites, blind to their defects; ready to suffer anything from them. It was small wonder then that De Poulengy dreaded the King's advisers. He and De Metz returned soon to the inn to report to Jeanne the result of the interview.

"'Tis pity that the King is not the only person who governs the realm," spoke Sire Bertrand with disgusted weariness. "But no! the whole Royal Council must give consent ere he can admit you to an audience, Pucelle. There are certain of the counsellors who advise against seeing you, declaring that your mission is a hoax. Some say that you are a witch, and for Charles to receive a witch into his presence would endanger his person, and greatly discredit his majesty. There are still others who favor seeing you; and Yolande, Queen of Sicily and the king's mother-in-law, declares openly that since Sire Robert sent letters introducing you, which you carried through many leagues of hostile provinces, fording many rivers in manner most marvellous so that you might come to him, the King ought at least to hear you. By my faith, Yolande is the best adviser and the best soldier that the King has. So there the matter rests; but he ought to see you."

"Which he will, messire. Have no doubt of that. He will hear and see me soon."

"Yes; in time, Pucelle. But ere that time comes certain priests and clerks, experts in discerning good spirits from bad, are to examine you. They follow us, do they not, Jean?"

De Metz nodded. "If I mistake not they come now," he said.

“In God’s name, why do they not set me about my work?” exclaimed Jeanne impatiently.

Almost immediately steps were heard without the chamber, and the hostess of the inn entered, bowing low before several imposing ecclesiastics and their clerks.

Jeanne rose, and courtesied; standing in reverent attitude during the entire interview. The visitors showed their astonishment plainly in finding that the renowned Maid of Vaucouleurs was such a mere girl. The senior bishop acted as spokesman for all.

“Are you the maid concerning whom letters have come to the King from Vaucouleurs?”

Jeanne bowed her head in assent.

“And you in truth made that long perilous journey to speak with the King?”

“Yes, messire.”

“You seem o’er young for such a fatiguing march. You are, I should judge, not over sixteen?”

“Seventeen, messire.”

“Have you, as ’tis said, a message for the King?”

“Yes, messire,” returned the maiden briefly.

“Tell it to us. We in turn will bear it to the King.”

Jeanne drew herself up at this, and stood regarding them calmly.

“I cannot, messire,” she said at length. “It is for the gentle Dauphin alone to hear. To him, and to none other, will I tell it.”

“Maiden,” said the senior bishop earnestly, “the King hath many counsellors who are wise and learned men. It is their opinion that he ought not to see you until he learns the nature of your mission. If you in truth have aught that is good for him to hear, it were best to tell it us. That is, if you desire admission to his presence.”

“Is not the Dauphin master of his presence? Is it not his to say who shall, or who shall not be admitted to him?” demanded the maiden in such open eyed wonder that the prelate looked confused.

“Certainly,” he said hastily. “But he sends certain of his friends to see if those

who seek admission are worthy to enter his presence. Be advised, my child, and tell us why you wish to see him."

For a long moment Jeanne stood looking at him as though she saw him not; then suddenly her face became transfigured with joy, for the Light shone beside her, and she bowed her head. The Voice that she waited for came instantly:

"Tell of thy mission, Daughter of God," it said. "But of that which concerns the Dauphin speak not. Rise, and answer boldly. We will aid thee."

The maiden raised her head, and said gently:

"I have leave from 'My Voices,' messire, to tell you that I have two commands laid upon me by the King of Heaven. One, to raise the siege of Orléans; the other, to lead the Dauphin to Reims that he may be crowned and anointed there."

The bishops heard her with amazement. They had not seen the Light, nor heard the Voice, but they saw that the maiden had received a communication of some kind, either from inward communion, or some celestial visitor. The senior bishop's tones showed his wonder.

"Those are marvellous commands, my child. What sign can you give us that you can perform them?"

“I have not come to give signs,” cried Jeanne, her impatience flaring forth at this. “Give me men-at-arms, and let me show the work I am appointed to do.”

“Then will you relate how the commands were given to you?” questioned the bishop.

Briefly, because Jeanne never liked to talk much of her visions, the maiden told something concerning the matter. The whole of it she did not tell. Then followed questions pertaining to her manner of life, her devotion, her habits about taking the sacraments of communion and confession, and so on. To all of these she made answer freely, with such modest mien that the ecclesiastics finally withdrew, charmed by her simplicity and earnestness.

And now the delay was ended; for, as evening fell, there came the Count de Vendôme, a gracious nobleman richly attired, to escort her to the King. De Poulengy and De Metz rejoiced that there would be no further delay. Being personal attendants of Jeanne’s they were to accompany her to the castle. Count de Vendôme eyed the simple page attire of the maiden soberly. She was clad like the varlet of some lord of no great estate, in black cap with a little silver brooch, a grey doublet, and black and grey hose, trussed up with many points; the sword that Robert de Baudricourt had given her hung by her side. At first sight she might well have passed for a boy, she was so slender and carried herself so erectly. There was admiration in the nobleman’s glance as he surveyed her gracious figure, but his words were grave:

“Will you attend the audience in that garb, Pucelle?” he asked.

And Jeanne, remembering how De Metz with a like expression of countenance had asked a similar question when she wore her woman’s dress, laughed cheerily.

“This and none other, messire. For in this garb shall I do that which is commanded.”

So led by the nobleman and followed by the two knights the maiden started for the castle. Up a broad winding path they wended their way to the rocky ridge of hill along which the great walls of the castle, interrupted and strengthened by huge towers, stretched. It was old and great and strong, having been builded when the Romans were lords of the land, and was a favorite seat of English kings before it passed into the hands of the French. From the high drawbridge above the moat, which was twenty feet deep, there was a wide prospect over the town and the valley of the Vienne. Soldiers idled and diced just within the gate,

though the dice were scarce discernible in the fast falling darkness. They ceased the play as Jeanne and her attendants came upon the drawbridge, and a murmur ran from lip to lip, for by this time all in Chinon knew of her.

“La Pucelle! La Pucelle! The inspired Maid from Vaucouleurs comes to see the King.”

At this soldiers and sentinels turned to gaze curiously at the girl. Suddenly one started from among his fellows, and came very close to her, peering impudently into her face.

“By all the saints, ’tis a pretty wench!” he cried. “May God send more such witches to Chinon. I—”

But angrily Jean de Metz swept him out of the way.

“Jarnedieu!” cried the soldier wrathfully, using the common oath of his class.

“Oh, dost thou jarnedieu?” cried Jeanne mournfully. “Thou who art so near death?”

Like one turned to stone the man stood, and then, as some of his comrades began to gibe at him, he came to himself and turned upon them in a rage.

“Think you that I heed what a mad woman says?” he shouted. “Nay; I defy her and her prophecies.” With this he uttered a loud laugh, and leaned back heavily against the low wooden pales of the bridge’s side, which were crazy and old. There was a crash; and down and down he whirled. The deep waters of the moat closed over him.

The soldiers looked grave and affrighted, and turned awed looks upon the maiden and her companions, who were just ascending the broad steps which gave entrance to the great hall of the King’s château, where the audience was to be held. Jeanne, being ahead with the Count de Vendôme, had not seen what had occurred, but she turned as the crash of the wooden pales sounded.

“What hath happened?” she questioned.

“Naught,” cried De Metz hastily, fearing that should he tell her it would disturb her calm, and he was timorous concerning the ordeal before the Maid. “The King should keep his bridge in better repair, for but now some of its wooden palings snapped in two.”

So without knowing that her prophecy had been fulfilled so soon the maiden passed on into the great hall. The audience chamber was crowded with curious

courtiers and the royal guard, and the place shone with the lustre of fifty flambeaux. At the end of the vaulted room was a chimney of white stone in which a noble fire blazed, reflected by the polished oak boards of the floor.

Veteran soldiers of the wars were there; counsellors, like the favorite La Trémouille, prelates, like the Archbishop of Reims, and trains of fair ladies with fine raiment and gay manners; all gathered to see the sorceress. A throng of men and women in velvet and cloth of gold, in crimson and azure such as she had never seen. A brilliant mob of vivid colors; a company of the noblest lords and ladies of France, their finery glowing in the flaring flames of many torches. The fans of the ladies fluttered; their high head-dresses, or hennins, towered above the head coverings of the men; a thousand unfamiliar hues and forms combined to dazzle the eyes and disturb the composure of a peasant girl.

But Jeanne was neither disturbed nor dazzled. Eagerly she looked to see the King. She did not care for the courtiers gazing so intently at her—some with amusement, some smiling, some sneering, the most of them sceptical, but all of them gazing at her with open curiosity; with surprise at her page's attire, her man-at-arms shoes, and above all at her hair which, cut round like a page's, flowed softly about her face. At this time no woman, of whatever rank, showed the hair. It was worn covered always in obedience to Saint Paul's command. Jeanne saw the amusement, and wonder, and scepticism on the faces around her; saw but heeded them not; moving forward the while with her eyes fixed ever on the figure seated on the throne. Suddenly she stopped short with a stifled exclamation. The Count de Vendôme touched her arm gently.

"Kneel," he whispered. "The King is before you."

But Jeanne did not respond. She looked at him who was seated upon the throne, but made no obeisance. Instead she knitted her brows in thoughtful manner, then turned deliberately round and glanced searchingly about among the courtiers. A low murmur of astonishment ran through the room as all at once she moved quickly toward a group of courtiers, and pushing them aside knelt before a soberly clad young man hiding behind them.

"God give you good life, gentle Dauphin," she said.

"But it is not I that am the King," said he with smiling lips. "Yonder he sits upon the throne."

"In God's name, gentle Dauphin, say not so," she said. "It is you and no other." Then rising from her knees she continued: "Fair Dauphin, I am Jeanne the Maid. I am sent to you by the King of Heaven to tell you that you shall be anointed and

crowned at Reims, and shall be lieutenant of the King of Heaven, who is King of France."

Charles's face grew grave as he heard the words. The little masquerade planned for the amusement of the courtiers had failed; the jest was over. Solemnly he spoke:

"How know you this, Maid?"

"My Voices have told me. I have come to lead you to your anointing, but first I must raise the siege of Orléans. This, fair Dauphin, I can do if you will but give me men-at-arms. Out of your grace, I beg you to send me at once to Orléans."

Touched by her perfect sincerity, her intense earnestness, her good faith, the King gazed musingly at her, and then asked:

"How shall I know that you can do this, Maid? What sign can you give?"

"My sign shall be the raising of the siege of Orléans; but, gentle Dauphin, I have another sign which is to be told to you alone."

"Then tell it to me," he said, drawing her into a window recess out of ear shot of the courtiers.

"Gentle Dauphin, when you prayed this morning in your oratory there was a great pain in your heart."

"True;" nodded Charles.

"And you made a prayer there. Fair Dauphin, did you tell to any one the prayer that you made?"

"No," he answered gravely. "I did not. 'Tis a prayer that concerns none but myself."

Then quickly, earnestly, passionately, Jeanne spoke, addressing him familiarly as an inspired prophetess:

"Did you not pray that if you were the true heir of France, and that if justly the kingdom were yours, that God might be pleased to guard and defend you? But that if you were not descended from the royal House of France God would grant you escape from imprisonment or death by permitting you to go into the land of Scotland or Spain, that you might find refuge there?"

Charles's face grew blank with amazement.

"I did pray that, exactly," he admitted. "In my heart alone, without pronouncing

the words. Speak on, Maiden. Is there aught from your heavenly visitors that would answer that prayer?”

“There is, gentle Dauphin. Know then, to ease thy heart, that I tell thee from Messire, that thou art the true heir of France, and son of the King.”

She made the strange statement so authoritatively, so impressively that the monarch’s countenance grew radiant. Those watching the pair wondered at the change, but none knew until long afterward what it was that the maiden had told him. Now he took Jeanne’s hand and bowed over it.

“I believe in you, Maid,” he said. “Though all should doubt yet do I believe. You shall have your men-at-arms, and go to Orléans.”

“Now God be praised,” exclaimed the maiden joyfully. “May he send you long life, oh fair and gentle Dauphin. Give me the men soon, I pray you, that I may be about my work.”

“You shall have your wish,” he said gently; and with this he led her back to the gaping courtiers.

CHAPTER XVII

The Impossible Happens

> "*To pray, we do not say with the lips, but to pray with the whole sincerity of the heart, is to win an inexhaustible source of moral strength. This we say simply from the point of view of a man of science who only concerns himself with the effects of a fact, and only considers truths of observation and experience.*"
>
> M. Siméon Luce. "*Jeanne d'Arc à Domremy.*"

The next day, as Jeanne sat with the two knights discussing the audience of the evening before, here came the Sire de Gaucourt, former commander of Orléans. "Pucelle," he said, bowing low before the Maid, "I come to you by order of the King, whose desire it is that you should leave this mean place and come to dwell in the Tower of Coudray, which is more proper lodging for you, and nearer to him. The friends who are with you shall accompany you, if such be your desire."

"It is in truth my desire," spoke the maiden quickly with an affectionate glance at Poulengy and Metz. "True and faithful friends have they proven themselves. Without their aid I could not have come to the King. They believed in me even before Sire Robert did. And they shall go with me to Orléans, if they wish."

"We do wish," came from the knights simultaneously. "To Orléans, or to any place that promises fighting for France."

"Would that we were now bound for Orléans," sighed Jeanne as the four set forth for the castle.

Up the steep approach to the castle they wended their way once more. And now, being daylight, it was seen that the long mass of embattled walls, of keeps, towers, turrets, curtains, ramparts, and watch-towers were three castles separated

one from the other by dyke, barrier, postern, and portcullis. Arriving on the ridge of hill Sire de Gaucourt led them past the long line of machicolated battlements of the Middle Château where the King dwelt, and across the bridge of the inner moat. A curtain of stone connected a high tower on the moat bank with another battlemented tower built into the buttressed cliff wall. There was an archway in the curtain at the end of the bridge, through which they passed to the Tower of Coudray.

Ascending a stairway they paused at its top, for here the lieutenant of the tower, Guillaume Bellier, the King's Major Domo, waited to greet them.

"You are to lodge with my own family, Pucelle," he said, making Jeanne a deep obeisance. "My wife comes now to bear you to your chamber for rest and refreshment."

As he spoke a pleasant faced woman came forward from an adjoining room, and greeted the maiden warmly. She showed plainly her surprise at Jeanne's attire, but seemed charmed by her youth and beauty. Sire Bertrand gave a sigh of satisfaction as he saw the maiden depart in the lady's company, and remarked to De Metz in a low tone:

"Glad am I to see the Maid in such good hands as those of Madame Bellier. She is a devout woman, and the two will take much pleasure in each other's company. It hath gone to my heart to see such a mere girl without any of her own sex near her."

"Yes; but she hath angel visitors to bring her comfort and solace, Bertrand, the like of which no other maid had ever before. I believe her in very truth to be a messenger from the blessed Saints that love France. Still, with you, I am glad that Madame Bellier hath her in her care."

Jeanne's chambers were in the upper story of the tower, and Lieutenant Bellier sent her for a servant one of his own pages, Louis de Coutes, sometimes called Mugot, who came from an old warrior family which had been in service of the house of Orléans for a century. Her two knights with their servants had chambers just beneath hers.

And now that the King had taken her under his charge people flocked to see her. Churchmen came to test her orthodoxy; Captains to ask her about her knowledge of war; and all the lords and ladies to question her concerning her mission, for it was dull at Chinon, and a witch was worth looking at any day. Jeanne was impatient to be about her work, but she answered them all so aptly, and was so gentle and simple, that all who met her grew to believe in her.

Many too were curious concerning the oak wood, asking if the Bois Chesnu were not in her country, for every one now recalled Merlin's prophecy, and was impressed by it. Every day the King had her brought to him. He was weak and timorous, but her simple faith impressed him, as it impressed all who saw her, and her entire trust in him gave him some courage and self-reliance. He wished to give the Maid men-at-arms at once, as he had promised, but the Royal Council over-ruled him. The Counsellors acknowledged that it was not unusual for princes to have the counsel of devout women; that women in whom was the voice of God were not to be scorned; that even the kings of England were no less ready than the kings of France to heed the words of saintly men and women; still, it behooved him to proceed carefully in the matter, lest he should be charged with helping himself by witchcraft.

In the Middle Ages it was the custom for saints to speak with kings and for kings to listen to them, but sorcery was the unpardonable sin. Therefore, it was the opinion of the Royal Council that, before giving the maiden the men-at-arms for which she asked, she should be subjected to a more searching examination than any that had yet been made. And while the talk waged pro and con the fame of Jeanne grew and filled all mouths. She fired the zeal of the captains who came to see her, and shamed them into some hope of saving France; she charmed the ladies of the Court by her modesty; while the common people told wonderful stories of her piety, exploits and adventures. To bring this about in the short time that she had been in Chinon was no mean achievement for a girl of seventeen, but Jeanne, believing God to be the author of the whole work, wondered only that any one should hesitate for a moment to trust His messenger.

One day she attended mass in the royal chapel, as was her daily custom, and when her devotions were finished she rose to find the King and a young nobleman standing beside her. Jeanne courtesied to the monarch, whereupon he said:

"We have brought our cousin, the Duke of Alençon, to see you, Jeanne. He hath great interest in the house of Orléans, having married the daughter of Duke Charles."

"He is welcome," spoke Jeanne simply. "The more of the blood royal there are here the better."

"So we believe," said the King, smiling. "It is our pleasure that you dine with us to-day, that our cousin may learn more of your mission."

Again Jeanne bowed low, charming Alençon by her courtly manners. Then she

and the Duke followed the King to the dining hall. La Trémouille, the King's favorite, was present also. Barrel-like in appearance, a toper, and a usurer, loaning money to the King and the nobles at high interest, La Trémouille was a most important personage at Court. Dismissing the rest of the courtiers the King sat down at the table with the other three, the peasant maid not at all disturbed by being the guest of royalty. Yet but one short month agone she had been the guest of the humble Catherine le Royer, the wheelwright's wife.

But Jeanne did not think of this. Her thoughts were for the Dauphin, and she was filled with the desire that he should govern wisely and well the realm which he held in trust from God. So she talked seriously to him, asking him to amend his life, and live after God's will. He was to be clement, and to be a good lord to rich and poor, friend and enemy. If he would be all this the King of Heaven would do for him what he had done for his ancestors, and would restore him to his former estate.

And gazing into the bright, eager young face, flushed with courage and glowing with celestial ardor the King was thrilled, and longed to do kingly deeds and to be worthy of the blood of Louis, his saintly ancestor. After the dinner the four went to the meadows by the river, where Jeanne guided her horse and wielded her lance with so much skill that both the King and the Duke marvelled.

"'Tis but an indifferent steed you ride, Pucelle," spoke Alençon, for Jeanne was still using the horse that De Baudricourt had bought for her. "I will send you another that shall bear you more worthily."

The very next day he presented her with a magnificent black charger which Jeanne rode thereafter. It was the beginning of a warm friendship between the two. He became one of the maiden's most enthusiastic supporters, and Jeanne grew fond of him not only because he was son-in-law to the Duke of Orléans, but because the English had done him wrong, and he had a good will to fight. Jeanne measured men by that standard. She had a wholesome, hearty contempt for men who skulked at Court and spent their time in idle pleasure while France lay under the heel of the invader. Alençon had but just returned to his home after being held captive by the English for three years. It was told of him that his captors had proposed to give him back his liberty and his goods if he would join their party, but he rejected the offer. He was young like her, and Jeanne thought that like her he must be sincere and noble.

In spite of her increasing influence over churchmen, and captains, and people, the King still wavered, influenced by the Royal Council and the favorite. La

Trémouille, though indifferent to Jeanne, because he had not yet come to dread her power and to intrigue against her as he did a few months later, was disinclined to action, and had no intention of allowing Charles to shake off his indolence. So there were further delays while the King's confessor and others examined the maiden daily. Though she was aware that these men questioned her by orders from the King, Jeanne did not talk freely, but answered discreetly concerning her mission.

"In God's name, my fair duke, why do they ask so many questions instead of setting me about my work?" she asked piteously of Alençon one day after a visit from some of the bishops.

"Perchance 'tis natural for them to doubt," replied the duke consolingly. "You will have to be patient, Jeanne, though there is much to try you in delay."

"Patient, patient!" ejaculated Jeanne, who was eating her heart out with the desire to engage the enemy immediately at Orléans.

"Can Orléans hold out forever? Why do they not take Messire's word as it comes to them? Daily do I pray to be delivered from these churchmen."

Alençon laughed, but checked his mirth quickly at sight of the tears that were in Jeanne's eyes.

"Endure a little longer, my friend," he said gently. "I believe that the end of these many queries is in sight, though before it comes it has been decided to send you to Poictiers."

"To Poictiers?" exclaimed Jeanne. "And why to Poictiers?"

"The Royal Council think it best for you to be examined by the learned Doctors there," he explained. "They acknowledge that they can find no fault in you, but before giving you men-at-arms to go to Orléans they wish that the Church should pass upon your inspiration. When that is over I believe that there will be no further delay in sending you to Orléans."

"What is the use in having learned men ask me questions when I know neither A nor B?" queried Jeanne, dashing the tears from her eyes. "But in God's name, let us be going, since we must go. Much ado will be there, I know. But my Lord will help me. Now let us go, my bonny duke, in God's strength."

The very next day she set forth for Poictiers, attended by a large company, for many were eager to see how the peasant maid would acquit herself before the learned Doctors. Beside Alençon and her own knights there were certain veteran

men-at-arms among the company; men who laughed at the idea that a mere girl of seventeen could raise the siege of Orléans. There were many courtiers, some who believed in the maid, and others who welcomed the diversion. The Queen's mother, Yolande, who wished to see her daughter seated firmly upon the throne of France, and who believed in the simple shepherd maid, went also. But her presence did not console Jeanne, who fretted because so much valuable time was being wasted.

There were learned doctors at Poictiers, which was distant some fifty miles from Chinon. Men who, loyal to the King, had left the University of Paris as soon as the capital had fallen into the hands of the English, and followed the fortunes of Charles, choosing this town for their abiding place, and later founding a university there. It was the home of the Bar also, the great legal center, and here, if anywhere in Charles's dominions, it seemed probable that men might be found able to distinguish between good spirits and bad.

On her arrival in the city Jeanne was lodged in the house of Maître Jean Robateau, the attorney general, a man of wealth and distinction, married to an excellent wife. The house was near the law courts, and had built into it a little chapel where Jeanne went at once to pray. It proved a haven of refuge in the days that followed.

The Archbishop of Reims presided over the Council which was soon held. The Council appointed a Committee of Investigation, and sent emissaries to Domremy to inquire into her previous history. The Committee included several professors of theology, an abbot, a canon of Poictiers, and one or two friars. Escorted by a squire this Committee went to interview Jeanne at Robateau's house, for she was not formally examined before the whole board of Doctors. She came to meet them as they entered, but the sight of the priests irritated her. She had been subjected to so much questioning at Chinon that she was weary of it. It seemed so needless and futile. For working priests and for people in religion she held a sacred regard. For learned Doctors she had no use.

The squire, a young man of the sword named Thibault, pleased her better than the priests, for he was in military dress. She acknowledged the presence of the Committee with an obeisance, then went quickly to the squire and clapped him on the shoulder, comrade fashion.

"Would that I had many men of your way of thinking, friend," she said.

"Maid," spoke the abbot gravely, "attend now to what we shall say. We are sent to you from the King."

“I know quite well that you are sent to question me,” spoke the maiden with spirit, “but of what avail is it? I know neither A nor B.”

At this the Committee began to ply her with questions.

“Why have you come to Court?” asked the abbot.

“I am come from the King of Heaven to raise the siege of Orléans, and to lead the Dauphin to Reims for his crowning and anointing,” she made answer.

“But what made you think of coming?” asked a professor of theology.

“Because of the great pity there was in Heaven for the realm of France, my Voices told me to come, nothing doubting,” replied the maiden earnestly.

“Your voices? What voices?”

Jeanne saw that much as she disliked to talk of her visions,—it was always of her mission and her Voices that she told,—there was need of some explanation. The grave Doctors listened attentively while she told something of her revelations, but not all. She was a peasant maid, ignorant, simple, her hands hardened with toil, her way of life humble and obscure, yet as she related her ineffable experiences she seemed a thing divine.

Having much food for thought they questioned her no more that day, and Jeanne retired to the chapel to seek comfort from her saints, who all this time continued to visit her daily, yet giving only the one constantly repeated command. The next day the Committee returned.

“You tell us,” said a professor of theology, “that God wishes to free the people of France from their distress. If He wishes to free them there is no need for the soldiers you ask for.”

“In God’s name,” exclaimed Jeanne with some irritation, “the men-at-arms will fight, and God will give the victory.”

There was a stir among the learned men at this answer. The professor who had asked the question smiled as though well pleased, while the King’s advocate murmured:

“No clerk of the court could have answered better.”

After the little flurry had subsided, one Seguin, a Carmelite friar of learning and repute, next took his turn. He was a native of Limoges, and spoke the dialect of his district.

“In what language, Pucelle, do these voices speak to you?”

Now this query seemed frivolous to Jeanne. She knew no language but French, so what other could the Voices use?

“In a better than yours,” she flashed, and there followed a general laugh, for the patois of Limoges was a common subject of ridicule.

“Do you believe in God?” continued the friar, nothing daunted by the mirth.

“More firmly than you do,” she replied seriously.

“Then you must know, Pucelle, that God does not wish us to trust you without some sign that you can do what you say. Gideon, for a sign, laid a fleece of wool upon the floor, and in the morning there was dew upon it so that he could wring a bowl of water from it, while all about the floor was dry; and the second night the fleece was dry and the floor was wet. So Gideon showed to the children of Israel, and it was his sign that he was from the Lord. We can not advise the King to risk his soldiers just on the strength of your simple word. What is your sign, Pucelle?”

“In God’s name,” cried Jeanne, now thoroughly worn out, “I did not come to show signs in Poictiers; but lead me to Orléans with few or many men-at-arms, and I will show you the sign for which I am sent. Attend, and I will tell you also what is to happen in France: I will summon the English, and if they do not heed I will drive them from their siege. I will lead the Dauphin to his crowning and anointing at Reims; Paris will come into its allegiance to the rightful king, and the Duc d’Orléans will return from his captivity; so my Voices have told me.”

And of those who heard the words all lived to see the fulfillment of Jeanne’s prophecies save only the maiden herself. During her life but the first two came to pass.

“Why do you call the King the Dauphin, even as the foreigners do who deny him the right to the throne?” asked another.

“Because he is not the King until he is anointed and crowned with the sacred oil,” she answered.

And so daily for three weeks the questioning continued. Beside this formal and official examination of her faith and character, private inquests of all kinds were made concerning her claims. She was visited by every curious person, man or woman, in the town or its vicinity, and plied with endless questions, so that her simple personal story and that of her revelations became known to all the whole country round about. The two Queens, Yolande and her daughter Marie, with their ladies, took her in hand, and subjected her to an inquiry more penetrating

still than that of the graver tribunals. They inquired into her history in every subtle feminine way, testing her innocence and purity. The women were especially interested about the male attire, and pressed this query. To the Queen's mother, Yolande, she told the reasons.

"In the first place, your majesty," said the maiden simply, "'tis the only dress for fighting, which, though far from my desires or from the habits of my life, is henceforth to be my work; this being the case, I am constrained to live among men-at-arms, and such dress is therefore more seemly."

"True," said the Queen thoughtfully; then presently she nodded an emphatic approval. "You are quite right, child. I see it. Others shall see it too."

"And too," spoke Jeanne, smiling at the Queen, "the habit matters nothing after all. I must wear it to do what I am commanded to do."

Yolande went away charmed by the Maid, and reported the result not only to the waiting women, but also to the learned Council. "It was her belief," she said, "that the child was sent from God."

And so said all the women. Jeanne had ever the women with her. So also said many of the members of the Council who were growing more and more to believe in the girl. There were men who were disgusted with the cowardice and treachery of La Trémouille, and not unwilling to fight for France; the energy of such men was aroused by Jeanne's enthusiasm.

Meantime the friars who had been sent to Domremy to investigate her former manner of living now returned to report that they had found no flaw in her character. At the end of the three weeks of daily examinations there came a day when Jeanne was summoned before the whole Board of Doctors to hear the judgment of the Council. The two faithful knights, Alençon, and other of her true friends went with her to give comfort should the verdict be adverse. But Jeanne was bright and smiling, never doubting for a moment that the result could be other than in her favor. The King and his adherents had come also, and Yolande, the Queen's mother, beside a great audience of the people of the town.

After the formal opening, the Archbishop of Reims, who presided over the Council, rose and read the judgment.

"The case of the kingdom being desperate we, the members of the Council, believe that the King should not reject the Maid, nor should he lightly believe in her. But, in accordance with Holy Scripture, he ought to make trial of her by two ways, that is, first, by human wisdom, examining into her character, life, and

intentions; and secondly, by devout prayer, asking a sign of some divine deed or ground of hope by which he may judge whether she is come by the will of God.

“The Maid’s character has been studied; inquiry has been made into her birth, past life and intentions; for she has been examined by clerks, churchmen, men of the sword, matrons and widows. Nothing has been found in her but honesty, simplicity, humility, maidenhood, and devotion.

“After hearing all these reports, taking into consideration the great goodness of the Maid, and that she declares herself to be sent by God, it is therefore determined by this Council that from henceforward the King should make use of her for his wars, since it was for this she was sent. The King then, ought not to prevent her from going to Orléans to show the sign of heavenly succor, and it is the opinion of this Council that she may go with the army under honourable superintendence.”

There was dead silence as the Archbishop concluded the reading. Dead silence as the people grasped the full significance of the verdict. The incredible thing had happened. The peasant Maid had triumphed over the learned Doctors, even as her own Saint Catherine had triumphed. To the young girl, barely seventeen, was delivered the marvellous task of raising the siege of Orléans.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a storm of applause. Charles rose from his seat and beckoned the maid to come to him. As she arose to obey the command, the Court and people rose and stood reverently as a mark of homage and respect. Charles himself, moved by knightly impulse to do a kingly deed, descended from the throne, and himself escorted her to the throne where all might see, then bent low over her hand as though she were the royal creature and he but the humble servitor.

But Jeanne, the tears of gladness streaming from her eyes, fell upon her knees and kissed his hand fervently. For Charles to her was France; France, represented, embodied, and made into a living thing—the France she was come to save.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WARRIOR MAID

"Her helm was raised,
And the fair face revealed, that upward gazed,
Intensely worshipping—A still, clear face,
Youthful, but brightly solemn!—Woman's cheek
And brow were there, in deep devotion meek,
Yet glorified with inspiration's trace
On its pure paleness; while enthroned above,
The pictured virgin with her smile of love
Seem'd bending o'er her votaress."

MRS. HEMANS.

A wave of enthusiasm swept over the land as the news of the verdict of the Doctors spread. Cowed France threw off her cowardice and rose to courage and activity. Men and arms were now forthcoming for the army that began to gather at Blois, which was the nearest city to Orléans that remained in Charles's hands. Alençon and other lords, Yolande, the Queen of Sicily, loyal cities like La Rochelle opened wide their coffers, and furnished money to finance the undertaking. An inspired Maid, a Virgin sent from God was to lead France to victory against the enemy. Because God had taken pity on the distressed kingdom the invader was to be expelled by His maiden messenger. Thus spoke the people, and men took heart of grace and prepared joyously to go to the succor of Orléans.

Possession of this city was of the greatest importance to Charles; for as it lay immediately between the provinces which had submitted to the English, and those which still acknowledged his authority, it served as a gathering point for his adherents, and a stronghold from whence they could with advantage sally out and annoy their enemies. Unless this place was taken the English could not with

safety pursue the King into the southern part of the kingdom, and the success of his cause depended upon its possession. If it were lost, there was no resource left the monarch but flight. Thus upon the raising of the siege of the city depended the whole fate of France; its nationality, its very existence.

A month must pass before the full number of men and sufficient provisions could be gathered for the expedition, but Jeanne knew the need of both and was no longer impatient. From Chinon the Dauphin sent her to Tours to be fitted with armour, whither she was accompanied by her knights. It was the most important city in that part of France, and no place excelled its smiths in the making of armour. Yolande, the Queen's mother, herself designed the armour for the warrior maiden, which was to be of steel inlaid with silver, burnished to a shining whiteness symbolic of the purity of the Holy Enterprise.

By Charles's desire Jeanne was given a Household as became a person of her importance. She dwelt with Eleanor, wife of Jean du Puy, one of the Queen's ladies, and her immediate attendants consisted of Jean d'Aulon, a veteran from Orléans, who acted as her equerry, or squire; the two knights who had accompanied her from Vaucouleurs, two pages, Louis de Coutes, and Raimond, while later was added Jean Pasquerel, an Augustinian friar who was her confessor. Jeanne submitted to the Household and to the splendor with which she was now clothed, because it proclaimed the favor of the Dauphin, and was therefore best for her mission.

But for her standard and her sword she herself gave directions, for concerning these she had received revelations from her Voices. When Charles would have presented her with a sword to replace the one Robert de Baudricourt had given her she told him of a weapon at Fierbois which her Voices had told her to use.

"I have sent a letter to the priests there at Saint Catherine's asking if I may have it," she said. "I told them that it would be found buried in the earth behind the altar. The messenger should return with it to-day."

"If it be there," he remarked, half laughing.

"It will be, fair Dauphin," returned the girl instantly, with the perfect faith in her revelations that was her strength.

"But how will they know that it is the sword that you mean?" he questioned.

"There will be five crosses on the handle," said Jeanne.

The King dropped the subject for the time being, but he resolved to watch to see if the sword were found where the maiden said that it would be. He had indorsed

her, but he welcomed further proof of her inspiration. Alençon, La Trémouille and Queen Yolande were with him beside the peasant maiden, and these were listening with great interest to Jeanne's words. And now the favorite spoke, voicing the thought that was in Charles's mind:

"I should like to see this mystic sword, your Majesty," he said, his tones reflecting his scepticism.

The monarch smiled at his favorite without replying, but Alençon, detecting the underlying mockery, exclaimed with some heat:

"By St. Martin! if the Pucelle says that the sword is under the altar at Saint Catherine's, it is there. And who denies it shall answer to me."

"Gently, my cousin, gently," spoke Charles lazily. "There will be time enough for private quarrel after Orléans. 'Tis not doubt that made La Trémouille so speak, but a natural desire to witness the marvel."

At this moment there came one who spoke to one of the gentlemen in waiting, who instantly approached the King.

"Your Majesty," he said, "a man waits without. An armourer of the city. He has but come from Fierbois, and he bears a sword which he is to deliver to the Maid whom he has been told is here."

"Let him present himself at once," said Charles eagerly.

Amid a hush of expectancy the armourer whom Jeanne had sent to Fierbois entered, and advanced toward the King. At a sign from the monarch he handed to him the sword that he bore. Charles drew the weapon from its sheath and examined it curiously. It was an ancient blade, and though it had been cleaned still showed traces of rust. Upon the handle there were five crosses, as Jeanne had said there would be.

"Did the priests know that the sword was there?" he asked of the man.

"No, Sire. They said at first that the Maid must be mistaken, as they knew of no such sword; but, after much labor and search, 'twas found just where the Maid said that it would be. It was very rusty when it was taken from the earth, but when the priests started to clean it the rust fell away of itself. So marvellous is the matter deemed that there is a great stir over it at Fierbois, and the priests have had this scabbard of crimson velvet made for the Maid to carry the sacred weapon in."

"The matter is of a truth marvellous," commented Charles, laying the sword in

Jeanne's eager, outstretched hands. "But good blade though it be, Pucelle, it will need sharpening before it can be used."

Jeanne hung her head, blushing.

"It shall never be used for the shedding of blood," she said reverently. "I love it already, fair Dauphin, but it shall not be used to kill. I could not shed blood."

Charles smiled slightly at the shamefaced confession. Here was the maiden anxiously awaiting the gathering of men-at-arms that she might lead them into battle, yet declaring that she could not shed blood.

"And your standard?" he said gently. "Did you not say that you had received divine direction regarding it also?"

"Yes; but—" Jeanne paused reluctant to continue. She did not understand the reason for the design upon the standard, and was diffident about telling of it. After some urging, however, she told Charles the exact design that was to be emblazoned upon it, and was dictated to her by her saints—Margaret and Catherine, and the monarch had it painted accordingly.

It was made of white linen, a precious fabric at this time, and over its field were scattered golden lilies. In the midst of it God was painted holding the world and sitting upon the clouds; on either side an angel knelt; the motto was Jesus Marie. The standard was symbolic of her mission: the lilies of France, the country she had come to save; God, who had sent her; and Jesus, the Son of Mary, her watchword. On the reverse side of the standard Charles had fashioned the chosen blazon of the Maid: a dove argent, upon a field azure.

This was the great standard to be used for the rallying of all her host. She had also a banner and a pennon. On the banner was our Lord crucified between the Holy Virgin and Saint John. This was to be used for the gathering of the men for prayer and praise after they had confessed and made their consciences clean. On the pennon was wrought the Annunciation, the angel with a lily kneeling to the Blessed Virgin. It was to be used as a signal to those who fought around her as guards to her body. The standard Jeanne declared that she would carry herself, which was unusual for one who was to act as general. But such was the command of her heavenly guides.

"Take the standard on the part of God, and carry it boldly," they had told her.

While all these preparations were being made Jeanne made a visit of a few days to Alençon's wife and mother at St. Florent near Saumur. Jeanne of Orléans made Jeanne of D'Arc warmly welcome. She was but a young girl herself,

daughter of Charles Duke of Orléans, then nearly fifteen years a prisoner in England, whose city the English were besieging, and therefore had a peculiar interest in the purpose of Jeanne D'Arc. She feared, though, for her husband's safety, remembering the three years that he too had been a prisoner to the English, and she told these fears to Jeanne just as the latter was starting to return to Tours.

"Fear nothing, madame," comforted Jeanne. "I will bring him back to you as well as he is now, or even better."

While Jeanne was at St. Florent the two knights, Poulengy and Metz, had gone with many others from Tours on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Puy en Velay; for this year of our Lord, 1429, was the year of Jubilee, as any year was called when Good Friday and the Annunciation fell upon the same day. The years in which this occurred were always marked by strange and great events, and crowds flocked to the church which was the oldest dedicated to Our Lady.

The morning that the knights were to return Jeanne sat in an upper room of the house of Jean du Puy, whose wife had charge of her. It was the room where she received people, and was connected with the portal by a flight of stairs. There were many in the chamber, for she was now the commissioned Maid of War, with much to attend to. Presently her attention was caught by a commotion in the street below, and there came shouts and cries, and then the sound of footsteps. Wondering at the tumult, for,—though many people were always waiting in the street below to see her come and go; sometimes striving to get close enough to kiss her hands or any part of her garments and hailing her as a messenger of hope,—there was seldom any disturbance inside the portal. Her amaze grew as footsteps were heard ascending the stairs. Presently there came a quick rush of men in haste. As the door was flung wide a young voice cried:

"Jeanne, Jeanne! where are you? We have come to you, Jeanne."

Jeanne uttered a cry of joy as Pierre and Jean, her brothers, came into the room, followed by the two knights and Father Pasquerel, her confessor.

"Oh, boys!" she cried, trying to clasp both of them in her arms at once. "When did you come? How did you get here?"

"We came with the knights and Father Pasquerel from Puy en Velay, where we went with mother on a pilgrimage. Then we came on here," Pierre told her, giving her a bearlike hug.

"With mother?" exclaimed Jeanne in surprise. "Did mother go on a pilgrimage to

Puy en Velay?”

“Yes; she sends her love and blessing to you. She made offerings for you there,” spoke Jean.

“And father?” questioned she anxiously. “How is father?”

“He grieves over your absence, Jeanne, but he sends his blessing and love also.”

“Now God be thanked,” cried the Maid, weeping for very joy. “Oh, ’tis good to have you here, boys. Now you two shall be members of my Household, and be with me wherever I go.”

Happy indeed was Jeanne made by the coming of her brothers. It seemed like bringing her home to her. Now with Jean and Pierre with her, and the love and blessing of her parents she could proceed on her appointed way with light heart.

By the twenty-fifth of April everything was ready for the march to Orléans. Jeanne now left Tours and went to Blois to meet the captains and soldiers. She found a busy scene at the little town. The roads were full of oxen, cows, sheep and swine all gathered for the victualling of Orléans. What with the lowing of the cattle, the bleating of the sheep, and the riotous noise of the soldiers in camp everything was in an uproar. Jeanne established her Household, and then sent for the captains to come to her. Officers of wide renown were they: De Gaucourt, the old commander of Orléans, whom she had already met; Rais and Boussac, two marshals of France; Culent, the Lord admiral; and La Hire, the Gascon freebooter. They revered her as a saintly child, but left her declaring among themselves that the Maid would inspire the army with courage, but as for war—When had there been a woman since the time of Deborah who had known aught of its art? This Jeanne found out afterwards.

After this meeting Jeanne sent by a herald to the English a letter which she had dictated at Poictiers just after the decision of the Doctors:

“JHESUS MARIA

“King of England, and you, Duke of Bedford, calling yourself Regent of France, you, William de la Poule, Comte de Sulford, John, Lord of Talbot, and you, Thomas, Lord of Scales, who call yourselves lieutenants of the said Bedford, listen to the King of Heaven: Give back [205] to the Maid who is here sent on the part of God the King of Heaven, the keys of all the good towns which you have taken by violence in His France. She is sent on the part of God to redeem the royal rights. She is ready to make peace if you will hear reason and be just towards France, and pay for what you have taken. And you Archers, brothers-in-arms, gentiles, and others who are before the town of Orléans, go into your own country, at God’s command; but if you do not, look to hear news of the Maid, who will shortly go to see you to your great hurt. King of England, if you will not do this, I am the head of the army, and wherever I meet your people in France I will make them flee, whether they will or no, and if they will not obey, I will kill them all. I am sent from God, King of Heaven, body for body, to drive you all out of France; but if the soldiers obey, I will have mercy on them. Be not obstinate, therefore, for you shall not hold the kingdom of France from God, the King of Heaven, Son of Saint Mary; from him shall Charles hold it, the true heir, for God, the King of Heaven, wills it so, and so has it been revealed by the Maid. If you do not heed the word of God and the Maid, in whatever place we find you, we will put you to a greater rout than has been known in France for a thousand years, if you will not hear reason. And be sure that the King of Heaven will send greater strength to the Maid and to her good soldiers than you can bring with all your might, and then we shall see who has the better right, the King of Heaven or you. The Maid begs you and bids you, Duke of Bedford, not to bring destruction on yourself. If you will heed her you may come in her company where the French shall do the greatest work that has ever been done for Christianity. [206] Answer then if you will still continue against the city of Orléans. If you do so you will soon recall it to yourself to your great misfortune.

“JEANNE THE MAID.”

Then into every part of the camp this girl of seventeen penetrated. Armies of the time were full of brutal license, and gambling, blasphemy, and other vices were prevalent. Wickedness of all kinds was the rule. But rude, rough, and lawless

though the soldiers were they had their adorations, and reverenced holy things. To them the fair young girl was a saint. They adored her, and talked freely among themselves about her habits of life. She was good to the poor, she confessed daily, oftentimes she heard mass three times a day; there was too a grace of purity about her such as one might bear who descended from Heaven. So when Jeanne declared that the war was a Holy War, and that all who followed her must go clean of sin, gambling and dicing ceased, and men went to be shrived daily. La Hire, too, fierce ruffian though he was, gave up swearing, though he begged so hard to leave him something to swear by that she, having a sense of humor, left him his baton.

All now being in readiness on the morning of the twenty-eighth of April the army started on its march to Orléans. The day was bright and beautiful, ideal for the beginning of such an enterprise. The brilliant sunlight flooded the fields and meadows gay with wild flowers. At the head of the army marched a long procession of priests bearing crosses, swinging censers, with holy banners as on a pilgrimage, and chanting the “Veni Creator”; the grave and solemn music of the church accompanied strangely by the fanfares and bugle notes of the army. Following these came Jeanne on a great white horse that the King had given her. She was clad in white armour inlaid with silver—all shining like her own Saint Michael himself. A radiance of whiteness and glory under the sun—her uncovered head rising in full relief from the dazzling breastplate and gorget. With her rode D’Aulon, her squire, following immediately after were her own faithful knights, her brothers, confessor, and pages; while behind them stretched the main body of the army, a forest of glittering spears, the divisions commanded by the respective generals. Then came the long train of carts and cattle to which the army formed an escort. God’s Maid indeed seemed Jeanne as she rode, and with hearts beating high with hope the citizens of the town blessed her as she passed up the road on the way to Orléans.

Blois was thirty miles from the besieged city, on the right bank of the River Loire, on which side Orléans was also situated. It was Jeanne’s plan, in accordance with directions from Her Voices, which told her to go forward boldly, nothing doubting, to go direct to Orléans by the road on the right bank, entering the city by its western gate, past the English fortifications. But, knowing nothing of the country, she left the guidance of the army to her captains, who deceived her.

The English had built a line of strong fortresses called bastilles around Orléans—fortresses which closed all the gates of the city but one. To the French

generals the idea of trying to fight their way past those strongholds and lead the army and supplies into Orléans was preposterous; they believed the result would be the destruction of the army. Jeanne's theory of the art of war was simple; she believed it to consist in attacking at once the principal body of the enemy, but after the recent experience at Rouvray the generals hesitated to face their enemies in the field. The generals therefore decided to march to Orléans by the left bank of the river. How they were to cross the river when they came opposite to the city they seem not to have considered. Intending to use Jeanne's trust in the divine favor to stir up the enthusiasm of their soldiers they did not tell her their plans, but made her believe that Orléans was situated on the left, or south, bank of the Loire.

Therefore, crossing the bridge at Blois they marched up the south bank of the stream. As had been said, it was thirty miles from Blois to Orléans, and the army passed one night in the fields. For the first time Jeanne slept in armour, and was in consequence bruised and chafed. When it is considered that this armour included a helmet (worn by her only at night); a neck-piece or gorget; a corselet; hip joints; a kind of skirt of steel, open in the centre for freedom in riding; strong shoulder plates; steel sleeve, gauntlets, thigh pieces, knee-joints, greaves, and shoes; every piece being of steel, the wonder is that a mere girl could have carried such a weight.

About noon of the succeeding day the army came upon the heights of Olivet, two miles south of Orléans, from which the city and the position of the besieging army could be plainly seen. Then Jeanne saw how she had been deceived. Between her and the town of Orléans lay the wide river, the broken bridge, and the camps of the English.

How the cattle and so great a company of men-at-arms were to be ferried across under the artillery of the English, who held the bridge and the strong keep of Les Tourelles which guarded passage at this point, was a problem. On the further shore the people swarmed the walls and quays of the city, laboring to launch boats with sails, and so purposing to ascend the stream and meet the relieving army. But a strong wind was blowing down stream and it was impossible to bring up the heavy barges needed to transport men and provisions, while the army and the convoy seemed open to attack by Suffolk and Talbot, who could cross the river safely under the guns of the fort on the island and the bridge.

Jeanne was bitterly indignant, and spoke her mind pretty plainly to the generals, to whom the absurdity of their plan was now apparent. She wished to attack the bastilles of the English on this side of the river at once, and the soldiers were

eager to follow her, but the generals implored her not to think of it, as even though these were taken they would not have the strength to hold them. So again the army took up its march from Olivet and wended its way up the river to a point six miles above the city. The march was watched anxiously from the leaguered city, and so flat was the country that every movement could be marked after the troops left Olivet. When the expedition stopped, the Count of Dunois, natural half brother of the Duke of Orléans and commander of the city, took boat and rowed up stream and across to meet it. Jeanne spurred forward to meet the hardy young man, brown of visage, who leaped from the boat.

“Are you the Count of Dunois?” she asked.

“I am,” said he, “and right glad of your coming.”

“Was it you that gave counsel that I should come by this bank and not by the other side, and so straight against Talbot and the English?”

“I and wiser men than I gave that advice, believing it to be best and safest,” he returned mildly.

“In God’s name, the counsel of Messire is safer and wiser than yours.” She pointed to the water running rough and strong, a great wind following it, so that no sailing boats could come from the town.

“You thought to deceive me, and you rather deceived yourselves, for I bring you better help than ever came to any captain or city, the help of the King of Heaven. It is not given for love of me, but comes from God himself, who at the prayer of Saint Louis and Saint Charlemagne has had pity on the city of Orléans, and will not suffer that enemies shall have the body of the duke and his city also. But have patience. By the help of God all will go well.”

And in a moment, as it were, the wind, which was contrary and strong, shifted, and became favourable, so that each vessel could now tow two others. Dunois was much impressed by this signal grace from God, and regarded the Maid reverently. Then taking advantage of the change he had the heavy barges towed up the river five miles, where the supplies were embarked without danger of attack, the army having marched along the river bank to the same place. As the loaded barges went down stream to the city, the garrison made a sortie against the English bastille of St. Loup, to prevent its defenders from firing upon the flotilla, and thus secured the safe arrival of the supplies.

This being accomplished the Count of Dunois wished Jeanne to return with him to the city. The people were impatiently awaiting her coming, he said, and it

would give them courage and hope merely to behold her. But Jeanne was reluctant to leave the army. It had been determined that it should go back to Blois, and make a new march, returning to Orléans by the north or right bank, according to the Maid's plan. Later it was found that Jeanne could have taken the army and supplies by the English forts just as she had designed; for the English soldiers were in a demoralized condition of superstitious terror. They too had heard of the coming of the divine Maid, but they believed her to be a witch in league with Satan. The French generals did not take this fact into account.

Jeanne feared now to leave her army. She had been deceived once; how could she know that the captains would keep the promise to return with the soldiers? Then too she might lose her hold upon the men if they were without her presence. So she was reluctant to consent to enter the city. Dunois implored the captains to promise to return, and to be content without her, and so save the disappointment of the people. The captains promised, and so, sending her own confessor, Father Pasquerel, and the great standard with the soldiers, Jeanne crossed the river with Dunois, taking with her her Household and a force of two hundred lances.

It had been noon when they reached the heights of Olivet, but the march up the river, the transporting of the supplies, and the return march down the Loire had taken much time, so that it was nearly eight o'clock in the evening when she rode into the city, by way of the Burgundy gate. She was in full armour, mounted on the white horse, with her white pennon, on which was the Annunciation with the two angels, each bearing a lily in his hand, carried before her. At her left side rode Count Dunois in armour, richly appointed, and behind her came her Household and many noble and valiant lords and squires, captains and soldiers, with the burghers of Orléans who had gone out to escort her. At the gate crowds of people were waiting; the rest of the soldiers and the men and women of Orléans. All the bells of the city were ringing, and the people laughed, and wept, and shouted for joy. The Maid, the God-sent Maid had come; and they rejoiced greatly, not without cause. For they had endured much labour, and weariness and pain, and what is worse, great fear lest they should never be succored, but should lose both life and goods. Now they felt greatly comforted through the divine virtue of which they had heard in this simple maid.[8]

Through the glare of the torches Jeanne saw the sea of faces turned adoringly toward her. She stretched out her mailed hands toward them lovingly:

"Be of good cheer," she cried. "Messire hath taken pity on your distresses."

There came a press to touch her, and to touch even the horse on which she rode. So closely did the people come that a torch bearer was pushed against the pennon and the fringe took fire. Almost instantly Jeanne spurred forward, leaned down, and put out the flame with her hand, and the people shouted with enthusiasm.

To the cathedral of Saint Croix the procession wended, and entering it the maiden returned thanks. Once more the line of march was taken up, the people accompanying her the whole length of the city to the house of Jacques Boucher, treasurer of the duke of Orléans, where she was received with joy. She was to be the guest of Madame Boucher as long as she remained in the city. The Squire d'Aulon, her brothers, the two knights, and her pages were lodged in the same house.

Jeanne was in Orléans at last, ready to show the sign for which she was sent.

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[8]

Journal du Siège, upon which this description is founded.

CHAPTER XIX

The Hour and the Girl

> "*By Esther, Judith and Deborah, women of high esteem, He delivered His oppressed people. And well I know there have been women of great worship. But Jeanne is above all. Through her God hath worked many miracles.*"
>
> Christine de Pisan. *Poem in honour of the Maid.*

July 31st, 1429.

Jeanne was eager to engage the enemy the next day, and the citizens would gladly have followed her, but Dunois and the captains of the garrison did not wish it. Their argument was that they ought to await the return of the army from Blois. Jeanne's influence in war had not yet begun to be felt, and so great was the fear of the French for the English that it was said that two hundred Englishmen could put eight hundred or a thousand Frenchmen to flight.

Forced into inactivity the Maid sent a herald with a summons to the English, a procedure common at the time. There had been no reply to the letter that she had sent from Blois, and neither had the herald been returned. In this later epistle she summoned the surrender of the enemy before the attack, demanding the return of her messenger. At the same time Dunois wrote, warning them that any harm that came to the herald should be retaliated upon the persons of the English prisoners held by him. In compliance with Dunois' request the last herald was sent back, but the English threatened to burn the other. While the person of a herald was regarded as sacred by all the usages of war this man from the Armagnac witch could have no rights, they declared, and should be burned for his mistress. They laughed at the letter, and gave fierce defiances to the Maid, calling her a dairy

maid, bidding her go back to her cows, and threatening to burn her if they caught her.

But in spite of these high words there was an undercurrent of fear in the defiance. The English as well as the French believed that the latter had supernatural aid, though the English held that the Witch of the Armagnacs was emissary of evil rather than of good.

In the afternoon La Hire and Florent d'Illiers, two of the captains who had entered the city with Jeanne, with a force of men-at-arms and some citizens sallied forth from the city and attacked an English outpost between their fortress of Paris and the city wall, and drove the men into the main work. They thought to have burned this, but before they could do so the English rallied and drove them back without much firing.

Jeanne was not present at this fray, but in the evening she rode forth, the townspeople crowding about her, and placing herself on the town end of the broken bridge—called out to the enemy, addressing them courteously, summoning them once more to withdraw while there was time. Sweetly and clearly her voice rang across the water, so that the English who were in the fortress called Les Tourelles on the other side of the bridge could not fail to hear her. Sir William Glasdale,—whom the French called Classidas,—the knight in charge, came out on the bridge and answered by hurling a volume of abuse upon her. Jeanne was not prepared for the foul epithets that he called her, and for a brief time could not speak, so overwhelmed was she. Then drawing her mystic sword she waved it above her head, crying:

"Dost thou so speak, Classidas? Thou who art to die in so short a time without stroke of sword!"

But Glasdale and his captains, who by this time had hurried to the walls to catch sight of the witch, retorted with such vile words that Jeanne could not restrain her tears, and wept bitterly. And so weeping she returned to the city.

There being no sign of the return of the army Dunois, fearing that without the presence of the Maid the favorite and the Royal Council might so work upon the captains that they would fail to bring the army back, determined to go to Blois and bring it himself. On Sunday, therefore, with Jeanne's squire D'Aulon, he set forth. The Maid, with La Hire and other captains, accompanied him to cover the departure, taking a position at the special point of danger between the expedition and the enemy. But in the towers not a man budged, not a shot was fired. So Dunois went on his way unmolested, while Jeanne returned to the town. The

citizens had watched for her coming, and now walked by the side of her charger to the cathedral, where every progress ended. The press to see her was at all times great, and Jacques Boucher's door was almost broken in by the eagerness of the people. She could hardly move through the crowded streets when she went abroad, and it seemed that "they could not have enough of the sight of her."

As an attack could not be made until the return of Count Dunois with the army Jeanne rode out on Monday to reconnoitre the position of the English, followed by the captains and soldiers and a great crowd of townsfolk who seemed to feel no fear in her company.

On all sides of Orléans the country was very flat. The city was built close to the northern bank of the Loire in a parallelogram, slightly irregular on its western side, which curved outward and joined the northern line at an acute angle. It was protected by a strong wall from twenty to thirty feet high, having a parapet and machicolations, with twenty-four towers. Outside the wall, except where it faced the river, was a ditch forty feet wide and twenty feet deep.

There were four great gates in the walls that gave upon roads leading from Orléans. On the north side were two, the Bannier Gate and the Paris Gate leading to the Paris road; on the east was the Burgundy Gate and the old Roman road leading to Jargeau; and on the west, the Regnart Gate upon the road to Blois. It was through this last named gate that Jeanne went to make her reconnoissance.

She found that the principal camp of the English was on this western side. From the river northward, guarding the road to Blois, there were five great bastilles, joined by ditches and covered trenches whereby the enemy could easily prevent the going in of men and convoys of food. The massing of the greatest number here was necessary, as this road led to the royal provinces.

To the northeast the great forest of Orléans crept nearly to the city walls. About a mile and a half beyond the Burgundy Gate on the east side was the bastille of St. Loup, which commanded the road to Checy and on to Jargeau, from which the English drew many of their supplies. This was one of their strongest fortresses, and was the only one on this side, for the reason that this road led to the possessions of the Duke of Burgundy, who was with the English, and therefore no enemy was expected from this direction.

On the south, the walls of the city rose directly from the river. A great stone bridge with arches, buildings and fortifications spanned the water here, but three of the arches had been broken, for the English now held the bridge and its fortifications, having taken it from Orléans early in the siege. On the last pier

was built a strong fortress called Les Tourelles, connected with the shore of the south bank by a drawbridge, which in its turn was covered by a strong earthwork or boulevard.

As they held Les Tourelles the English had but three posts on the left side of the river. One, Champ St. Privé, that guarded the road by the left bank from Blois; Les Augustins, that was a short distance inland from the boulevard of Les Tourelles; and St. Jean le Blanc, that was higher up the river, and was a hold of no great strength.

There had been faubourgs, or suburbs, “the finest in the kingdom,” about the city, but their citizens destroyed them so that no Englishmen could be sheltered among them. Fifteen thousand people were thus rendered homeless, and crowded into Orléans, nearly doubling its population, and threatening all with famine.

As Jeanne rode round the city at leisurely pace necks were craned over the breastworks of the enemy to catch a glimpse of the witch, but not a shot was fired from the forts. Like a shining vision she seemed, clad in white armour, riding her white horse, her head covered by a little velvet cap ornamented with nodding plumes, her dark hair flying about her face, and though the English hurled words of abuse at her the lips that spoke them were pale with superstitious terror. Unmolested Jeanne completed her survey, then led her people back through the gate into the city, then to the cathedral to vespers. Here Doctor Jean de Mascon, a “very wise man,” said to her:

“My child, are you come to raise the siege?”

“In God’s name, yes.”

“My child, they are strong and well intrenched, and it will be a great feat to drive them out.” The wise man spoke despondently.

“There is nothing impossible to the power of God,” Jeanne made answer.

The garrisons of Montargis, Gien, and Château Regnard came marching into the city the next day, bringing word that the army and convoy from Blois had started on the march for Orléans.

At dawn of Wednesday, therefore, Jeanne with La Hire and five hundred of the garrison rode out to meet them. Dunois was coming by the route that Jeanne had wished to take on her entry, and it was found to be no difficult matter to make a wide detour around the forts, skirt the forest at the back of the city where the English had no bastille, and enter by the Paris Gate. So, led by the priests,

chanting the Veni Creator, as at Blois, headed by Father Pasquerel bearing the great standard, Jeanne entered the city as she had planned to do. Right beneath the forts of the English they rode and marched, but not a shot was fired, not a sally was made from the forts. John, Lord of Talbot, was a brave man, but not even a brave general can control demoralized and terrified men; men to whom the slender figure in shining armour seemed like nothing mortal. By noon Jeanne had her army safely housed in Orléans.

D'Aulon dined with Jeanne, and while they were seated at table, the Count of Dunois entered and told the maiden that there was news that Sir John Fastolf, he who had defeated the French at Rourvay in the Battle of the Herrings, was coming from Paris with reinforcements and supplies for the English, and that it was said that he was but a day's march distant. Jeanne heard the tidings joyfully.

"Dunois, Dunois," she cried, elated that at last action must come, "I command you, in God's name, to let me know as soon as he arrives. If you do not, I—will have your head."

"For that I do not fear, Jeanne," replied the Count courteously. "I shall let you have the news as soon as it comes." Then he took his leave.

Now there were some of the captains of the city who resented the enthusiasm with which the maiden had been received. This was quite natural among men who had been fighting unsuccessfully for months in defence of the beleaguered city. Dunois, La Hire, Poton Zaintrailles and a few others were exceptions to the men who felt jealousy of the Maid, but the others were sore and wounded by her appearance and claims. A certain Guillaume de Gamache felt himself insulted above all by the suggestion that Jeanne should arrange the plan of procedure against the enemy.

"What," he cried, "is the advice of this girl of the fields to be taken against that of a knight and captain! I will fold up my banner, and become again a simple soldier. I would rather have a nobleman for my master than a woman whom nobody knows."

Dunois had tried to placate these men, but vainly. Jeanne, of course, knew nothing about it. Later she was to be greatly harassed by these jealousies. Those captains who had not shared in the expeditions of the morning to meet Dunois and the army took advantage of the enthusiasm aroused by the entrance of the men-at-arms under the very guns of the enemy to make a sortie, unknown to the new leaders. They wished to show how well they could do without the presence of the Holy Maid of Vaucouleurs.

Jeanne was wearied by the early morning expedition, and so laid down in the afternoon by the side of her hostess, Madame Boucher, and was asleep. D'Aulon too felt fatigued, and also stretched himself on a couch for rest. All at once Jeanne awoke with a wild cry of agitation and alarm.

"My Council tell me to go against the English," she cried, springing out of bed. "But if to assail their towers, or to meet this Fastolf I cannot tell."

And then her trouble grew, and her eyes had the rapt look left in them by her visions.

"My arms, D'Aulon! My arms!" she cried. "Quick! The blood of our soldiers is flowing. Why did they not tell me?"

All was quiet in the streets, and there came no sign of conflict on the tranquil air of the May afternoon. But D'Aulon leaped to his feet at her cry, and without a word began to buckle on her armour, assisted by Madame Boucher and her little daughter. Meantime Jeanne was calling loudly to her page for her horse. Hurriedly the youth saddled the charger and brought it to the door. As Jeanne swung herself into the saddle she perceived that her standard was wanting.

"My banner," she cried, and Louis the page handed it to her from the upper chamber window. Then with the heavy flag staff in hand she set spurs to her horse and dashed away at speed so that the fire flashed from the stones that paved the thoroughfare. One by one her attendants armed themselves and clattered after her.

And now came shouts and cries, and all at once the streets were filled with people who cried loudly that the English were slaughtering the French.

Straight through the town Jeanne galloped, riding toward the loudest noise, which proved to be at the Burgundian Gate on the east side of the city. The gate was open to let in a rabble of retreating French who were bringing some wounded men with them. Overwhelmed with pity at the sight Jeanne paled, and half drew rein.

"I can never see French blood but my hair rises with horror," she said to D'Aulon, who had now overtaken her.

Through the gate they passed, and met a disorganized band of men-at-arms, archers, and burghers flying before the English. For the coup which had been planned by the captains was a sortie against the strong bastille of St. Loup, and it had proven disastrous to those who had undertaken it.

There went up a great shout from the French as they caught sight of Jeanne as she galloped through the gate. They rallied, turned, and swept onward after her. Clear and sweet above the din of battle sounded her bell-like voice:

“Friends, friends, have good courage. On! On! They are ours.”

There never was anything like the response that followed. The French surged forward upon the English, who had sallied confidently out of the bastille to meet the first assault, and swept their foes before them, driving them back into their fortress. Gallantly the English fought, but they were no match for men imbued with divine ardour by the Maid. Everywhere in the thick of battle the shining figure appeared, encouraging and urging the men to greater efforts. Against the formidable walls of the bastille the French hurled themselves with irresistible fury. Back and forth the tide of battle surged; back and forth, for the English made a desperate resistance. Back and forth until the vesper hour when, with a mighty rush, the French carried the place by storm. St. Loup was taken. Before the English camp on the west side could hurry reinforcements around the walls the bastille was sacked, riddled, burned. The English were cut off from Jargeau.

Dizzy with the first victory that had been theirs in years the soldiers and burghers re-entered the city with banners flying, proudly displaying the prisoners and captured munitions. And the city went wild over the Maid who had wrought the miracle. La Hire, Dunois, Poton Zaintrailles, Rais and Boussac were ready to follow wherever she might lead. The citizens pressed upon her as she rode, adoring and worshipping. All the bells in the city rang joyfully, and in the churches soldiers and citizens alike “gave thanks to God by hymns and devout orisons.” It was Jeanne’s first battle, and she wept as she prayed for those who had died unshriven. As she rose from her confession she said to Father Pasquerel:

“In five days the city shall be delivered; but I shall be wounded on Saturday, here.” And she placed her hand upon a spot between her neck and shoulder.

Thursday being the Feast of Ascension and a holy day there was no fighting. To Jeanne, whose mission was a holy one, it seemed right that the success of the day before should be followed up by an attack upon one of the English fortresses, but the captains pleaded the sanctity of the day, so none was made. But, while Jeanne confessed and took the Sacrament, exhorting the soldiers to do likewise, the captains held a Council at the house of the Chancellor of Orléans, Cousinot, taking care that news of it should not come to Jeanne.

They decided that a feigned attack should be made upon the strong bastille of St.

Laurent, which stood just beyond the Regnart Gate on the west side, which should draw off men from the forts beyond the river. When this was done the main body of the French would attack the weakened bastilles on the south bank and overcome them. The Maid, at the head of the burghers, was to make the feint while the nobles and their levies were to make the real assault across the Loire. But Jeanne was to be told no word of their design lest she should reveal the intention to the enemy.

When they had come to this conclusion Ambroise de Loré was sent to bring the Maid to the Council, and when she came in answer to the summons, Chancellor Cousinot himself told her they were to attack the great fortress of St. Laurent, and that she was to lead the attack. But of their real purpose he said no word. Jeanne's acuteness told her that something was being withheld, but she said nothing until he had made an end of the telling. Then she spoke quietly.

"What is it that you have really decided? Why do you fear to tell me what it is? I can keep a greater secret than that."

"Jeanne, do not be angry," spoke Dunois. "We cannot tell you everything at once. What the Chancellor has told you is true, but if the men in the bastilles go to the aid of those in the great fort we intend to cross the river, and fall upon them."

Jeanne professed herself satisfied, and so the matter rested. But no part of the plan was carried out. That evening she made her last summons to the English. Going to the end of the intact part of the bridge, where the people of Orléans had erected a fort, she called across the water to the English in the Tourelles, telling them that it was God's will that they should withdraw from France.

"I shall write no more," she said as she fastened a letter to an arrow and directed an archer to shoot it into the fortress. "I would have sent this in more honourable fashion, but you keep my herald, Guienne. Return him and I will return my prisoners taken at St. Loup."

"News from the Armagnac wench," shouted a soldier as he ran forward to pick up the missive. "Cowgirl! Witch! Only let us catch you, and you shall burn."

Jeanne could not keep back her tears as she heard these insults, but calling the King of Heaven to her aid, she was soon comforted, and smiled through her tears.

"I have tidings from Messire," she called back. "The English shall depart, but you, Classidas, will not see it, for you will be dead. Without stroke of sword

shall you die.”

The English hooted and jeered at these words, and hurled taunts and foul epithets upon her, and having given her last summons Jeanne returned to the city.

She rose early the next morning and confessed to Father Pasquerel, who said mass for all the Household; then she set forth followed by her personal attendants and a multitude of citizens who were in armed readiness.

The secret that the true attack was to be made on the forts across the river had somehow leaked out, but not through Jeanne. A number of burghers had been present at the Council, and they had not approved of the plan. When Jeanne appeared there was no word said about attacking the great fort of St. Laurent, but with one accord all took a line of march toward the eastern side of the city to the Burgundy Gate, which the troops must pass through in order to cross to the south bank of the river.

That the captains intended to carry out the design and make their assault without Jeanne and the townspeople was evidenced when they reached the gate. It was closed and guarded by De Gaucourt with some men-at-arms. Angry murmurs arose as the people saw their former governor with his men drawn up in formidable array, and Jeanne cried quickly:

“Gentle sir, in God’s name, open the gate, and let us pass.”

“I cannot, Jeanne,” he said. “I have orders from the Council to keep it closed, and closed it shall remain.”

At this a shout went up from the citizens, and they moved toward him threateningly. They were in no mood for interference.

“You are an evil man to prevent these people from going,” cried Jeanne. “But whether you will or no, the men shall go, and they shall prevail as before.”

Gaucourt hesitated. As he glanced at the stern faces of the citizens, who were determined to fight their way through, if necessary, he saw that he stood in peril of his life. With the ready wit of a soldier he threw wide the gate, crying:

“Come on, I will be your captain!” And the people rushed through.

Just above the bridge of Orléans there was a broad island, called St. Aignan, lying quite close to the south bank of the river, with a narrow swift passage of water between it and the shore. A little higher up the Loire, on the left side, stood the small fort of St. Jean le Blanc, which the English had built to guard the road. The plan of the captains was to cross by boat to the island, and thence by a

bridge of planks laid on boats to the southern shore, and so make an assault on St. Jean le Blanc. It would be a task of some hours to bring troops, horses, and artillery, so the townsfolk being lightly encumbered crossed first. When the English captain of the bastille saw the boats put out he abandoned the post, and retired to the Bastille of St. Augustins, opposite the Tourelles. When the townspeople found the post undefended they were wild with enthusiasm, and, without waiting for Jeanne, marched on at once to Les Augustins, and attacked it. They were no match for the disciplined English, who rushed out to fall on them. Instantly the old dread fell upon the citizens, and they became panic-stricken, fleeing in a disorganized rabble before the enemy, while De Gaucourt, their old governor, covered their retreat gallantly. Slashing, slaying, and hurling taunts and gibes at the routed French the English came on a run.

At this moment Jeanne and La Hire, who had been having difficulty with the horses in getting them across the improvised bridge, reached the shore. Seeing the rout of the French they mounted hastily, and then these two, the Maid with her banner, La Hire with lance at rest, charged the English. The English turned and fled incontinently at sight of the white figure on the white horse. The fleeing townsfolk rallied, turned, and following the men-at-arms, who had succeeded in crossing by this time, went after the Maid and the valiant La Hire, and chased the English back into their works.

Swiftly following Jeanne planted her standard under the fort of the Augustins, in the moat, and the assault begun. The English fought bravely, and again the French were repulsed. And Jeanne was everywhere, inciting the men to greater deeds by her inspiriting cry. At length the rest of the main body of troops came up with the artillery, and the assault redoubled in vigour.

The enthusiasm was with the French. Onset after onset was made. Knights vied with each other in feats of valour. A giant Englishman who gallantly defended the open gate was presently shot down by Jean the Lorraine gunner, and instantly Jeanne’s clear, girlish voice rang out:

“Enter! Enter boldly! They are ours.”

In a terrible onslaught the French rushed in upon the defenders. A few of the English escaped to the boulevard of Les Tourelles, an earthwork connected by a drawbridge with the pier upon which the Tourelles stood; the rest were slain or taken. Great deeds at arms had been performed on both sides, and the victory was hard bought, but the Bastille of St. Augustins was taken. The sun was setting, and setting also was the glory of England in France. Verily God was

speaking through His Maid.

CHAPTER XX

JEANNE SHOWS HER SIGN

"But never a son of Adam, since the song of man was scrolled,

Has followed the golden lily, by wood or wave or wold,

To triumph after triumph for which the people prayed

In vain through years of anguish, as has the matchless Maid,

The girl with the soldier spirit shrined in the angel mould—"

JUSTIN HUNTLY MCCARTHY.

"The Flower of France."

For fear that the men would fall into disorder while plundering the fortress Jeanne had the buildings of the Augustins burned. On the morrow the Tourelles must be attacked and taken, and the men must be in readiness for it. For this reason they were to encamp for the night on the hard won field. Jeanne wished to remain with them so that she might be ready to push the assault in the early morning; then too, she feared that a night attack might be made by the English, which of course was the proper procedure for the enemy. Jeanne always foresaw what an opposing force ought to do, and then tried to forestall it. But La Hire and the captains besought her to return to the city and seek the services of a leech.[9] She had been wounded in the foot by a chausse-trape (a small piece of iron, which, falling in any position, turned a foot-piercing point uppermost). Both English and French lances carried them as part of their equipment. To be ready for the great work of the next day she must have proper rest, they told her. Finally the maiden consented, and with most of the captains and squires crossed

the river to the town. The archers with a body of citizens remained on the field.

It was Friday, and Jeanne was wont to fast on that day, but on this night she broke her fast and ate a little meat, for she was worn and weary. While she was eating a knight came to tell her that the captains were in Council, and that it had been decided that enough had already been done; that their forces were too much inferior to those of the English to hazard an attack upon the Tourelles the next day; that God had greatly favored them already, and that now it seemed wisest to await reinforcements from the King. The town was now well victualled and could afford to wait. Therefore, it did not seem best to the Council to fight the next day.

Jeanne heard the announcement with quiet disdain.

“You have been with your Council,” she said, “and I have been in mine, and you may believe that the counsel of my Lord, the King of Heaven, shall prevail, while councils of your sort shall come to naught. Get up early to-morrow morning, fight your best, and you shall accomplish more than you have done to-day.”

As the knight left she turned to her confessor, and said:

“Rise to-morrow even earlier than to-day. Do your best to keep near me, for to-morrow I shall have yet more to do, and much greater things. To-morrow also blood will flow from my body here.” And again she placed her hand upon a spot above her right breast between her neck and shoulder.

The Maid was up early the next morning, but early as it was some of the burghers were waiting to see her. They had heard the decision of the captains not to fight, and had held a meeting of their own. They were not minded to wait for reinforcements from the King, they said. They had been in siege for seven months, and had nothing but broken promises from the King and his Councillors. Therefore, as God was with her, and had sent them succour through her it seemed madness not to avail themselves of the divine favour. And they besought her to go out against the enemy that day in spite of the captains, and so accomplish the mission with which she had been charged.

Jeanne needed no urging, but answered them with solemn intensity:

“Be of good cheer. In God’s name I will go against the English to-day. And the captains will go also, and will fight with us.”

The delighted burghers departed to spread the tidings, while the maiden ran down to the courtyard to mount her charger, followed by her attendants.

“Stay, Jeanne,” spoke her host Jacques Boucher, coming into the yard with a large fish, a shad, in his hand. “This is for your breakfast. Wait until it is cooked before you go. You need food before starting upon so great an enterprise.”

“Keep it until supper, messire,” cried the girl gaily. “I will back a Godon to share it with me, and to-night, gentle sir, I will come back by the bridge.”

“To-night, Pucelle? That may not be, for an arch of the bridge is broken.”

Jeanne laughed again without replying, and was off. The decision of the captains not to fight had been far from unanimous. There were those who felt that the assault ought not to be postponed, and who were desirous of following the Maid, for over some of them she had gained great influence. Consequently when the great standard appeared in the streets, and the Maid with her company was making for the Burgundy Gate these men gladly flocked to her. Dunois, La Hire, Florent d’Illiers, Poton Zaintrailles, Gaucourt, and many others crossed the river with her; there were some who remained in the city to guard it against attack.

“I will have much to do, more than ever I had,” Jeanne had said the night before. In truth it was no easy task that lay before the French.

There was first a supporting work called a boulevard, on the south bank of the Loire, on solid land, to be taken before the Tourelles could be assailed. Its rear communicated with the bastille by a drawbridge, under which ran a deep, swift strip of the river. It was strong, with high walls and surrounded by a deep fosse. Should it be taken the garrison could retire by the drawbridge to the Tourelles which, being shut off by the Loire into an islanded position was considered impregnable. Its six hundred men, the pick of the English army, were made a host by their captain, Sir William Glasdale, a brave and valorous knight. To drive such a man from such a position would be no light feat. The garrison was amply provided with cannon and small arms, and were full of determined courage.

The French were as well equipped as the English with everything necessary for the attack: arrows and crossbolts, and all small arms, “pavoises,” or strong wide screen shields, and movable wooden shelters to protect the advance of small advancing companies of assailants, cannon, ladders, beams for the ditches, and all the munitions of war. The French had the advantage in numbers over the English, but the latter were possessed of a seemingly unconquerable position.

The French army, whom the men of Orléans had been busy all night feeding and encouraging, lay in the morning sunlight waiting for the leaders. When Jeanne and the captains appeared there was instantly the bustle of activity. With D’Aulon carrying her standard, accompanied by her faithful knights, her

brothers and pages, the Maid passed through the ranks and took up her place on the border of the moat of the boulevard. About her the army was arranged in companies under its several captains, each flying its own standard.

At six o’clock the assault began by a bombardment of the boulevard by the artillery, the stone balls of the cannons being thrown sometimes as far as the Tourelles itself. From the town the guns kept up a constant fire against the fortress.

With uncalculating valour the French made the assault, varying the bombardment by furious sorties against the walls. The noise of attack and repulse was terrific. From every side the onset was made. Stooping forward with their shields slung over their backs for protection the French ran up the scaling ladders in swarms, attacking the men at the top with such hardihood that the English cried in amazement:

“Do they think that they are immortal?”

Again and again the ladders were flung down, the climbers were shot, or smitten, or grappled with and dashed into the fosse. Valiantly the English fought with bow-shot and gunshot, with axes, lances, bills, and leaden maces, and even with their fists, so that there were many killed and wounded. But like Antaeus, of whom it was fabled that being a son of the goddess, Tellus, or the earth, every fall he received from Hercules gave him more strength, so the French returned to the charge after every repulse with such vigour that it was marvellous to behold. The air was filled with shouts and cries of the captains: “France and St. Denys!” “St. George for England!” It whirled to the singing of arrows, the twang of bowstrings, the clang of axes on armour, and the roar of guns.

Exposed to all the dangers of the fray Jeanne stood, her clear girlish voice sounding high above the din and confusion of battle:

“Be of good cheer. The hour is at hand!”

But after many hours of desperate fighting the spirit of the assailants began to flag. Seeing this the Maid seized a scaling ladder, and placing it against the walls started to mount amid a rain of arrows and stones. As she did so she cried clearly:

“On, on! Be of good courage! They are ours.”

With a shout the French swarmed over the fosse with their ladders until there seemed a forest of ladders against the walls. Up Jeanne mounted, still crying out encouragements, and then—all in a moment a bolt whizzed, and uttering a cry of terror and pain the maiden reeled and fell. A great Hurrah! went up from the English—a mighty shout of triumph and rejoicing. The witch had fallen, and with her went the mysterious force that had overwhelmed them. She was slain, or if not killed her blood was shed, which forever spoiled her witchcraft; for such was the superstition. Therefore they rejoiced, and renewed the defence with confidence.

It was De Gamache, the captain who had said that he would not follow a girl of the fields whom nobody knew, who raised her, and carried her back.

“Take my horse, brave creature,” he said. “Bear no malice. I confess that I was in

the wrong."

"It is I that should be wrong if I bore malice," cried Jeanne, "for never was knight so courteous."

Her own people had followed her when she was carried out of the fray. The bolt stood out a hand-breadth behind her shoulder, and the maiden wept with the pain. She was General-in-Chief of the army, but she was seventeen, and after all but a girl, so she cried just as any girl would have done. Some one of the soldiers proposed to charm the wound with a song of healing, but the maiden cried:

"I would rather die than do so, for it would be sin."

And then, because none of her attendants would drag the bolt from her shoulder for fear of hurting her, she herself pulled it out, and as the blood gushed out she swooned. Father Pasquerel, who was surgeon as well as priest, dressed the wound with a compress soaked in oil, and Jeanne, recovering from her faint, made her confession to him, then lay quiet.

Meantime the battle languished. Discouraged assailants were drawing back from the boulevard out of bow-shot, and Dunois himself thought that there was no hope of victory, the day being nearly spent, and the men weary. So he had the recall sounded, and gave orders to retreat across the river. Brave work had been done, and the captains had not hoped to take the place in a month. The bugle notes of the retreat were welcome music to the English, and to the wearied French who had fought without cessation for thirteen hours. But when they sounded on the ears of the wounded Maid she heard them with amazement.

She rose in haste, and somehow managed to mount her horse, and so rode to Dunois.

"Doubt not," she said. "They are ours. Rest a little. Eat something. Refresh yourselves, and wait for me a little."

With that she withdrew into a little vineyard close by, and prayed for the half of a quarter of an hour. When she appeared again her eyes were shining, her whole appearance that of one inspired.

"On," she cried, "the place is ours." And she spurred toward the fosse.

Now her standard had not been removed from the edge of the moat, for D'Aulon had kept it there to be a terror to the English and an inspiration to the French. When the trumpets had sounded the retreat he, being weary and outworn, had handed it to a Basque to be carried in the retirement. But after the order for the

recall had been countermanded by Dunois at the request of the Maid, D'Aulon, moved to do a feat of arms, said to the Basque:

"If I dismount and go forward to the foot of the wall, will you follow me?"

"I will," said the Basque.

So D'Aulon leaped into the fosse, his shield up, defying the English, but the Basque did not follow; for Jeanne, seeing her standard in the hands of a man whom she did not know, thought that it was lost, and seized hold of the floating end.

"Ha! my standard! My standard!" she cried, and as she and the Basque struggled for it, the banner waved wildly like a signal for an immediate onset. The men-at-arms conceived it to be such and gathered for the attack.

"Ha, Basque! Is this what you promised me?" cried D'Aulon, and the Basque tore the banner from the Maid, ran through the ditch and stood beside the emblem. By this time Jeanne's company stood about her.

"Watch," said she to the knight at her side. "Watch till the tail of the standard touches the wall."

A few moments passed. The great standard fluttered with the movements of the Maytime breeze. Presently the knight cried:

"Jeanne, it touches!"

"Then enter," cried Jeanne her voice thrilling through the air. "In God's name, enter! All is yours."

The troops rose as one man, and flung themselves against the walls. Up they swarmed, "as thick as a cloud of birds lighting on a bush," says the old chronicle.[10] "Never was assault so fierce and wonderful seen within the memory of living man." The English, amazed at the new onset, defended themselves valiantly, but the French were irresistible. The defenders became panic-stricken as the French swarmed over the top of the earthwork. Panic-stricken, not by the enemy but by that white figure standing there beneath her standard, the rays of the setting sun striking a dazzling radiance from her shining armour. The witch was there. They had thought her dead, yet there she stood without sign of injury.

"A crowd of butterflies hangs about her," a soldier cried in terror, throwing down his weapon and turning to flee into the Tourelles.

“No; it is a dove,” gasped another who followed him.

Arrows flew on every side of the maiden, but never touched her, and on the French sped, incited to superhuman effort by the bell-like voice:

“On, on! All is yours!”

And the boulevard was taken.

Showering down blasphemies Glasdale stood on the drawbridge making a desperate effort to save his men by covering their retreat over the bridge into the Tourelles. Suddenly a foul smoke rolled up from the river, suffocating all who stood with him. The citizens had loaded a barque with sulphur and all manner of evil smelling things, and floated it under the drawbridge. Presently tongues of flames shot up from it, licking the rafters of the drawbridge, and darting through the planks, while all about them fell the stone bullets of the guns of Orléans, lighting on the roofs and walls of the Tourelles, and splashing in the waters of the Loire. Jeanne’s quick eye saw the men’s danger.

“Classidas! Classidas!” she cried. “Yield thee, yield thee to the King of Heaven. I have great pity on thee and thy people.”

Before the compassionate voice died away the bridge bent under the rush of armoured men, and broke. Glasdale and his companions plunged downward into the great river and were seen no more, for the weight of their armour, the fire and the water all conspired against them. And at the sight Jeanne broke down and wept, then kneeling began to pray for their souls.

Yet the greater part of the surviving English had succeeded in reaching the fortress, but here they found themselves assailed from another quarter—Orléans. The gap whence the arches had been broken had been spanned by gutters and beams, and through the smoke and dusk came the knights from the city, assaulting the Tourelles from that side. The struggle was soon over. Of all the stout defenders of the fort not one escaped; all were slain, drowned, or taken and held to ransom. Talbot with his English in the forts before the city had heard the French trumpets sound the recall, and had believed that the battle was over. Now the flames of boulevard and bridge blazed out the story of a new defeat.

The bells of Orléans pealed forth joyously as Jeanne re-entered the town by the bridge, as she had said she would do. The streets were crowded with people so that it was with difficulty that she could make her way through them. They pressed about her as closely as they could, to kiss her hand, her greaves, her mailed shoes, her charger, or the floating folds of her banner, while others went

before her, crying:

“Room! Room for the Maid of Orléans!”

She was no longer the holy Maid from Vaucouleurs or Domremy, she was their Maid; the Heaven-sent deliverer of their city; their Maid whom God had raised from among His poor for their salvation; their Maid, and so she has remained, and always will remain—The Maid of Orléans.

Through all the delirious joy Jeanne rode in a maze of happiness, fatigue, languor, pain, and profound pity for the souls of those who had gone unshriven to their maker. She stopped only to return thanks in the Church of St. Paul, and then rode to her lodgings, and went to bed.

On Sunday morning she arose and, weak from her wound, put on a coat of armour lighter than she had worn, and with Dunois and the captains marched out of the Regnart Gate, for the English had come out of their fortresses and were drawn up outside in battle array. The confident French soldiers were eager to attack them, but Jeanne was reluctant to do so.

“Let us not attack them, for it is Sunday,” she said. “But if they attack you, fight bravely, and you will get the better of them.”

She then sent for an altar and a priest, and bade him celebrate mass in front of both armies. When one mass was done, she bade him celebrate another, both of which she and the French and English soldiers heard with devotion.

“Now look,” she said, “and see if their faces are set toward us.”

“No,” was the answer. “They have turned their backs and are retreating toward Meung.”

“In God’s name, let them go,” she said. “Our Lord does not wish us to fight them to-day. You shall have them another time.”

La Hire with a hundred lances followed the English and found that the retreat was genuine. They had collected their prisoners and all the property they could carry, leaving their sick, their heavy guns and ammunition, huge shields and provisions behind them. Jeanne’s first herald, Guienne, was found bound to a stake preparatory to burning him. The English but waited for the decision of the University at Paris before the execution. Before it had time to arrive the siege was raised.

The army of the French returned to the city and gave thanks, and made a procession; for they were delivered of the ancient enemies of the realm.[11]

That which had been declared impossible was done. The siege of Orléans was raised. Jeanne D’Arc had shown her sign.

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[9]

Leech: surgeon.

[10]

Percéval de Cagny.

[11]

This was the foundation of the festival that has been held ever since at Orléans on the eighth of May. It was suspended for a short time during the French Revolution, but resumed afterward. Since 1429 the day has been considered as belonging to the Maid, and so throughout the centuries it has been observed. Orléans does not forget Jeanne D’Arc.

CHAPTER XXI

A Week of Wonders

> "*The goodness of her life proves that Jeanne possesses the grace of God.... She goeth forth capturing towns and castles. She is the first captain of our host. Such power had not Hector or Achilles. But God, who leads her, does all.*"
>
> Jacques Gélu, *Archbishop of Embrun. 1429*

After a few days' rest Jeanne set forth for Chinon, where the King still remained. To raise the siege of Orléans and to lead the Dauphin to his crowning and anointing were the two charges laid upon her. She had performed the first, and wished now to accomplish the latter. There was too a lack of provisions and money, the troops were dispersing, and the help of Charles was needed if the army were to be kept together. After the fall of each bastille news had been sent to the King by the citizens, and he in turn forwarded the tidings to all the good towns that held for him. "The Maid, who was always there in person at the doing of these things," is the only leader mentioned in the dispatches.

Consequently a royal welcome awaited Jeanne at all the towns through which she and her company passed. As she drew near to Tours she was amazed to see the King, accompanied by some of the courtiers, ride forth to meet her. As soon as she saw him the maiden set forth at speed to greet him, bowing low in her saddle. But Charles reached forth his hand and lifted her, bowing in turn before her as though she were a queen.

"Rise, dear Maid," he said, "and receive our welcome and our thanks for what you have done. It was a great deed, most gloriously performed. Such prowess merits rich reward; therefore speak, and say what poor return Charles may make for such services."

Jeanne looked at him eagerly with all her soul in her eyes. There was but one

desire in her heart.

“Gentle Dauphin, the only boon I crave is leave to lead you to your crowning and anointing at Reims. Out of your goodness I beg you to let us set forth at once; for now is the time.”

“At once?” The indolent monarch shrank from the suggestion, and there were murmurs among the courtiers, who did not wish anything to occur to interrupt their amusements. La Trémouille, the favorite, interposed quickly:

“It is impossible, my dear Maid. His Majesty’s person should not be exposed to such risks. Why, the road is filled with English and Burgundian strongholds. An army strong enough to open the way should first be raised, and that would take six weeks to equip.”

“But now is the time,” cried Jeanne, dismayed that there should be delay. “We should strike now before the Duke of Bedford has time to send them reinforcements. If we wait our task will be but the harder.”

“Patience, patience, Jeanne,” spoke the King soothingly. “We will go, we promise you, but not just now. You are wounded too, we hear, and sadly need the rest. So have patience for a little, we beseech you.”

So Jeanne was forced to curb her eagerness while the King dawdled away the precious days in idle pleasure. She had spoken truly: the time was ripe for action. Charles had but to mount and ride and all was his at a blow. Had he but gone straight to Reims, after Orléans, and thence on to Paris, every city would have opened its gates to him. So obviously was this the thing he ought to do that, supposing it would be done, the Duke of Bedford left Paris and shut himself up in the strong castle of Vincennes, dreading an uprising among the people. Then next he wholly withdrew to Rouen, for he had no force of men to guard the walls of Paris. But through the influence of La Trémouille, Regnault de Chartres, the Archbishop of Reims, and Raoul de Gaucourt, the former governor of Orléans, the golden opportunity was lost.

It was no part of the policy of these men to allow the King to shake off his indolence, and from this time forth they set themselves to thwart the peasant Maid who so amazingly upset their plans and schemes. It was never English or Burgundians whom Jeanne had to fear the most. They were open enemies, and with a good company of men-at-arms she could overcome them. It was the constant efforts of these foes at Court that undermined her influence and neutralized any advantage that she might gain.

The campaign of Orléans had been allowed. La Trémouille was willing that the city should be relieved, if it could be done without danger to his power, but the completeness of the girl's victory had aroused his opponents, and there was a dangerous current of French patriotism awakening which, unless subdued, meant the overthrow of himself and his party. It was said of him truthfully that he had "a foot both in the Burgundy and French camps," and the present state of France suited him admirably. So Jeanne found herself opposed by these wretched politicians in her plans for the redemption of her country. Her true friends were the gallant captains of the armed companies that accompanied her on the campaigns, and the simple people who believed that she had a mission from Heaven, and was inspired by saints and angels.

Thus, longing for the dash of action that would drive the enemy from the land, Jeanne was thrown into the frivolity of the Court instead. A fortnight was spent by Charles in lengthy debates with his Counsellors, and in a round of pleasures; then he removed to Loches, some thirty miles from Tours, where there was a grim fortress better suited to his humours than a city. Being a part of his household, Jeanne went also.

In every place that she entered the people crowded about her horse, and tried to kiss her shoes or her hands. The Abbot, Robert le Macon, one of those who had examined her at Poictiers, reproved her sharply for allowing these manifestations, and told her that it was making the people idolatrous.

"In truth," answered Jeanne, smiling at him, "I should not know how to guard myself from these things, unless God guarded me. They love me because I have never done them any unkindness, but helped them as I could."

Charles tried by means of rich gifts to make the maiden content to remain in idleness, and so to cease from importuning him to set forth for his anointing. But, though Jeanne delighted in pretty clothes and presents, as was natural in a young girl, she never for one moment lost sight of her mission. Nor did she abstain from entreating the Dauphin to go to Reims. And now Alençon and Dunois, her good friends, came to the Court, and added their pleas to hers that he should set forth for the crowning, but Charles did not discover the hurry to save his kingdom that they did.

Greatly distressed by the waiting, one day Jeanne's patience reached its limit. Knowing that the King was in Council with Sir Christopher d'Harcourt, Gerard Machet, his confessor, Robert le Macon and Dunois, she went boldly to the door of the Council Chamber, and knocked. Being admitted she went at once to the

monarch, and threw herself at his feet, clasping his knees.

“Noble Dauphin, you hold so many and such long Councils,” she cried. “Rather come to Reims and receive your worthy crown.”

“Does your Counsel tell you to say this?” asked d’Harcourt, the Bishop of Castres.

“Yes,” replied Jeanne. “The Voices urge this chiefly.”

“Will you not tell us in the presence of the King the nature of this Counsel?”

Jeanne blushed and hesitated before replying. Then she said:

“I understand what it is that you wish to know, and I will gladly satisfy you.”

“Jeanne,” said Charles kindly, “it would be very good if you could do what they ask in the presence of those here; but are you sure that you are willing to speak about it?”

“Yes, sire,” she answered simply. Then she turned to them, and spoke with visible emotion.

“When I am vexed to find myself disbelieved in the things I say from God, I retire by myself and pray to God, complaining and asking of Him why I am not listened to. And when I have finished my prayer I hear a Voice saying: ‘Daughter of God, on, on! I will help thee. On!’ And when I hear the Voice I have great joy. I would that I could always feel thus.”

The maiden’s face shone as she spoke, “lifting her eyes to Heaven, and she was in marvellous ecstasy,” so that the men who heard her were dazzled, and sat speechless looking on. Then all in a moment there came a change. Jeanne’s features worked, and she was overcome by emotion. She turned toward the King beseechingly, and cried brokenly:

“The time is so short. Oh, use it, use it, sire. I shall last such a little while: only a year and little more. Oh, sire, ’tis such a little time to work for France.”

Charles was deeply moved, as were also those with him.

“Dear Maid,” he said, “I will go whenever you—” Robert le Macon interposed softly:

“When the roads are clear between here and Reims. Your Majesty. It would not be wise to risk your person on an uncertainty.”

“Let me clear the road, noble Dauphin,” exclaimed the maiden quickly. “I

beseech you, out of your grace to grant me leave to do it."

"There still remain the strong places on the Loire which will have to be broken up," remarked the King dubiously.

"They can be broken up. Then you can march."

"Well, you have our permission to do it, Jeanne," said the monarch, half laughing. "Never was there such an indefatigable little soldier!"

"When may I begin, sire?" Jeanne's delight was plainly evident. The delay was over; action might begin. No wonder she rejoiced.

"As soon as you please," Charles told her graciously.

Joyously the girl left the room, and began immediately the task of gathering the army together; the army that had been forced to disband through the inertia of its King. A tide of popular enthusiasm arose as soon as it became known that the English towns on the Loire were to be attacked, and from all quarters came men eager to fight, with or without pay; beginning again to hope for their country and aroused by the Maid's exploits before Orléans. Selles, a town of Berri, about fifteen miles from Loches and about fifty miles south of Orléans, was chosen for the recruiting camp.

Thither, among other nobles, came one day the two young Counts de Laval: Guy and his brother André, who could not rest until they had seen Jeanne. Their father had been slain at Agincourt, and they had been brought up by their mother, who had defended their castles against the English, and by their grandmother, in her youth the wife of the great constable, Bertrand Du Gueselin, who had done great deeds for France. Full of boyish enthusiasm for the Maid, they wrote home to their mothers, telling them of Jeanne:

"She seems a creature wholly divine, whether to see or hear. Monday at vespers she left Selles to go to Romorantin, three leagues in advance of the army, the Marshal of Boussac and a great many soldiers and common people being with her. I saw her get on horseback, armed all in white, except her head, with a little battle-axe in her hand, riding a great black courser, which was very restive at the door of her lodgings, and would not let her mount. So she said, 'Lead him to the cross,' which was in front of the church near by, in the road. There she mounted without his budging, just as if he had been tied. And she turned to the church door and called in her sweet woman's voice: 'You priests and churchmen, make processions and prayers to God.' She then set out on the road, calling, 'Forward! Forward!' with her little battle-axe in her hand, and her banner carried by a page.

Her brothers went with her, all armed in white."

At Romorantin Jeanne and Alençon, who had been given the command under the Maid, were joined by Dunois and other captains, and together they entered Orléans on the Ninth of June. The people received her with joy, and set about supplying her impoverished army with supplies and artillery, making their gifts directly to the Maid whose courage and wisdom they had cause to know. They were grateful for their deliverance, but to make that deliverance secure the Loire must be cleared of the strongholds that menaced it. The first point of attack was Jargeau, which lay above Orléans on the south bank of the Loire, about ten miles. It was connected with the north bank by a bridge, which was the only bridge across the river between Orléans and Gien, and was held for the English by the Earl of Suffolk, one of the commanders before Orléans, who had retreated into this place after the raising of the siege. Ten miles below Orléans lay Meung, which also had a fortified bridge, and six miles below Meung was Beaugency, with a bridge also fortified. Both these places were held by the English, Talbot being in Beaugency, and Lord Scales, his lieutenant, being in Meung. The next bridge across the river was at Blois, which was French, so that the English could cross either above or below Orléans into the Dauphin's provinces. By bringing large reinforcements into these places the siege of Orléans could be renewed at any time by the English. It was the part of wisdom to clear them of the enemy.

As has been said, the first point of attack was Jargeau, for the reason that news was brought that Sir John Fastolf was proceeding toward it with reinforcements, and it was Jeanne's plan to attack it before he could reach it. It was a strong place. After Jeanne left Orléans Dunois had stormed it unsuccessfully for three hours, and Suffolk had strengthened its defences. Its garrison was experienced in all the arts of war.

On the eleventh of June the advance was begun on the town, and on the way the associate commanders were seized with hesitation, using many arguments to get the Maid to postpone the attack. To which she replied:

"Success is certain. If I were not assured of this from God, I would rather herd sheep than put myself in so great jeopardy."

The men of Orléans were in the van, and, encouraged by the marvellous success of the month before, rushed to the attack without waiting for the men-at-arms or the artillery, and tried to storm the place. The garrison easily beat them off, and charged upon them, driving them back to the main body. Then Jeanne rode forward, standard in hand, and led the men-at-arms to the rescue. The English in

turn were driven back, the French occupied the environs to the very ditch, and passing the night there, after the Maid had summoned Suffolk to yield peaceably to the Dauphin.

The next morning the artillery was placed and Alençon wondered audibly at Jeanne's expertness in laying the guns.

"Where got you such skill in military matters, Jeanne?" he exclaimed. "Who taught you where to set those guns? You go to work as though you were a captain of twenty or thirty years' experience."

"It is my Lord who tells me," answered Jeanne, regarding him with reverent look in her large grave eyes. "When I see a place I know at once where the artillery should be placed."

At which the young duke's wonder grew; for he knew that she had never seen ordnance until at Orléans the month before. While the captains were planning the mode of attack word came that the Earl of Suffolk was parleying with La Hire, offering to surrender if not relieved within fifteen days, no doubt believing that Fastolf would arrive with reinforcements before that time.

"Tell them that they may leave in their tunics, without arms or armour," cried Jeanne. "Otherwise the place will be stormed at once."

The terms were refused by Suffolk, and immediately the cannon began their work. One of the towers of the town was destroyed, and the sharpshooters of the French picked off some of the garrison with their culverins. The English too used their artillery with telling effect. As Jeanne and Alençon stood watching the bombardment, she cried out to him suddenly, recalling the promise she had made his wife to bring him back safe.

"Change your position. That gun will kill you!" pointing to a gun on the walls. Alençon stepped aside quickly, and a few moments later a gentleman was killed on that very spot.

Soon Jeanne urged an assault on the walls, which Alençon believed to be premature. He thought that the artillery should continue the bombardment before the attack should be made, and was therefore reluctant to follow. As the trumpets sounded the assault, and he did not advance, Jeanne turned upon him quickly:

"Why do you hesitate?" she asked. "Doubt not! When it pleases God the hour is prepared. God helps those who help themselves." As he still hesitated she added: "Ah, gentle duke, are you afraid? Do you not know that I promised your wife to bring you back safe and sound?" Thereupon they both rushed to the attack.

As the body of the men rushed into the fosse to plant the scaling ladders Suffolk tried to parley, but it was now too late. The English resistance was effective and stubborn, so that for several hours the struggle went on with Jeanne in the thick of it. The ditch was bridged and, banner in hand, the Maid started up one of the scaling ladders as at the Tourelles and tried to mount the wall. One of the garrison threw down a stone which crashed through the banner, struck on the light helmet that she wore, and stretched her stunned to the ground. For a moment only she lay, and then springing to her feet unhurt, she cried:

“Friends, friends, on! On! Our Lord has condemned the English. They are ours! Have good courage.”

The French had learned that cry. They knew that victory awaited them, and swarmed over the walls in a rush that carried all before them. Suffolk retreated toward the bridge, hoping to escape across it into the Beauce, but the French followed him too closely. One of his brothers and many of the garrison were slain, but he and all who were left alive were captured. As Suffolk was surrounded a knight cried:

“Yield thee, Suffolk! Yield thee, rescue or no rescue!”

“I will yield to none but the most valiant woman in the world,” answered Suffolk proudly. And he would give his sword to none other than Jeanne herself.

So Jargeau was taken.

The town even to the churches was sacked, and Jeanne found herself powerless to prevent the sacrilege, but she profited by the experience. Some of the prisoners had been butchered because their captors had quarreled over the right to ransom them, so that it was deemed best to send the other captives down to Orléans by boat during the night. This was another lesson that Jeanne took to heart.

Alençon and Jeanne returned in triumph to Orléans, where the burghers gave them a royal welcome, making them many presents. Among Jeanne’s were a hucque and a rich robe of the Orléans colors, green and crimson. In the old times the green had been bright and clear, but it had darkened after the murder of Duke Louis by Jean Sans Peur of Burgundy, and since Agincourt was almost black. The hucque was of green, and the robe, or overcoat, was of crimson “cramoisy” lined with white satin and embroidered with the device of Orléans, the nettle.

With Meung and Beaugency still left to attack Jeanne felt the necessity of immediate action. Sir John Fastolf was at that very time at Janville, only twenty-

five miles' distant from Jargeau; since that town had fallen he would press forward to Talbot's assistance. The Maid permitted but one day of rest in Orléans.

"Now we must go to see the English at Meung," she told Alençon. "We will march to-morrow after dinner. Give orders to that effect."

Meung, as has been said, was the nearest fortified town to Orléans down the river, being distant some ten miles. Its bridge was a mile upstream from the town, and well fortified. It was attacked the afternoon of the next day, as Jeanne had desired, and fell easily. Placing a French garrison in the bridge towers the Maid with her forces camped for the night in the fields and next morning passed on down the river to Beaugency. These towns with their castles and towers were very conspicuous on the flat plain of the Loire; and bodies of men were easily seen by the watchmen on the walls. As soon, therefore, as the English saw the French approaching they did not try to defend the town, but retired into the castle, leaving men ambushed in houses and sheds to surprise the French. They were under command of Matthew Gough, a brave Welshman, for Talbot, having no force sufficient to meet the enemy in the field, left Beaugency and rode off with a small company to Janville to hasten the coming of Fastolf. As the French marched into the town the men hidden in the houses fell upon them, but with losses upon both sides were driven into the castle. Jeanne placed the guns, and battered the castle until evening, when news came that was disturbing; for the Constable of France was advancing with a force of men and wished to join her.

The Comte de Richemont, Constable of France, was a great nobleman and a famous leader, but at the present time was in disgrace with the King and exiled from Court, largely through the machinations of La Trémouille and his party. He had wished to assist in raising the siege of Orléans, but the King had forbidden it, and consequently his approach caused both Alençon and Jeanne disquietude.

He was no friend of Jeanne's, believing it to be a disgrace to France that her armies should be led and victories gained by a woman, probably a witch, a creature unworthy to stand before armed men. The Constable could hardly be blamed for holding this opinion of the Maid; excepting those who came in personal contact with her such belief was general. The captains and soldiers reverenced her, holding that she was truly sent of God; the simple people had no doubt of it. The English believed firmly that she was a witch. The Regent Bedford in his report to England concerning the failure of the siege of Orléans said that it was caused by "false enchantments and witchcraft of a Maid." Richemont was a sworn enemy to all such.

The French generals were divided over the advisability of receiving him. He was own uncle to Alençon, and the latter had no personal quarrel with him, but the King's command was that Richemont should not be received should he come with his force. Alençon, therefore, declared that he would withdraw should the Constable's aid be accepted. It was an embarrassing moment. Jeanne herself did not regard his coming with much pleasure, but it was not her way to reject any champion of France. So, as just at this time news was received of the advance of the English under Talbot and Fastolf, she persuaded Alençon that they ought to accept the proffered aid gladly.

"He is French, my gentle duke," she said. "And Frenchmen ought to lay aside private quarrels for France. In God's name, then let us welcome him."

In the end this wise counsel prevailed, and both Jeanne and Duc Alençon rode forth to meet the Constable.

"Jeanne," said Richemont, as the maiden alighted from her horse to greet him, "they tell me that you are against me. I know not whether you come from God—or elsewhere. If from God, I do not fear you, for He knows my good will; if from the Devil, I fear you still less."

"Brave Constable," returned the maiden, smiling, "you are not here by any will of mine; but since you are here you are welcome."

They then mounted and rode back to Beaugency. Immediately they were obliged to make ready for battle, for Talbot and Fastolf had come up with their forces, and rested at a spot between Meung and Beaugency, distant about a league from each town. The French army took up a strong position on a hill in front of Beaugency, covering the siege of the castle and the town. Night was coming on, but the English formed in line of battle, and waited for the French to begin the attack. From their excellent position the French watched the enemy's preparations, but made no move to fight. Becoming impatient the English sent two heralds, saying that three English knights would fight any who would come down into the plain. Jeanne declined the challenge.

"Go to your rest to-day," she sent back word. "It is late enough. To-morrow, if it please God and Our Lady, we shall see you at closer quarters."

Later, scouts reported to Jeanne and the French captains that the English were withdrawing from their position in the plain, and were headed northward.

"They are going to Meung," cried the Maid joyfully. "They will occupy the town, and try to take the bridge, thinking to come down on the other side of the

river, and so relieve the garrison here at Beaugency in that way. But Beaugency will surrender as soon as it hears the news that Talbot has gone."

Which proved to be the case. Matthew Gough, upon learning that the English army had retreated, felt that his case was hopeless. He had seen that Alençon was reinforced by the Constable, and believed that Talbot had left him to his fate. Therefore, at midnight he capitulated on easy terms. His men with their horses and armour, and goods to the value of a silver mark, were allowed to march away, on the condition that they were not to fight against the Dauphin for ten days; he himself was held as hostage.

At dawn the French were up and away to Meung, where they found that Talbot had indeed been battering the bridge held by the French all night long, but the bridge held. On receipt of the news that Gough had surrendered Talbot and Fastolf with all the united forces of the English set off across the wooded plain of Beauce, as the country north of the Loire was called, for Paris.

The French were uncertain what to do. An encounter in the open field, an open hand-to-hand battle between the French and the English, had heretofore resulted in victory for the English. Such a thing as the French holding their own and attaining victory over the enemy had never been known. They would rather avoid an engagement than risk such a disaster. To arrive at an understanding Alençon assembled the captains for a Council of war. He turned to Jeanne first.

"What shall be done now?" he asked.

"Have good spurs," she told him.

"What?" he cried astonished. "Are we to turn our backs?"

"Nenni," answered she, laughing. "The English will not defend themselves, and you will need good spurs to follow them."

There was a murmur at these words; a murmur of confidence for the prophecy put heart into men who had been wont to fly instead of pursue. Eagerly now they prepared to follow the retreating English. La Hire and Dunois with a company of eighty men, mounted on the best horses, rode in advance, and the main body of the army came more slowly. Jeanne preferred going with the vanguard, but the leaders feared that they might run into an ambush, and would not permit the risk. Jeanne was angry over this. She liked the thick of the fight, and chafed at following, but it was well that she remained with the main body, for the men needed encouragement.

It was a long ride and a dangerous one. The wide plain was covered by a dense

growth of underbrush and trees, and there was danger of an ambush. Not an Englishman was visible. Cautiously the French made their way, and some of the captains began to show signs of uneasiness. Jeanne encouraged them constantly.

“In God’s name we must fight them; if they were hung in the clouds we should have them, for God has sent them to us that we might punish them.” And again:

“Fear naught. This day the gentle Dauphin shall have the greatest victory he has ever won; my Counsel have told me that they are ours.”

The pursuit continued until near Patay, a town standing midway between Meung and Rouvray, where Fastolf had won the Battle of Herrings in February. La Hire and his scouts were scouring the country to get trace of the English, but without success. All at once they roused a stag as they rode, and, startled, the animal bounded away before them, disappearing into some bushes which grew as a hedge by the roadside. Instantly there came a shout from English voices—a cheer of delight as the creature plunged among them, and, not suspecting that the French van was so near, they began to fire upon it.

La Hire drew rein, and sent back a messenger to the main army to hurry forward. Then with a shout he and his company spurred forward, and charged the English before they had time to form, or to set up their usual defenses.

Now Talbot had been marching in three bodies. First, the advance guard; then his artillery; then his battle corps a good way in the rear. When he was within a league of Patay some of his scouts reported that a large body of the French was advancing toward him. Seeing that he could not escape without some fighting he posted his advance guard with the wagons and artillery behind some strong hedges which would cover their front from the French cavalry. He himself with five hundred archers halted in a place where the road through which the French must pass was bordered on both sides by a hedge. Here he stood waiting for the enemy, waiting too for his main body of troops under Sir John Fastolf to join the train, when the advent of the stag discovered his presence to the French.

The English archers were thrown into wildest confusion and disorder by the suddenness of the onslaught. Slashing and slaying, the French cut them down, pressing onward toward the advance guard of the English with the wagons and artillery. Sir John began to gallop toward the advance guard, but to the latter he seemed to be fleeing before the enemy. Panic seized them, and leaving the provisions and guns the troops broke and fled, utterly demoralized, on the road toward Patay. Talbot himself fought with desperation and rage, to be thus overcome a second time by a girl whom he believed to be a pernicious witch, but

was finally taken prisoner by Poton Zaintrailles, while his men fled and were killed in their flight. Fastolf turned back to the field, hoping to die there or be captured, but his escort dragged him off, and at length he too rode off toward Paris. His men were cut down at the will of the victors.

The Battle of Patay was won.

But it was a bloody field, for slaughter of fugitives who were not valuable followed. Jeanne had never seen such a massacre, and “she had great compassion on the victims.” Meeting a Frenchman who was brutally using a prisoner she flung herself from her horse, indignant that he should be subjected to such treatment, and seating herself beside him lifted his bleeding head upon her lap. Sending for a priest that he might have the last comforts of religion she comforted him with womanly tenderness until he died.

Jeanne wanted the English out of France. She fought them that she might achieve that end. She had steeled herself to the necessity of war, but pity was always enthroned in her heart. A wounded enemy appealed to her tenderness as much as one of her own countrymen would have done.

And so ended a great week of wonders. Between June eleventh and eighteenth the Maid had delivered three strong towns from the English, and routed them in open field. All the Loire and the waterway was now in the power of France. But it was not Alençon, nor Dunois, nor the French generals who had secured the victories. It was the dauntless girl, the peasant maid in whom was more of the divine than human—she who after a scarce month of war bore herself like the “most skilled captain in the world who all his life has been trained to war”[12]—this girl of seventeen who bade fair to be the best soldier of them all.

[12]

De Termes.

CHAPTER XXII

The Culmination

"*Along this square she moved, sweet Joan of Arc,—*

With face more pallid than a day-lit star
Half-seen, half-doubted; while before her, dark

Stretched the array of war."

Maria Lowell.

The next day, which was Sunday, Jeanne and her men returned to Orléans in triumph, and were "nobly received." The streets were crowded with people who were wild with joy at sight of the Maid, and who gave her a tempestuous welcome. They formed processions and went to the churches, where "they thanked God and the Virgin Mary and the Blessed Saints of Paradise for the mercy and honor which Our Lord had shown to the King and to them all, and saying that without the Maid such marvels could not have been done."

To all parts of France the news of the victory of Patay was carried with incredible quickness, and everywhere the loyal towns celebrated the event by singing Te Deums, by processions and prayers, by bonfires and by bell ringings. But the tidings that brought such rejoicing to the hearts of the French, caused consternation among the partisans of Burgundy and England. On Tuesday when Sir John Fastolf and other fugitives brought the story of the disaster of Patay into Paris, there was a riot, and many believed that the victorious French were coming at once to attack the city. Had this been true the town must have fallen, for the English troops were thoroughly demoralized. Rank and file were filled with superstitious terror of the Armagnac Witch, and the Duke of Bedford was at the end of his resources.

In Orléans the exultation was greatest, for Jeanne was counted their Maid, and

the people expected that their King would come to greet her and start for his crowning from that city. Consequently the burghers decorated the streets and prepared to give him royal welcome, but he did not come. He was at Sully being entertained by La Trémouille, frittering away his time in pleasure while a girl fought his battles for him. Jeanne, therefore, after a few days of rest left Orléans to join him and to urge his instant departure for Reims. She met him at St. Bénoit-sur-Loire on his way to Châteauneuf. Charles was exceedingly gracious, showering her with praise.

“Wonderfully you have wrought, Jeanne,” he said. “Greatly have you earned our gratitude. What guerdon shall be yours for these amazing labors?”

“Sire, that you will start at once for Reims to be crowned is all that I desire.”

“We will go, dear Maid. We promise you, but now you must rest. Greatly have you endeared yourself to us, and above all we desire your welfare. Therefore, rest from these labors to please your King.”

Now Jeanne had just taken three fortified towns, and had cut a great army to pieces. In smaller towns and fortresses the citizens had risen and driven their English garrisons out of the gates upon receipt of the news of Patay, so the golden lilies floated over the cleared country of the Beauce nearly to Paris. She had done all this that the Dauphin might safely march to Reims. She had been told that if the Loire were cleared the march would be begun, and now he wished further delay. It was too much for the girl, who longed so ardently to complete her mission, for she knew that her time was short, and she burst into tears.

“Jeanne, ma mie, what is it?” asked the monarch, disturbed by her emotion.

“Ah, gentle Dauphin,” she said brokenly, “you are not King until the sacred oil shall anoint you. Doubt no longer, but come to your sacring. The whole realm shall be yours when you are consecrated.”

“We will go, beloved Maid, and that right soon. But you? Is there not some gift or boon that you wish other than this?”

“Sire, forgive the Comte de Richemont, and receive him again at Court, I beseech you. Great aid did he give us at Beaugency, and at Patay. For the sake of France, Sire, grant this favor.”

But Charles shook his head. At this moment Alençon and Dunois drew near and added their pleas to Jeanne’s that the Constable should be forgiven, but the King was obdurate. So Richemont, who had helped to administer the greatest blow to English domination that had ever been given, was rejected once more. He had

remained at Beaugency to await the result of the embassies, and had even sent two of his own gentlemen to La Trémouille to plead that he might be allowed to serve the King in the state of the country. But all his overtures were refused, so he withdrew to his own estates, and Charles lost a good soldier.

And Jeanne, to her amazement, for she had given every sign required of her, found herself opposed by almost incredible difficulties. The King was plainly reluctant to act, and seemed averse to taking a decided step of any kind. From every point of view the march to Reims and the accomplishment of the great object of her mission was the wisest and most practicable thing to do. But there were delays and parleyings. Had the maiden not been sustained by her Voices and her duty to her country she would have been discouraged.

But all France was rousing, and was beginning to call upon the King in no uncertain tones. It was said that the Maid would lead the Dauphin to his crowning if she were allowed; that after the deeds she had wrought she should be given the opportunity. La Trémouille recognized a dangerous note in the general talk, and a Council of War was held in which it was decided to risk an advance. Gien was chosen as the base for the army, and Jeanne went to Orléans to bring up the troops and munitions that were left in that city.

“Sound the trumpet, and mount,” she said to Alençon on the twenty-fourth of June. “It is time to go to the noble Charles and start him on his way to be consecrated.”

Which was easier said than done. There were many of the Councillors who wished to besiege La Charité and other small towns on the upper Loire, which would have profited nothing; still others were for a bold move into Normandy to attack the English at Rouen, where they were strongest. But Jeanne insisted that the Dauphin should march to Reims. Her Voices had told her to take him there to be crowned that the people might know that he was the true King, and to the maiden, sublime in her faith, that was the thing to do.

It was objected that there were many cities and walled towns and strongholds well guarded by English and Burgundians in the way, but she answered:

“I know it well, and all that I hold as naught.”

Worn out finally by the futile arguments and the wasting of so much precious time, when all hope lay in a quick advance against the enemy before Bedford could bring over new troops from England, Jeanne left the Court, and went to her army which lay in the fields near Gien. There was comfort there, for the soldiers declared that they would go wherever she wished to lead them. There

were princes of the blood among the men; great lords, and knights, and squires of high and low degree. They had come from all parts of loyal France bringing their companies, eager to serve, for the “great hope of the good that should come to the country through Jeanne, and they earnestly desired to serve under her, and to learn her deeds, as if the matter were God’s doings.” There was little or no pay for the men, but enthusiasm took the place of money. Jeanne’s exploits had made her a personage, and not only France but all Europe was rife with curiosity concerning her, and her deeds. Many were attracted to the army by her fame, and it was said, though not openly, for no man was bold enough to speak against La Trémouille at this time, that if the Favorite would permit it an army large enough to drive every Englishman out of France could be raised.

On Monday, the twenty-seventh of June, Jeanne crossed the River Loire with part of the army, and on Wednesday the King and his Councillors reluctantly followed her. The march upon Reims had at last begun.

Fifty miles to the eastward of Gien was the town of Auxerre. It was under Burgundian allegiance, and if it admitted the Dauphin, had good reason to fear Burgundy. So its gates were closed upon the approach of the King and his army. Jeanne and the captains wished to attack it at once, but the town sold food to the troops and sent bribes to La Trémouille to exempt it from assault. The bribes were accepted, though a mere military demonstration would have opened its gates, and the army passed on, the town giving some sort of a promise to submit if Troyes, and Châlons, and Reims should acknowledge the King. Other smaller strongholds on the road yielded upon being summoned, and presently Charles and his army were before Troyes.

It was the capital of Champagne, about forty miles to the northeast of Auxerre. The whole province was greatly excited by the advance of the royal forces, and those who held for the English were much alarmed. The cities were not sure of each other, and each feared to be either the last or the first to open its gates to the King.

So, during the march toward it, Troyes sent letters to Reims saying that it had heard that the latter would submit to the Dauphin, but that its own citizens would do nothing of the sort, but would uphold the cause of King Henry and the Duke of Bedford even to the death inclusive.

Now Troyes had reasons for taking this bold stand. It was the place where the treaty which had given France to England had been signed; where the French princess, Catherine, was married to Henry Fifth of England, and where the

Dauphin was disinherited by his mother. The burghers had arrayed themselves with the Burgundians and the English after the treaty, and feared now that if Charles were admitted to their city he would wreak vengeance upon them.

Charles stopped at Saint Phal, within fifteen miles of Troyes, from which place both he and Jeanne sent the burghers letters. The King demanded that they should render the obedience they owed him, and he would make no difficulty about things past for which they might fear that he should take vengeance; that was not his will, but that they should govern themselves toward their sovereign as they ought, and he would forget all and hold them in good grace.

Jeanne's letter was to the people, in which she summoned them to their allegiance in the name of the Sovereign Lord of all. They must recognize their rightful Lord who was moving on Paris by way of Reims, with the aid of King Jesus, she said. If they did not yield the Dauphin none the less would enter the city.

The letters were received at Troyes on the morning of the fifth of July, and copies were at once sent to Reims with assurances that the city would hold out to the death, and begging the men of Reims to send at once to Burgundy and Bedford for assistance.

The royal army meantime camped before the walls for several days, hoping that the town would surrender. There were a few sallies which resulted in nothing of importance. The burghers held off, expecting the same terms would be given them that were granted Auxerre. After nearly a week the supplies of the besiegers began to get low. The Dauphin could not provision his troops at Troyes, and Gien, his base of supplies, was thirty leagues away. He could not pass on to Reims and leave the town in his rear, for so strongly garrisoned a place would be a menace, and the state of the army was becoming seriously grave. So Charles called a Council to consider what were best to be done, but Jeanne was not asked to attend.

Regnault Chartres, Archbishop of Reims, was for retreating, and a number of Councillors were against assaulting the city. One after another they gave their opinions, some arguing that if they did not retreat it would be best to leave the hostile fortress in their rear and press on towards Reims. When it came the turn of Robert le Macon, the old Chancellor of Charles VI, he said that the march had been undertaken in reliance neither upon the number of their troops nor upon the richness of their treasury, but because the Maid advised them that such was the will of God. He suggested, therefore, that she be called to the Council. At this

moment Jeanne, becoming impatient over the long debate, knocked at the door. She was at once admitted, and the Archbishop of Reims took it upon himself to explain:

“Jeanne,” said he, “the King and his Council are in great perplexity to know what they shall do.”

“Shall I be believed if I speak?” asked the maiden, who was learning from experience that even messages from Heaven may be set aside by the will of man.

“I can not tell,” replied the King, to whom she addressed herself; “though if you say things that are reasonable and profitable I shall certainly believe you.”

“Shall I be believed?” she asked again.

“Yes,” said the King, “according as you speak.”

“Noble Dauphin, order your people to assault the city of Troyes, and hold no more of these Councils; for in God’s name, before three days I will bring you into Troyes, by favor or force, and false Burgundy shall be greatly amazed.”

“Jeanne,” said the Chancellor, “we might well wait if you could do that in six days.”

“Doubt it not,” spoke Jeanne, addressing the Dauphin only. “You shall be master of the place, not in six days but to-morrow.”

The Council broke up, and Jeanne began at once to make preparations for storming the place. The whole army was set to work during the night, nobles and men-at-arms alike, to collect any kind of material, faggots, palings, tables, even doors and windows—anything that could be used to shelter the men, mount the guns, and fill up the fosse. She worked hard all night, and the unusual commotion gave notice to the townsfolk that something out of the ordinary was being done, and they retired to the churches to pray. In the morning they saw that arrangements had been made to assault the place, and heard the Maid’s voice order the attack to begin. At this great fear of her came upon them, and they had no heart to man battlement or tower. Whereupon the Bishop of the town and the citizens threw the gates open and made submission without firing a shot, sending a committee to Charles to treat for terms of peace. The King received the envoys graciously, and guaranteed all the rights of Troyes, promising that the garrison might depart with their arms and goods, providing the town were given up to him.

Jeanne of course was obliged to acquiesce in the terms that her King made, but

she was suspicious of the good faith of the Burgundian garrison, and so stationed herself at the gate to see them march out. She had been up all night “laboring with a diligence that not two or three most experienced and renowned captains could have shown,”[13] and she was weary, but she would not retire to her tent until she knew how the garrison complied with the conditions. Her suspicions proved to be well founded.

After a time the English and Burgundian soldiers came marching through the gates with their horses and armour, and their property,—property which proved to be French prisoners. There they walked, a band of men previously taken, each one representing so much money in ransom. The poor fellows cast appealing, piteous glances at their victorious fellow countrymen as they passed. Jeanne uttered an exclamation, and stopped the march.

“In God’s name,” she cried, “they shall not have them.”

But some of the captains explained to her that under the terms of the capitulation the prisoners were property, and the soldiers were justified in taking them away, though it had not occurred to the King or his Councillors that any such thing would happen when the terms were given. But the Maid would not hear of letting the Frenchmen be carried away.

“They shall not have them,” she said again. “The thing would be monstrous. I will see the Dauphin.”

Which she did at once, and to such good purpose that the monarch was obliged to ransom the men from their captors, paying for each one a reasonable sum. French prisoners had been too plentiful in the wars to be worth much.

Troyes was full of doubt, terror and ill-will toward the Maid, and Jeanne felt it plainly when she entered the town to prepare for the reception of the King. At Orléans, at Blois, at Tours, at Gien, at all other places where she had been the people thronged about her with enthusiasm. Here they regarded her as a sorceress, and sent a certain Friar Richard to confront her. Friar Richard was a Franciscan who had created a great stir in Paris and Champagne by preaching fervid, emotional sermons, warning people of the coming of Anti-Christ, and urging them to forsake their sins, and to prepare for eternity. As he drew near to the Maid, he crossed himself devoutly, making the sign of the cross in the air, and sprinkling holy water before him to exorcise the evil spirit in the girl. Brother Richard was devout, but he wasn’t going to run any risk. Jeanne laughed gayly. She had become accustomed to being thought possessed.

“Come on boldly,” she cried. “I shall not fly away.”

Upon this the good man fell upon his knees before her, and the Maid, to show that she was no holier than he, knelt also. They had some conversation together, and thereafter the friar was one of her most devoted adherents.

The day after the surrender Charles entered the city in splendor, and went at once to the cathedral, where he received the oaths of loyalty of the burghers. The day following the troops marched on to Châlons, but met with no resistance. All opposition to the King's advance had collapsed, and eagerly the towns opened their gates to him. After all, he was French, and it was natural for Frenchmen to turn to their rightful King and believe in him in spite of the English. And so with ever increasing army Charles marched in triumph towards Reims.

Châlons, Troyes, and other places that had made submission wrote to Reims immediately advising that town to do likewise as Charles was a "sweet, gracious, pitiful and compassionate prince, of noble demeanor and high understanding, and had shown clearly and prudently the reasons for which he had come to them."

Reims laughed the messages to scorn, and vowed to resist to the death. They had recalled the captain of their garrison, who was at Château-Thierry, but they limited his escort to fifty horsemen, for which reason the captain very properly declined to come, saying that he could not attempt to hold the city with fewer than three hundred men. So when Charles reached Sept-Saulx, a fortress within four leagues of Reims, it sent out representatives to him to offer its full and entire obedience, in token of which the envoys presented the King with the keys of the city.

It was finished. The march to Reims, which has been called "The Bloodless March," was ended. The wonderful and victorious campaign with all its lists of towns taken had lasted but six weeks, almost every day of which was distinguished by some victory. The King and his Councillors had been fearful of the result, but the Maid had carried them through in triumph. Every promise which she had made had been fulfilled. There was nothing now between Charles, the discredited Dauphin of three months agone, and the sacred ceremonial which drew with it every "tradition and assurance of an ancient and lawful throne." Some time later when the Regent wished to make the same march with young Henry of England to crown him at Reims the Duke of Burgundy advised against the attempt, stating that it was too difficult and perilous to imitate.

On the morning of Saturday, July sixteenth, the Archbishop, Regnault de Chartres, who had been kept out of his city by the Burgundians, entered it to

make preparations to receive his royal master. In the afternoon the King, with Jeanne riding by his side, his Councillors, the princes and nobles, the captains, and a great train of soldiers, and citizens of neighboring places entered in state. The streets were thronged with people who cheered lustily at sight of the monarch, crying “Noël! Noël!”[14] but who struggled and shouldered each other in the natural curiosity to catch glimpses of the wonderful Maid with her shining armour and fair sweet face.

The King, the Maid, and the heads of the expedition were to be lodged in the palace of the Archbishop, which was near the great cathedral, but as the procession made its way thither Jeanne uttered a cry of joy; for, gazing at her half fearfully from the crowd were her father, Jacques D’Arc, and her uncle, Durand Lassois. The King turned to her.

“What is it, ma mie?” he asked.

“My father, my dear father, is standing there among the people,” she cried, waving her hand at the two rustics. “And with him stands my uncle, Durand Lassois: he who took me to Vaucouleurs, you remember?”

“I remember, Jeanne. We must see and speak with them both,” said the monarch graciously. “Bring them to us later.”

With another wave of her hand at the two the maiden passed on. In the evening Charles was led to a platform which had been erected before the cathedral, and there, amid the red glare of bonfires, flaming torches, the ringing of bells and the acclaiming shouts of the assembled people he was shown to the multitude by the peers of France, with the traditional proclamation:[15]

“Here is your King whom we, peers of France, crown as King and Sovereign Lord. And if there is a soul here who has any objection to make, let him speak and we will answer him. And to-morrow he shall be consecrated by the grace of the Holy Spirit if you have nothing to say against it.”

But the people shouted, “Noël! Noël! Noël!” in a frenzy of delight, and so this preliminary ceremony was concluded. There was feasting in the palace of the Archbishop that night. But Jeanne slipped away from it all and made her way quickly to the little inn called The Zebra, in front of the cathedral, which was kept by Alice Moreau, a widow, where she would find her father and uncle. To her delight her brothers had come hither also, and when Jeanne entered Jacques was standing with an arm around each, his usually undemonstrative face beaming with gladness, for they had been telling him of Jeanne and her exploits. He started toward her as she came through the door, then stopped suddenly and

stood gazing at her with doubt and hesitation, but Jeanne flung herself upon him with the abandonment of a child.

“Father!” she cried. “Dear, dear father! I did not hope for this. Oh! how glad I am to see you.”

Jacques could not utter a word for a moment, but held her close, close as though he would never let her go. When at last he spoke it was with choked and trembling accents.

“And do you forgive me, my little one? All the harshness and severity that I showed you? My child, I did not know, I did not understand—”

Jeanne smiled at him through her tears.

“How could you understand, father? I did not either for a long time. But it is over now. My mission will be ended to-morrow when the Dauphin is crowned. And then I am going back home with you to mother. Dear mother! how is she?”

“Well, Jeanne; but longs for you always.”

“And I for her,” said Jeanne, tearfully. “I shall never leave you again, father. I shall be glad to get back.”

At this Durand interposed:

“You won’t be contented there, Jeanne. Just think how set you were to get away. And now you have done everything you wanted to do. And it was I that helped you to do it.”

“Yes, Uncle Durand; and the King wishes to see you to thank you for it.”

“The King?” exclaimed Lassois, almost dumbfounded by this news. “Why, Jeanne, you don’t mean that he wants to see me?”

“Yes, I do,” said Jeanne, laughing. “He says that by helping me to go to Messire Robert you have done more for the country than any other man in France.”

Durand could scarcely contain himself at this, and beamed delightedly. Presently he said, wistfully:

“Don’t you ever get afraid in battle, Jeanne? I heard that you were wounded once. I should think that you would be so afraid that you’d run away as soon as the guns began to shoot and the arrows to fly.”

“I do not fear wounds or battle,” she told him. “I fear only—treachery;” and a shadow crossed her face.

It was a happy family party there at the little inn. There was wonder and admiration in the regard which the simple peasants bestowed upon the maiden, but there was love also, and the weary girl, longing for home and rest since her mission was so nearly completed, gave herself up to its blessed consolation. Far into the night she talked, and then she left them; for the morrow would bring the coronation, and there was much to be done.

It was the tradition that coronations should take place on Sunday, so that there was little sleep in Reims that night. Everything had to be prepared; decorations for the cathedral and town, and provisions for the ceremonial. Many of the necessary articles were at Saint Denis, in the hands of the English, and the treasury of the cathedral had to be ransacked to find fitting vessels. All night the work of preparation went on. And all night long rejoicing crowds filled the streets and the great square before the cathedral, where the Dauphin kept vigil, as was the custom of the Sovereign the night before his coronation.

At dawn of day the town began to fill with visitors, great personages and small ones, to attend the rites, and to render homage. All France seemed to pour into the place; for the people were to have their rightful king, and French hearts were joyful. It mattered not after this who should be crowned—Henry of England, or another—there would be but one King of France, Charles the Seventh, he who was anointed with the sacred oil in the city of Reims, where all kings of France had been crowned since the time of Clovis. Charles had been crowned after a fashion at Bourges, but in the eyes of the nation he was not King until the oil from the mystic ampoule brought down from Heaven by a dove to Saint Remi was poured upon his brow. Jeanne, a daughter of the people, understood this better than the politicians who tried to thwart her design of leading Charles to his sacring, deeming it a piece of childish folly. After the crowning, when the increased prestige and loyalty which it brought to Charles was seen, its significance was understood not only by the politicians but by the Regent Bedford. It was a decided advantage which this girl of the people gained over the English claimant by her quickness in taking the Dauphin to be crowned.

The ceremonies were to begin at nine o’clock, Sunday morning, July the seventeenth, and long before that hour the ancient cathedral was filled to overflowing with nobles and men-at-arms, and dignitaries both civic and ecclesiastic, richly and gayly attired in gorgeous stuffs: cloth of gold, cloth of silver, brocades of crimson and azure, and silks dyed in all the colors of the rainbow, mingled with sheen of glittering spears and shining armour: a brilliant gathering. Charles the Dauphin waited at the foot of the high altar, garbed in a

robe of cerulean blue over which was scattered the golden fleur-de-lis. Outside the cathedral the streets were thronged with people in holiday attire, wearing leaden medals which bore an effigy of Jeanne. After the coronation the King too had thirteen gold medals struck in honour of the Maid, which bore her device, a hand holding a sword, and the inscription, Consilio firmata Dei. (Strong in the Counsel of God.) These and a vase of silver were among the gifts which he bestowed on the Chapter of Reims.

Suddenly there was a blare of trumpets, and from the palace of the Archbishop there issued a wonderful procession. Four peers of France,—the Maréchal de Boussac, Gravile, de Rais, Admiral de Culent,—armed and accoutred, and a great company with banners floating rode through the streets to the old Abbey of St. Remi—which had been consecrated in the eleventh century—to bring from its shrine, where it was strictly guarded by the monks, the Sainte Ampoule, the holy and sacred vial which held the oil sent from Heaven for the sacring of Clovis. The noble messengers were the hostages of this sacred charge, and kneeling they bound themselves by an oath never to lose sight of it by day or night, till it was restored to its appointed guardians.

This vow having been taken, the Abbot of St. Remi, in his richest robes, appeared surrounded by his monks, carrying the treasure in his hands; and under a splendid canopy, blazing in the sunshine with cloth of gold, marched toward the cathedral under escort of the noble hostages. Into the cathedral rode the cavalcade through the great west door. Their coming was proclaimed by chimes of bells, and blare of trumpets, and chanting of hymns until a mighty volume of sound rolled and swelled through the vaulted domes of the ancient building. Straight up to the entrance of the choir they rode, and there the Abbot gave over the sacred Chrism to the Archbishop. Then began the long and imposing ceremonies of the coronation. There were prayers, and anthems, and sermons, but at length the king-at-arms, standing upon the steps of the altar, called upon the twelve peers of France to come and serve their King.

There were vacant places to be supplied, both among the temporal and the spiritual peers, but Alençon, Clermont, Vendôme, Guy de Laval, La Trémouille and Maillé filled them. Among the clerical peers the Archbishop of Reims, the Bishops of Châlons and Laon were present; the others were supplied. In the absence of Richemont, the Constable of France, d’Albret held the Sword of State. D’Alençon, in place of “false Burgundy,” dubbed Charles a knight; then the Archbishop raised the holy flask and anointed the Dauphin upon the brow, upon his shoulders, within the joints of his arms and the palms of his hands, slits

being cut and embroidered in his robe to this use. All was done according to ancient custom, the Dauphin kneeling the while. Administering the oath the Archbishop then took the crown and held it high above the monarch's head; the twelve peers of the realm, closing in, held it firm; then gently it was lowered upon the brows of the kneeling prince.

"Arise, Charles, King of France," cried the prelate in a loud voice. And, as Charles was lifted high in the throne chair by the peers that all might see, he cried again: "Behold your King!"

As Charles the Seventh, King of France, faced his people a mighty shout of "Noël! Noël! Noël!" came from the assembly, while crash of chimes, chanting voices, and music of instruments rolled through the arches, until the vaulted heights answered again and again.

Throughout the ceremony, close to Charles upon the steps of the altar stood Jeanne with her standard in her hand. "It had borne the burden, it should share the glory," she said afterwards. "And a right fair thing it was to see the goodly manners of the King and the Maid. She who was in truth the cause of the crowning of the King and of all the assembly."[16]

Pale with emotion Jeanne had stood watching every step of the ceremonial with intentness. When at last it was ended she could control herself no longer. Stepping forward she fell at the feet of the newly crowned monarch, embracing his knees, and weeping for joy.

"Gentle King, now is the pleasure of God fulfilled—whose will it was that I should raise the siege of Orléans, and lead you to this city of Reims to receive your consecration. Now has He shown that you are the true King, and that the kingdom of France belongs to you alone."

Soft, and low, and broken came the words. They pierced all hearts, and "right great pity came upon all those who saw her, and many wept."[17]

Many wept. The girl was so young, so fair, so slight, yet what great deeds had she not wrought? In three months she had given France a king, and to the King, a country. In spite of obstacles that would seem incredible were they not a part of recorded history she had accomplished her mission. A great soul in which intense zeal was wedded to intense purpose had wrought marvels, and changed the destiny of a nation.

Many wept, and the King too was moved. Perhaps at that moment he felt more gratitude towards the maiden than ever before or afterward. Lifting her, he said:

“You have brought us to our crowning, beloved Maid. Speak, and whatsoever grace you ask it shall be granted.”

Again Jeanne fell upon her knees.

“Most noble King, out of your grace I beseech you to grant that the taxes of my village be remitted. Its people are poor, and it brings great hardship upon them to pay.”

“Is that all, Jeanne?”

“Yes, Sire.”

“Then in consideration of the great, high, notable, and profitable service which this, our beloved Jeanne the Maid, has rendered and daily renders us in the recovery of our Kingdom, in her favour and at her request, we therefore decree that Domremy, the native village of Jeanne D’Arc, Deliverer of France, be forever exempt from taxation.”

Again the people shouted fervently. They recognized the justice of the grant, and wondered only that she asked so little.

“Noël! Noël! Noël!”[18]

For centuries the privilege lasted, and against the names of Domremy and Greux, its adjoining village, in the tax gatherer’s book was written:

“Domremy ... Rien-La Pucelle,” “Nothing—For the sake of the Maid.”

She had gained a kingdom, yet all she asked in return was that the taxes of her poor oppressed village might be remitted. She wished for nothing for herself. Not the least of the girl’s great qualities was her unselfishness.

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[13]

Dunois.

[14]

Noël—an exclamation of joyful acclamation.

[15]

M. Blaze de Bury.

[16]

Journal du Siège.

[17]

Journal du Siège.

[18]

“Noël”—a word of acclaim—“hurrah!”

CHAPTER XXIII

THE TURNING OF THE TIDE

> "*If France deserts her, and she fails, she is none the less inspired.*"
>
> JEAN GERSON. 1429.

There was feasting in Reims after the coronation. In the Archbishop's palace the King was served with the princes of the blood and the nobles. The tables stretched to the streets that the people might be served also; all Reims ate, drank, and made merry. But Jeanne, always exceedingly temperate in the matter of eating and drinking, soon slipped away from the festivities. She had other work on hand.

There was a letter to be written to the Duke of Burgundy, the greatest peer of France. Philip, because of the blood feud between him and Charles, had cast his power and influence with Regent Bedford against his own countrymen. Jeanne had written to him before in June at the beginning of the march to Reims, summoning him to the crowning of the King, but had heard from neither letter nor herald. It was the maiden's belief that all Frenchmen should unite against the common enemy, laying aside private griefs that France might be served. She had no party feeling, and was possessed of a fund of common sense which made her see what a powerful ally Philip of Burgundy would be. So now she wrote again, summoning him to renounce his feud with his cousin, the King, and thus to heal the breach which had divided the realm into two great parties.

"JHESUS MARIA

"High and redoubtable Prince, Duke of Burgundy. Jeanne the Maid requires on the part of the King of Heaven, my most just sovereign and Lord, that the King of France and you make peace between yourselves,

firm, strong, and that will endure. Pardon each other of good heart, entirely, as loyal Christians ought to do, and if you desire to fight let it be against the Saracens. Prince of Burgundy, I pray, supplicate, and require as humbly as may be, that you fight no longer against the holy kingdom of France: withdraw, at once and speedily, your people who are in any strongholds or fortresses of the said holy kingdom; and on the part of the gentle King of France, he is ready to make peace with you, having respect to his honor. All those who war against the said holy kingdom of France, war against King Jesus, King of Heaven, and of all the world and my just and sovereign Lord. And I pray and require with clasped hands that you fight not, nor make any battle against us, neither your friends nor your subjects. For however great in numbers may be the men you lead against us, you will never win, and it would be great pity for the battle and the blood that would be shed of those who came against us. Three weeks ago I sent you a letter by a herald that you should be present at the consecration of the King, which to-day, Sunday, the seventeenth of the present month of July, is done in the city of Reims: to which I have had no answer. To God I commend you, and may He be your guard if it pleases Him, and I pray God to make good peace.

"Written at the aforesaid Reims, the seventeenth day of July, 1429.

"JEANNE THE MAID."

So, her mission ended, the girl began to make preparations for her return home with her father. When she left Vaucouleurs she had taken with her the red homespun dress that she had worn from home, and had always kept it with her. She brought it forth, and smoothed its folds tenderly.

It was of coarse fabric unlike the brocades and satins of the knight's suits that she now wore, but Jeanne's eyes grew misty, and soft, and wistful as she fondled it; the simple frock meant home and mother to her. Presently the members of the Household began to come in to take farewell, for all knew that she felt that her task was finished and that it was her intention to return to Domremy. But it was not to be.

The next day Jeanne sought Charles and asked him of his graciousness to let her depart. Her mission was closed, she told him. She had done the two things that she was charged to do: the siege of Orléans was raised, and she had led him to his crowning. She wished now to go back home with her father, and of his

goodness she begged him to let her depart.

The monarch heard her with surprise.

“Go back now, Jeanne?” he exclaimed. “That cannot be. We need you.”

“Nay, gentle King. There is no further need of me. You are crowned, and the towns will receive you joyfully. Whatever of fighting there is to be done the men-at-arms can do.”

“Dear Maid, have you forgot Paris? We are to march there from here, and who can lead the men-at-arms to the storming so well as you? You will inspire them, give them heart and courage, and frighten the enemy. We cannot do without you yet, Jeanne. We need you; the country needs you. Stay your departure for yet a little while we entreat—nay; we command it, Jeanne.”

Her King and her country needed her. That was enough for the girl whose every heart beat was for France. So sorrowfully she wended her way to The Zebra, the little inn where Jacques and Durand were stopping.

“Father,” she said sadly, as Jacques came forward to meet her, “I can not go home. I must continue with the army. It is the King’s command.”

“Not go back, my little one?” exclaimed her father, his face clouding. “Why, Isabeau will be sore disappointed. She thought you would come after your work was done.”

“And I too, father, but the noble King commands me to stay. He hath need of me, he says. And France needs me.” And, as she had done when she was a little child, Jeanne laid her head on her father’s shoulder and cried like the homesick girl that she was. Her father comforted her tenderly. His own disappointment was great.

“We went to see the King, Jeanne,” spoke Durand suddenly.

“He had us brought to him, and he was graciousness itself. I wonder not that you delight to serve him; so sweet and pitiful he is.”

“Oh, he is,” exclaimed the maiden. “For know, father, that he has exempted both Domremy and Greux from the taxes.”

“Now that is good,” cried Jacques delightedly. “That will be news indeed to carry back!”

“And we each have a horse,” Durand told her proudly. “And we are to have our keep for so long as we wish to stay in Reims. The town will have it so. And all because we are of kin to Jeanne D’Arc.”

Jeanne smiled at his pleasure. She too had gifts which she had bought to carry home herself. Now she gave them to her father to deliver with many a loving message, and then took a lingering farewell of them. Her heart was very full as she returned to the palace of the Archbishop, and once more took up her position as a general in the royal army. She never saw either her father or her uncle again.

Jeanne supposed that it was the King’s intention to march directly upon Paris the day after the coronation. To the surprise of every one Charles dallied at Reims for four days, and did not set forth from the town until the twenty-first of July. Then with banners flying the royal army rode from the gates with glad hearts and high hopes, Jeanne with her standard riding in front of the King. With the Maid leading them the troops believed themselves to be invincible. They were filled with confidence, for Paris once taken, the power of the English in northern France would be entirely broken. Both Burgundy and Bedford realized this fact to the full. “Paris is the heart of the mystic body of the kingdom,” wrote the former to the Regent in the Spring of 1430. “Only by liberating the heart can the body be made to flourish.” What was true in 1430 was equally so in 1429. The right policy, therefore, was to advance at once and storm Paris.

But the King stopped at the Abbey of Saint Marcoul and “touched for the King’s Evil.”[19] Nothing should have been allowed to waste time. It should have been Paris first, and then Saint Marcoul; for Bedford at this very time was marching from Calais with newly landed troops under Cardinal Beaufort.

After Saint Marcoul Charles marched next to Vailly, and having received the keys of Soissons passed to that city. Everywhere he was received with acclamations, town after town yielding to him and the Maid. The army was now only sixty miles from Paris. Bedford had not reached the city, which had but a small garrison, and many of its citizens favored Charles. Only a vigorous

advance was required to take it, and so end the war. At Soissons the King received the submission of many towns, but there was nothing else done. When the army set forth again the King turned about and headed due south for Château-Thierry; after two days he proceeded to Provins, which was reached on August second.

This place was about sixty miles south of Soissons, and fifty miles southeast of Paris. With all his marching after ten days Charles was but ten miles nearer his objective point.

The enthusiasm of the troops was dwindling. Jeanne and the captains viewed the effects of the vacillating manoeuvring of the King with despair; for no one seemed to know what it all meant. The Maid at length sought Charles for an explanation. To her surprise she learned that ambassadors from Burgundy had come to Reims on the very day of the coronation, desiring a truce between the King and the Duke. The envoys had marched with them since then, for the belief was so strong that Paris should be taken that the King and his Councillors did not dare treat with them while feeling ran so high. Now, however, the envoys had succeeded in establishing a sort of truce by the terms of which Burgundy was to deliver up Paris to Charles at the end of a fortnight.

“At the end of a fortnight,” repeated Jeanne in dismay. “In God’s name, gentle King, the regent will have time to bring his new troops into the town before the two weeks are sped. All the Duke of Burgundy wants is to gain time for the English regent.”

“Do you mean to reflect upon the honor of our cousin Burgundy?” demanded Charles haughtily. “His intentions toward us are most kind, we assure you, Jeanne. It is our dearest wish to be at peace with him.”

“Make peace, Sire; but—”

“But what, dear Maid?”

“Make it at the point of the lance,” she cried. “None other will be so lasting. A quick advance, Sire, and Paris is ours, and with it all France.”

“Would it not be best to take it without bloodshed?” he asked. “By your way much Christian blood must perforce be spilled. By this truce with our cousin the city will be ours peaceably. Is not that best?”

“It may be,” she agreed sorrowfully.

There was no more to be said, so with heavy heart she went from the presence to

report to the captains. Silently they heard her; for none of them believed that Philip of Burgundy would ever deliver Paris to the King. So “turning first the flanks, then the rear of his army towards Paris, dragging with him the despairing Maid, the King headed for the Loire.”

Beyond that river lay pleasure and amusement; time could be taken for ease and enjoyment, and the unworthy King desired them more than honor. In this he was encouraged by La Trémouille and his party.

Reims, Soissons and other cities that had made submission were alarmed because the King was abandoning them to the mercy of Burgundy, and the men of Reims wrote to Jeanne telling her their fears. To which she made answer:

“Dear good friends, good and loyal Frenchmen, the Maid sends you news of her.... Never will I abandon you while I live. True it is that the King has made a fifteen days’ truce with the Duke of Burgundy, who is to give up to him the town of Paris peacefully on the fifteenth day.

“Although the truce is made, I am not content, and am not certain that I will keep it. If I do it will be merely for the sake of the King’s honor, and in case they do not deceive the blood royal, for I will keep the King’s army together and in readiness, at the end of the fifteen days, if peace is not made.”

At Bray, where Charles expected to cross the Seine on his road to the Loire, he found a strong Anglo-Burgundian force in possession, so facing about he started toward Paris. Jeanne and the captains rejoiced openly, for they had no desire to cross the river, but wished only to keep near the capital until the truce was ended.

The erratic marching and indecision of the royal Council and the King were ruining the spirit of the men-at-arms; but the country people who knew naught of the parleying with Burgundy were wild with delight at the coming of Charles, and crowded to gaze upon him as he passed by. Jeanne was touched by their demonstrations of delight.

“Here is a good people,” she remarked one day, as she rode between Dunois and the Archbishop of Reims when the army was near Crépy. “Never have I seen any so glad of the coming of the noble King. I would that when I die I were so happy as to be buried in this country.”

“Jeanne, in what place do you expect to die?” asked the Archbishop, who had never been a friend of Jeanne’s, and wished to draw some expression of prophecy from her that might be used against her.

“When it shall please God,” she made answer; “for I know no more of the time and place than you do. Would that it pleased God my Creator to let me depart at this time, and lay down my arms, and go to serve my father and mother in keeping their sheep with my brothers, for they would be very glad to see me.”

There was a note of sadness in the words. Even Jeanne’s brave spirit was feeling the strain of the fluctuating, futile marchings.

On August eleventh Charles lay at Crépy-en-Valois, where he received a letter from Bedford, who by this time had brought his troops near to Paris and now lay between that city and the French army. It was a brutally insulting letter, obviously written for the purpose of forcing the monarch to fight in the open field. It closed by challenging him to single combat, and with an appeal to the Almighty. Any man with an ounce of red blood in his veins would have accepted the challenge, and died gloriously, if needs be, in defense of his honor. Charles merely ignored the letter. It is said of him that at a later date he discovered great valour, taking the field in person against his enemies, and fighting in knightly fashion. It seems a pity that such gallantry was not in evidence at this period.

On August fourteenth the armies of Charles and Bedford came face to face at Montépilloy. It was near evening, and after a skirmish they both encamped for the night.

In the morning the royal army found Bedford entrenched in a strong position. His flanks and front were carefully protected by earthworks and a stockade made of stout stakes carried by English archers for the purpose. Thrust deep into the ground, they would break the charge of cavalry, and were very formidable. In the rear was a lake and a stream, so that no attack could be made from that quarter. Over the host floated the banners of France and England.

The French army formed in four divisions: the advance-guard, commanded by Alençon; the centre, commanded by René de Bar; the rear, with which were the King himself and La Trémouille, was under Charles de Bourbon, and a large body of skirmishers under Jeanne, Dunois and La Hire.

The position of Bedford was too strong to admit of a direct attack. He also had the advantage of a superiority in numbers, so the French tried to draw his forces from behind their barricades in the same manner that Talbot had tried to entice Jeanne to forsake the strong position which she had occupied on the height above Beaugency the night before Patay. But, though several times French knights, both on foot and on horseback, rode up to the palisade and so taunted the English that some of them rushed out, the result was only skirmishing. The

main body of the enemy stood firm.

When Jeanne saw that they would not come out she rode, standard in hand, up to the palisade and struck it a ringing blow hoping to excite the enemy into action. For answer the English called, “Witch! Milkmaid! Go home to your cows. If we catch you we’ll burn you.”

There were other names added, some of them vile and insulting. At the same time they waved in mocking defiance a standard copied from that of Jeanne’s, showing a distaff and spindle, and bearing the motto: “Let the fair Maid come. We’ll give her wool to spin.”

This roused the rage of the French, and thereafter no quarter was asked or given in the skirmishes that ensued when parties of the English sallied out in answer to the jibes and taunts of the French. But with all their endeavors the English were not to be stung into leaving their strong position. Later Alençon and the Maid sent a message that they would retire and give the English a fair field to deploy in, but they did not accept the offer. Bedford was not anxious for a chivalrous engagement in a fair field.

In the afternoon the English captured a few field pieces which the French had brought up to enfilade the English line. So the long summer day passed, and when it grew dusk so that friend and foe could not be distinguished from each other the French retired to their quarters. The King left them, and retired to Crépy.

Early the next morning the French withdrew, hoping that the English would follow them. But the Regent would not. As soon as he was clear of the French he retreated to Senlis and from there went to Paris. Of course the royal army should have followed him, but the triumphant spirit that filled the troops at Patay had been dissipated. The captains feared to move without the King’s sanction, and, though Jeanne counselled the pursuit, they deemed it best to join the King at Crépy.

Compiègne, Senlis, and Beauvais now made their submission to the King and the Maid. Charles marched at once to Compiègne, fifty miles from Paris. At Beauvais those persons who refused to recognize Charles were driven out with their possessions. Among these was Pierre Cauchon, its Bishop. This man never forgave Jeanne for being the cause of his losing his diocese and his revenues, and later took a dire revenge upon her.

Charles dallied at Compiègne, greatly to the distress of Jeanne, who knew the value of rapid movements. She saw too that the troops were losing heart. The

King, however, was busy entangling himself with new truces with Burgundy, but of this the Maid at this time knew naught. She only knew that the fifteen days' truce was ended, and Paris had not been delivered to her King; that August was almost spent, and that nothing had been accomplished. She grieved at the monarch's shilly-shallying, and suspected that he was content with the grace God had given him without undertaking any further enterprise.

As the time passed without bringing action of any sort, or any promise of it, the girl's patience became thoroughly exhausted. She had only a year to work in, she had said, and France's King was wasting the time that should have been used for France. So one day she said to Alençon:

"My fair duke, make ready the men, for by my staff, I wish to see Paris nearer than I have seen it yet."

The words struck a responsive chord in Alençon's breast, and the captains gladly made ready for the march; for all were weary of inaction, and discouraged by the irresolution of the King.

On the twenty-third of August, therefore, the troops under Jeanne and Alençon set forth, making a short pause at Senlis so that the forces under the Count de Vendôme might join them. It was hoped that, moved by their example, the King would be impelled to follow them with the main body of the army; the hope proved a futile one. After three days' march they rode into St. Denys, a town six miles from Paris, and the other sacred place of the realm.

It was the city of the Martyr Saint whose name was the war cry of France. It was also the city of the tomb; for, as Reims was the place where French kings were crowned, so St. Denys was the town where French kings were buried. From antiquity they had lain here in the great Abbey, where too was the crown of Charlemagne. There were also many sacred relics of the saints here, among them a head said to be that of Saint Denys. It was a sacred place to all French hearts.

At their approach those people who were of Anglo-Burgundian opinions retired to Paris, terrified by the dark stories of vengeance with which the emissaries of Burgundy had beguiled them, so that those who remained in the place were royalists. As she had often done of late Jeanne became godmother for two little babies, holding them at the font. When the little ones were boys she gave them the name of the King; if they were girls, and the parents had no name for them, she called them Jeanne.

There was further vexatious delay here in waiting for the coming of the King. It was a supreme moment in the affairs of the realm. All that had been gained in

the summer was now to be either entirely lost, or fully perfected by this attack on the capital. Charles's presence was needed for the authority and approval that it gave, and, too, the main body of the army was necessary for the attack as the city was too strong to be assailed with what troops Alençon and Jeanne had with them. Courier after courier was sent to the King to urge his coming, and at length Alençon rode back to entreat his presence. Reluctantly the monarch advanced to Senlis, and there stopped. "It seemed that he was advised against the Maid and the Duc d'Alençon and their company."[20]

Meantime Jeanne employed the time in skirmishing and reconnoissances, studying the city to find the best point for the onslaught. Alençon also sent letters to the burghers, calling the dignitaries by name, and asking them to surrender to their true Lord.

The authorities in the city were not idle. They strengthened the fortifications, and frightened the people by spreading stories of the dire vengeance that Charles had sworn to wreak against them. He would deliver the city and its people of all ages and conditions to the pleasure of his soldiers, it was said; and he had also sworn to raze it to its foundations so that the plough should break the ground where Paris had stood. Terrified by these tales the citizens feared to leave the gates to gather the grapes which grew on the slopes beyond the walls, or to get the vegetables from the great gardens which lay to the north of the city.

Finally, after a fortnight, Charles arrived at Saint Denys, and his coming was hailed with delight. The army was wrought up to a high pitch of excitement, and was eager for assault. "There was no one of whatever condition who did not say, 'The Maid will lead the King into Paris if he will let her.'"[21] Charles himself was not so eager. In truth, the last thing in the world that he desired was this attack.

In the afternoon of the day of his arrival Jeanne and the captains started toward the city walls to make the usual demonstration. The King rode with them.

Now at Blois, at Orléans, on the march to Reims the army of men was orderly, clean confessed and of holy life; but it was no longer what it had been. It is idleness that demoralizes and disorganizes men on the march or in camp. Action keeps them in trim, and in a righteous way of living. The personnel of the troops was no longer what it had been before Orléans. After the coronation men had flocked in from every quarter; soldiers of the robber companies, rude, foul, and disorderly. They revered the Maid for her saintly manner of life, but continued to practice their own vices, greatly to her distress.

So now as the King and the Maid rode from the town toward the walls of the city one of the vile women who followed the camp thrust herself forward boldly from the crowd of people who had gathered to watch the passing of the monarch and the girl, and leered insolently at them. At this, all of Jeanne's youthful purity was roused to a blaze of indignation, and she brought up her sword quickly, and smote the creature a smart blow with the flat side of the weapon.

"Get you gone," she cried sharply.

Instantly at the touch of the unclean thing the blade parted in two. One piece fell to the ground, and Jeanne, stricken by the happening, sat gazing silently at what remained in her hand.

"'Tis the holy sword," exclaimed Charles, aghast. "Are there no cudgels to be had that you should use the sacred weapon? I like not the omen."

Jeanne made no reply. She could not. All about her ran whispers and outcries as news of the incident flew from lip to lip. Soon the story was spread through the army. The Maid had broken the miraculous sword. It was a bad portent, and men shook their heads, saying that it boded ill for future enterprise. The King sent the sword to his own armourers to be mended, "but they could not do it, nor put the pieces together again; which is great proof that the sword came to her divinely."[22]

At a Council held later it was determined that an attack on Paris should be made the next day, and thereupon the troops withdrew to La Chapelle, a village midway between St. Denys and Paris, and encamped there for the night. But the King remained at St. Denys.

"I like not the day, gentle duke," said Jeanne protestingly to Alençon. "To-morrow is the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Mother of God. It is not meet to fight on such a day."

"We must, Jeanne. We have been insistent that the assault should be made; and if we decline now La Trémouille will persuade the King that we are the cause of the delay."

"True," agreed the maiden. "Well, we will make the attack, fair duke. After all, it is the duty of Frenchmen to fight the enemy whenever need arises, be the day what it may."

Yet in spite of her words it was with reluctance that Jeanne prepared for the assault the next morning. It was the eighth of September, upon which day fell the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, a great festival of the church. The church bells of

La Chapelle were ringing as she rose, and faintly the bells of Paris and St. Denys tinkled an answer to the summons to the faithful. All the citizens of Paris would be at church, for no one would expect an attack upon such a day, and Jeanne would far rather have spent the time before the altar. She did not wish the assault, but yielded to Alençon and the captains.

The troops made a late start, it being eight o'clock before they marched out of La Chapelle, and wended their way toward Paris. The morning was bright and beautiful, though unusually warm for the season. In the sunshine the towers and battlements of the city gleamed and glistened. It was a great city; far greater than Orléans, and a prize worth fighting for, but the chances of taking it had diminished by the dalliance of the King.

The morning was entirely consumed in placing the ordnance, and getting ready for the assault. The point of attack was to be a place between the gates of St. Honoré and St. Denys, which Jeanne was to lead with Rais and Gaucourt, while Alençon, placing his guns in the swine market near the gate, stationed his force behind the Windmill Hill which sloped above the market. This was done to guard the rear from a possible attack from a sally of the English from the St. Denys Gate. The main body of the army was posted as a reserve out of range. The King did not leave St. Denys. Charles was the only prince in Europe who did not lead his own army in the field. All was in readiness, when Jeanne learned to her great surprise that no serious assault was intended. It was to be an effort to cause tumult and surrender in the city. The Maid determined to force the fighting to an issue.

At two o'clock in the afternoon the trumpet sounded the call, and the roar and rebound of cannon began, the artillery plying the boulevard or earthwork which protected the Gate of St. Honoré. The palisade weakened; presently the pales fell with a crash, and the earthen wall of the boulevard stood beyond. With a shout, "Mont-joie St. Denys!" the French rushed forward with scaling ladders, and began the escalade, their friends backing them by shooting of arbalests from behind the remnant of the palisade. By sheer impetuosity they carried the outpost, and poured over the walls pell-mell, driving its defenders before them back to the fortifications of the gate itself.

All at once their furious advance was brought to a sudden check; for before them lay two wide deep ditches, one dry, the other full of water, which here guarded the walls of the gate. The archers and gunners on the ramparts above jeered mockingly at the halted French, and sent a rain of stones and arrows down at them, waving their banners, which mingled the leopards of England with the

rampant two-tailed lion of Burgundy.

Jeanne was of course at the head of her men, and only for a moment did she permit them to pause before the set-back. Calling loudly for faggots and beams to bridge the moat she descended into the dry fosse, then climbed out again to the shelving ridge which divided the two trenches. Some of the men ran for the bundles of wood and bridging material, while the others followed her to the ridge. Dismay again seized them as the wide deep moat full to the brim with water stretched before them. But Jeanne was not daunted. Handing her standard to a man at her side, she took a lance and tested the water amid a shower of arrows and stones.

“Surrender,” she called to the men on the walls. “Surrender to the King of France.”

“Witch! Evil One!” they shouted in answer.

By this time the soldiers had brought bundles of wood, faggots, and whatever would help to fill the moat, Jeanne calling encouragingly to them the while. Presently they were enabled to struggle across, and the charge began. At this instant, as had been arranged, a great commotion was heard in the city, the loyalists running through the streets and shouting: “All is lost! The enemy has entered.” It was hoped that this would help the King’s troops without the gates. The people in the churches, panic-stricken, rushed to their homes, shutting their doors behind them, but there was nothing gained. The garrison kept their heads, and their numbers at the gates and on the ramparts were increased.

The firing now became very heavy; the artillery bellowed and the guns roared in answer. There were shouts of men, and words of order. And through the rattle of guns, the whizzing rush of stones, the smiting with axe or sword on wooden barrier and steel harness, the hundreds of war cries there sounded the wonderful, silvery tones of a girl’s voice, clear as a clarion call:

“On! On, friends! They are ours.”

On the shelving ridge between the two ditches stood the Maid, her white armour gleaming in the sunshine, a shining figure, exposed to every shot and missile. Hour after hour she stood, in the heat of the fire, shouting directions to her men, urging, cheering them while always the struggle raged around her, her banner floating over her head. Suddenly a mighty shout of joy went up from the men on the walls. Three times the roar rent the din of battle. For the Witch had fallen, pierced through the thigh by a bolt from a crossbow.

Undismayed, Jeanne struggled to her feet, when the man at her side who bore her standard was hit in the foot. Lifting his visor to pull the arrow from the wound he was struck between the eyes, and fell dead at the maiden's feet. Jeanne caught the standard as he fell, but for a moment her own strength failed her, and she sank beside the standard bearer. When her men would have borne her out of the battle she would not consent, but rallied them to the charge. Then slowly, painfully, she crept behind a heap of stones, and soon the dauntless voice rang out:

"Friends! Friends! be of good cheer. On! On!"

And so, wounded, weak, unable to stand she lay, urging the soldiers on, and on. There never was anything like it. Whence came that indomitable spirit and courage? "A Daughter of God" her voices called her, and truly was she so named. For who that had not kinship with the Divine could transcend the weakness of the flesh as did this girl of seventeen?

Fiercer grew the din, and fiercer. The heat became stifling. Hours passed, and the day waxed old. The sun set; twilight fell, and the dusk came. The shots were fewer and more scattering, and then they stopped. The two French captains had had enough for one day, for the attack had been confined to the forces under Jeanne, Rais and de Gaucourt, and the trumpet sounded the recall. But Jeanne did not heed, but kept crying her men on to the charge. She herself could not move to lead them, the supporting army was out of range, and the men would not go further without her. Gaucourt ordered his men to bring her out of the fire. Jeanne protested, but weeping she was carried back, set in the saddle and conveyed back to La Chapelle. Over and over she cried:

"It could have been taken! It could have been taken!"

Early the next morning in spite of her wound she went to Alençon, begging him to sound the trumpets and mount for the return to Paris.

"Never will I leave," she declared, "until the city is taken."

Alençon was of like mind, but some of the captains thought otherwise. Some of the troops were reluctant to assault again; for there were whispers that the Maid had failed. That she had promised them to enter the city, and Paris had not been taken. They recalled the omen of the mystic sword, and shook their heads. They had forgotten that it took nearly a week to free Orléans from the siege, and Paris was a larger city. Jeanne had had but part of one day for the attack. While the captains were debating the advisability of renewing the assault a cavalcade of fifty or sixty gentlemen under the Baron de Montmorency, who had been a

Burgundian for many years, rode up, and offered his services to the Maid. It was a joyful augury, and it was so encouraging that an immediate assault was planned. Just as they were setting forth two gentlemen arrived from St. Denys. They were René Duc de Bar, and Charles de Bourbon, and they bore the King's orders that no further attack upon Paris should be made, and that the Maid with the other leaders must return at once to St. Denys.

There was a storm of remonstrance and appeal, but the gentlemen were peremptory in their insistence. Such a command could not be disregarded, so with heavy hearts the entire force obeyed the summons. As they had expected that the attack would be renewed the following day the siege material had been left on the field, and there was not time to return for it. The King made no explanation when they reached St. Denys, and disconsolately the captains discussed the matter.

Now Alençon had built a bridge across the Seine above Paris, expecting to make an onset upon the south as well as the north of the city, and Jeanne and he decided secretly to make a new effort in that direction. Accordingly they slipped away very early the next morning, which was September tenth, with a few chosen troops, and rode hastily to the place. The bridge was in ruins. It had been destroyed in the night; not by their enemies, but by the *King*. Sadly the two with their men rode back to the "City of the Tomb," which had become the grave of their hopes.

Jeanne's heart was hot with disappointment and the thwarting of all her plans, and leaving Alençon she crept painfully to the chapel of the Abbey, and knelt for a long time before the image of the Virgin. After a time she rose, and slowly, awkwardly, for she was without her squire, unbuckled her armour, and laid it piece by piece upon the altar, until at length the complete suit lay there. With a gesture of infinite yearning she stretched her hands over it.

"To Saint Denys," she said with quivering lips. Turning she went slowly from the Abbey.

Jeanne, the invincible Maid, had met her first defeat at the hands of her King.

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[19]

Scrofula. It was believed it could be cured by the touch of a King.

[20]

Percéval De Cagny.

[21]

De Cagny.

[22]

Jean Chartier.

CHAPTER XXIV

JEANNE'S LAST FIELD

"I fear naught but treachery."

JEANNE'S *own words*.

"Saith each to other, 'Be near me still;

We will die together, if God so will.'"

JOHN O'HAGAN. "*The Song of Roland.*"

No longer buoyed up by hope Jeanne began to feel her wound to faintness, and was compelled to seek her room for rest. As she lay on her bed, despondent and heavy-hearted, her Saints came to her with words of comfort. Daily they appeared, but since the crowning of Charles at Reims they had given the maiden no specific direction. There had been no further definite message. They had said, "Raise the siege of Orléans and lead the Dauphin to his crowning"; and she had done both things. Now they consoled the girl in her humiliation and sorrow, and uttered a message:

"Remain at St. Denys, Daughter of God," they said. "Remain at St. Denys."

And Jeanne resolved to do so, but this was not allowed. After a few days Charles announced his intention of returning to the Loire, and ordered the army to make ready for the march. And now the cause of the shameful treason at Paris was learned. There was a new treaty with Burgundy. Charles had signed it just before coming to St. Denys. La Trémouille and his party had triumphed, and an inglorious armistice which was to last until Christmas was the result. The position of the Favorite was becoming precarious under the great national feeling that was beginning to sweep the land, and his only safety from his foes was to keep his hold upon Charles. To this end the King was persuaded to

consent to the abandonment of the campaign. Charles was not difficult to win over, for by so doing he would be left in peace to pursue his pleasures, and La Trémouille would be free to misrule France as he liked.

The truce covered the whole of the country north of the Seine from Nogent, sixty miles above Paris, to the sea. While it lasted Charles might not receive the submission of any city or town, however desirous it might be to acknowledge him, although strangely enough he might attack Paris, while equally as strange, Burgundy might assist the Regent to defend it against him. Compiègne was to be given as hostage to Burgundy. The French hoped by giving him this city that he might be drawn from the English alliance.

Compiègne, however, refused to be given, thereby showing more loyalty to the cause of France than did the poor stick of a King. Burgundy entered into the truce for his own purposes, playing France against England to increase his power at French expense. Philip was justified in seeking a truce, for many towns which had been Burgundian had thrown off such allegiance, and turned to Charles. He wished to prevent such desertions for the future. England might come into this peace at any time if she wished. This left England free to wage war against France, and the French could move against the English, but not if any stronghold was held for the English by the Burgundians. It is difficult to see what France hoped to gain by such an armistice, though there were those among the Councillors who sincerely believed that from the arrangement a lasting peace might result both with Burgundy and the English. Later it was learned how Burgundy had beguiled them. Alençon and the captains denounced the truce bitterly.

“If the King had taken Paris, he could have made his own terms with Philip,” the young duke told Jeanne.

“The noble King is deceived,” said the girl sorrowfully. “There will be no peace with Burgundy for six years, and not until seven are sped shall the King enter his capital.”

“Jeanne, do you in truth know that?” questioned the young man quickly. “You speak as though you do.”

“I do know, gentle duke. My Voices have told me. Paris would have been ours had we but persisted in the attack, and in a few months northern France would have been clear of the English. Now it will take twenty years to drive them out.”

“Twenty years,” repeated Alençon aghast. “Have your voices told you that also, Jeanne?”

“Yes, fair duke. And the pity of it! Oh, the pity of it!”

“The pity of it,” he echoed. “For now we must start for the Loire, leaving all these cities and towns that have made submission to Charles to the mercies of the Regent. They have written piteous letters to the King, entreating him not to abandon them, but he consoles them by telling them that he is withdrawing because he does not wish to strip the country to feed the army; yet the English are left free to harry the towns, and their state will be worse than before they made submission. We should not leave.”

“I shall not go,” returned Jeanne quietly. “My Voices have told me to remain at St. Denys. I shall obey them.”

She reckoned without her host. When the King was ready to march he commanded her attendance. She refused to go. She had never disobeyed her Heavenly Guides, she told him, so she gave the King her duty, and begged of him to let her stay. Charles was not minded to do this, so he ordered that she be brought along. Jeanne’s wound was not yet healed, and she was scarcely able to get about. So the helpless maiden was forced against her will to go with the King.

It was a dreary march back to Gien, but it was made quickly. So eager was the King to return to his amusements that the one hundred and fifty miles’ distance from St. Denys to Gien was traversed in eight days. When the city was reached Charles disbanded the army; so that of all the great number of men who had set forth from the place three months agone with banners flying nothing remained but the men of the King’s body guard. Some were free lances from many lands, but for the most part they were French gentlemen who had served without pay for the love of France and the Maid. Jeanne took farewell of them with sadness: the brave Dunois, the bold La Hire, Poton Zaintrailles, Boussac, Culent, and others. The great army was never mustered again.

Normandy, being an English possession, was exempt from the truce, so Alençon prayed permission to lead troops against the English strongholds there, wishing also to take the Maid with him. “For many,” he said, “would come with them for her sake who would not budge without her.”

But neither the King nor La Trémouille would grant the grace. They did not wish the ardent young prince to become a leader of the French against the enemy, and the Maid had become too much of a power to be lost sight of. So firmly and decidedly the project was dismissed, and he was relieved of his command. In disgust the young duke retired to his estates. He and Jeanne had grown to be

great friends. He believed in her implicitly, and she was fond of him that he did so believe; and also because of his nobility of character, and his connection with the house of Orléans. It was the last time that they ever met. “And thus was broken the spirit of the Maid, and of the army.”[23]

Jeanne pined in the days that followed; for the Court drifted from castle to castle and from town to town in search of amusement. Its frivolity and idle merrymaking were not to her liking, but she was forced to follow in its train. She had her own Household, to which were now added women and maidens of rank, and everything which could show that she was one whom the King delighted to honor. The Queen came up from Bourges, and gave her a warm welcome. Rich apparel, gorgeous in coloring, was bestowed upon her, and, be it said to the credit of Charles, she was not stinted for money. The King was not ungrateful. He knew that it was almost impossible to estimate the moral effects of Jeanne’s victories about Orléans and upon the Loire. All Europe was filled with wonder, and sent eagerly to him for news of her. All this he knew, but he misjudged the girl, and tried to pay his debt to her by showering gifts upon her when she wanted only to fight for France. Pretty clothes and a life of ease might satisfy other girls, but not Jeanne D’Arc, who lived only for the welfare of the country. Had Charles but availed himself of her influence, the splendid confidence of his soldiers, and the loyalty of the country people, treating with Burgundy after taking Paris, it is more than likely that the English power in France would have been broken in 1429 as quickly as it was twenty years later.

There was one who recognized Jeanne’s services to the French to the full: the English Regent, Bedford. Writing to England four years later he acknowledged that the gains France had made against England were due mainly to the “panic caused by the Maid, and the encouragement given by her to the French.” Had Bedford been King of France he would have known how to use such a power.

The leaders did not mind if Jeanne worked, but they were not desirous that there should be more individual triumphs. It threw their own treachery to the realm into strong relief, and made for their downfall. On the upper Loire were several strongholds which did not come under the truce with Burgundy, and these might be proceeded against with impunity. The strong town of La Charité was held by Perrinet Gressart, who had begun life as a mason but, war being the best trade, made a fine living out of the rich district of the upper Loire. He was in a measure under Philip of Burgundy, but when the duke pressed him too hard he threatened to sell out to the enemy, so that he was left in peace to pillage to his heart’s content. Early in his career this soldier of fortune had seized La Trémouille as he

was passing through the Burgundian country, and the rich favorite was allowed to proceed on his journey only at the price of a month's captivity and a heavy ransom.

The little town of St. Pierre le Moustier, which stood about thirty-five miles above La Charité, was held by a Spanish Free Lance who had married a niece of Gressart. Its garrison waged a war of wastry, pillaging the peasants and the country far and wide, and holding all whom they could take to ransom. It was decided to launch an expedition against these strongholds under Jeanne. If they fell it would satisfy the grudge that La Trémouille held for his captivity; if they did not fall there would be further loss of Jeanne's influence, and the favorite would be rid of a danger that was threatening his control of France.

Jeanne preferred to go against Paris, but the capital was at this time under the government of Burgundy, who had been appointed lieutenant by Bedford, and therefore was within the truce. So, glad of any sort of a dash against the enemy, Jeanne went to Bourges to muster the men. The force was to be under d'Albret, a son-in-law of La Trémouille, a man not inclined to be friendly to the Maid. By the end of October all was in readiness, and it was decided to go against St. Pierre le Moustier before marching against La Charité. It was a strong little town with fosses, towers, and high walls some two miles east of the River Allier, overlooking the fields which lay between the walls and the river.

The town was plied by the artillery for several days, and after a breach was made Jeanne ordered an assault, herself leading with standard in hand. The men rushed to the walls, but were driven back; the retreat sounded, and the troops were retiring from the point of attack when Jean D'Aulon, Jeanne's squire, being himself wounded in the heel and unable to stand or walk, saw the Maid standing almost alone near the walls. He dragged himself up as well as he could upon his horse, and galloped up to her, crying:

"What are you doing here alone, Pucelle? Why do you not retreat with the others?"

"Alone?" questioned Jeanne, raising the visor of her helmet and gazing at him with glowing eyes. "I am not alone. Fifty thousand of my people are about me. I will not leave until this town is mine."

The squire looked about him in bewilderment, for there were not more than five men of her Household near her, yet there she stood waving her standard while the arrows and bolts from the town rained and whistled about her.

"You are mistaken, Jeanne," he said. "I see not such a host. Come away, I

beseech you. The troops are in full retreat."

"Look after the screens and faggots," ordered the Maid. Mystified, the worthy man did as he was bid, while the clear voice rang out the command:

"To the bridge, every man of you."

Back came the men on the run with planks and faggots, and so filling the moat returned to the assault, and the town was taken. D'Aulon watched the onslaught in wonder.

"The deed is divine," he exclaimed in amazement. "Truly the will and the guidance of our Lord are with her, else how could so young a maid accomplish such a marvel."

The town was taken, and the soldiers would have pillaged even the churches, but Jeanne, remembering Jargeau, firmly forbade it, and nothing was stolen.

Then the Maid and d'Albret proceeded to Moulins, an important town further up the river in the Bourbonnais, whence they sent letters to the loyal towns requiring munitions for the attack on La Charité. It was to the interest of the neighboring towns that this place should be cleared away, for the garrison was a plague to the surrounding country, but only a few of them responded to the appeal for money and supplies. Orléans, generous as always, sent money, gunners, artillery and warm clothing, but the army was ill-equipped for the siege. Jeanne moved her forces before the strong town and settled down for the siege, but the King neither forwarded money nor supplies. Riom promised money, but that was the end of it. Left without the munitions necessary, her army ill-fed, ill-clothed against the bitter November weather, Jeanne wrote to the citizens of Bourges an urgent appeal. "The troops must have help," she said, "else the siege must be abandoned, which would be a great misfortune to your city and to all the country of Berri."

Bourges voted to send the money, but it was never received. Vigorously the troops pummelled the strong town with what artillery they had, but a siege can not be prosecuted without provisions and other supplies, and the King left them to get along without any support. The men naturally became discontented. A month was wasted in artillery play, and an assault resulted only in loss of men. In great displeasure Jeanne raised the siege. She could inspire men to fight as they never fought before, but she could not work miracles. God would give the victory to those who helped themselves. Hungry, cold, disheartened troops could not fight without munitions and provisions. So they were disbanded, and retreated from the town, leaving some of their artillery on the field.

Thus ended the fighting for the year 1429, and sadly the Maid returned to the Court. In spite of unbelief and opposition she had accomplished incredible deeds since her setting forth from Vaucouleurs, and would have done them again had she not been hampered by the King and his Council.

Charles was at his beautiful Château at Méhun-sur-Yèvre, where Jeanne joined him. She was overcast and sorrowful at the failure of the siege of La Charité. She had wished to go into the Isle of France to help the people of the loyal towns there, whose state was pitiful, but had been sent on the unsuccessful expedition instead. Invaders and robbers alike were made bold by the withdrawal of Charles from northern France; and the English were active, forcing exile or death on the defenseless people, who would not forswear their loyalty. Many villages were forsaken, the inhabitants having been driven into other parts of France. There was pestilence and famine everywhere. In Paris wolves prowled openly, and its citizens died by hundreds. Paris, the beautiful city of covered bridges, orchards, and vineyards and towered fortresses, had been abandoned by the English and Burgundians to its own protection; Burgundy going to look after his personal concerns, while Bedford swept the adjacent country with fire and sword. She had been needed in northern France, and Jeanne's heart was heavy with tenderness for the suffering people of that region.

Many feasts were held in her honour, and both the King and the Queen showered attentions upon her, trying by fine clothes and caresses to make her forget her mission and her despair. In December the King, in the presence of La Trémouille, Le Macon, and other courtiers, conferred upon Jeanne a patent of nobility, sealed with a great seal of green wax upon ribbons of green and crimson, the Orléans colours.

"In consideration of the praiseworthy and useful services which she has rendered to the realm and which she may still render, and to the end that the divine glory and the memory of such favors may endure and increase to all time, we bestow upon our beloved Jehanne d'Ay[24] the name of Du Lys in acknowledgment of the blows which she had struck for the lilies of France. And all her kith and kin herewith, her father, mother, brothers and their descendants in the male and female line to the farthest generation are also ennobled with her, and shall also bear the name Du Lys, and shall have for their arms a shield azure with a sword supporting the crown and golden fleur-de-lis on either side." Charles was a "well languaged prince," and he conferred the patent with fine and noble words, but Jeanne would far rather have had a company of men to lead into the suffering country of northern France. She cared nothing for either the grant of nobility or the blazon, and never used them, preferring to be known simply as Jeanne the Maid. Her brothers, however, Pierre and Jean, were delighted, and ever after bore the name of Du Lys.

The winter passed, bringing with it Jeanne's eighteenth birthday. The truce with

Burgundy had been extended until Easter, and the Maid waited the festival with what grace she could, determined that the end of the truce should find her near Paris. March found her at Sully, where the Court was visiting at La Trémouille. Easter was early that year, falling on March twenty-seventh, and as soon as it was over Jeanne left the Court, and rode northward with her Company.

On her way north she heard of the disaffection of Melun, a town some twenty-one miles south of Paris, which had been in English hands for ten years. When the English took the place they had locked up its brave captain, Barbazon, in Louvier, from which place he had recently been released by La Hire. In the Autumn of 1429 Bedford had turned the town over to Burgundy; but during April on the return of Barbazon the burghers rose, and turned out the captain and his Burgundian garrison, and declared for France. It was a three days' ride from Sully-sur-Loire to Melun across rough country and up the long ridge of Fontainebleau forest, but Jeanne arrived with her men in time to help the citizens resist the onset made against the town by a company of English which had been sent to restore the English allegiance. Joyfully they welcomed her, giving over the defense into her charge.

The first thing that Jeanne did was to make a survey of the walls, that she might consider their strength and how best to fortify them against assault. One warm pleasant day in April she stood on the ramparts superintending some repairs that she had ordered when all at once her Voices came to her.

"Daughter of God," they said, "you will be taken before the Feast of St. Jean. So it must be. Fear not, but accept it with resignation. God will aid you."

Jeanne stood transfixed as she heard the words. The feast of St. Jean was near the end of June. Only two months more in which to fight for France. Her face grew white as the words were repeated, and a great fear fell upon her. A prisoner? Better, far better would it be to die than to be a prisoner in the hands of the English. All their taunts, their gibes, their threats came to her in a rush of memory. She knew what to expect; the stake and the fire had been held up as a menace often enough. Terrified, the young girl fell on her knees, uttering a broken cry of appeal:

"Not that! Not that! Out of your grace I beseech you that I may die in that hour."

"Fear not; so it must be," came the reply. "Be of good courage. God will aid you."

"Tell me the hour, and the day," she pleaded brokenly.

“Before the St. Jean. Before the St. Jean,” came the reply. And that was all.

For a long moment Jeanne knelt, her face bowed upon her hands; then she bent and kissed the ground before her.

“God’s Will be done,” she said. Rising she went on with her work, as calmly, as serenely as though knowledge of her fate had not been vouchsafed her.

She knew, but she did not falter. A braver deed was never done. Who else has shown such courage and high heart since the beginning of the world? To know that she was to be taken, and yet to proceed with her task as though she knew it not! There is an ecstasy in the whirl of battle; a wild joy in the mad charge of cavalry and the clash of steel on steel. There is contagion in numbers filled with the thought that the enemy must be overcome, the fortress taken; a contagion that leads to deeds of valour. There is inspiration in the call of the bugle, or sound of the trumpet, in the waving of banners, in the war cries of the captains. But for the prisoner there is no ecstasy, no joy, no valorous contagion induced by numbers, no inspiration of music, or banners, or war cries. There are only the chill of the dungeon, the clank of the chain, the friendless loneliness, and at length the awful death. But with capture certain, with the consciousness of what was in store, this girl of eighteen went her way doing all that she could in the little time that was left her for France.

The fighting of the Spring was to be along the River Oise. While Charles and his Council had rested serenely reliant upon the faith of Burgundy, the duke and the Regent had completed their plans for the Spring campaign. An army, victualled in Normandy and Picardy, was to take the towns near Paris and thereby relieve the city, which was to be well garrisoned. Only by recovering these towns from the French could Paris be made secure. The good town of Compiègne was especially to be desired, for whosoever held Compiègne would come in time to hold Paris. It was thirty leagues to the north and west of the capital, lying on the River Oise. It will be recalled that Charles had offered the city as a bribe to Burgundy to woo him from the English allegiance, but the city had refused to be lent. It had submitted to the King and the Maid the August before, and its people remained loyal, declaring that they would die and see their wives and children dead before they would yield to England or Burgundy; saying that they preferred death to dishonour. They had imbibed Jeanne’s spirit, and the Maid loved them.

It was further planned by the Regent to clear the road to Reims so that young Henry of England might be crowned there. Bedford was bringing him over from England for that purpose, believing that the French would be more inclined to

support him if he were crowned at Reims. This plan was given up, however, for Burgundy warned Bedford against attempting to imitate the feat of the Maid, saying that it was too difficult. So the real objective of the spring campaign became Compiègne, other movements being to relieve Paris, and to distract the French on their rear. For the French were rising; rising without their King. All over northern France there were stir and activity as troops began to gather to go against the enemy.

From Melun Jeanne journeyed to Lagny, which was but a short distance away, but the road was through a country full of enemies, in which she was subject to attack from every direction. It was one of the towns recovered for France the August before, and was now held for Ambrose de Loré by Foucault with a garrison of Scots under Kennedy, and a Lombard soldier of fortune, Baretta, with his company of men-at-arms, cross-bowmen and archers. It was making “good war on the English in Paris,” and “choking the heart of the kingdom.”

Paris itself became greatly excited when it heard of the arrival of the Maid at Lagny, its ill-neighbor, and feared that she was coming to renew her attack on the city. Among the English also there was consternation when the tidings spread that again Jeanne had taken to the field. “The witch is out again,” they declared to their captains when the officers sought to embark troops for France, and many refused to go. They deserted in crowds. Beating and imprisonment had no effect upon them, and only those who could not escape were forced on board.

Jeanne had scarcely reached Lagny when news came that a band of Anglo-Burgundians was traversing the Isle of France, under one Franquet d’Arras, burning and pillaging the country, damaging it as much as they could. The Maid, with Foucault, Kennedy and Baretta, determined to go against the freebooters.

They came up with the raiders when they were laying siege to a castle, and were laden with the spoils of a recently sacked village. The assault was made, and “hard work the French had of it,” for the enemy was superior in numbers. But after a “bloody fight” they were all taken or slain, with losses also to the French in killed and wounded.

For some reason the leader, Franquet d’Arras, was given to Jeanne. There had been an Armagnac plot in Paris in March to deliver the city to the loyalists, but it had failed. The Maid hoped to exchange the leader of the freebooters for one of the chief conspirators who had been imprisoned, but it was found that the man had died in prison, so the burghers demanded Franquet of Jeanne, claiming that he should be tried as a murderer and thief by the civil law. Jeanne did as

requested, saying as she released him to the Bailly of Senlis:

“As my man is dead, do with the other what you should do for justice.”

Franquet’s trial lasted two weeks; he confessed to the charges against him, and was executed. The Burgundians although accustomed to robbery, murder and treachery, charged Jeanne with being guilty of his death, and later this was made a great point against her.

There was another happening at Lagny that was later made the basis of a charge against the Maid. A babe about three days old died, and so short a time had it lived that it had not received the rites of baptism, and must needs therefore be buried in unconsecrated ground. In accordance with the custom in such cases the child was placed upon the altar in the hope of a miracle, and the parents came to Jeanne requesting her to join with the maidens of the town who were assembled in the church praying God to restore life that the little one might be baptized.

Jeanne neither worked, nor professed to work miracles. She did not pretend to heal people by touching them with her ring, nor did the people attribute miracles to her. But she joined the praying girls in the church, and entreated Heaven to restore the infant to life, if only for so brief a space of time as might allow it to be received into the Church. Now as they knelt and prayed the little one seemed suddenly to move. It gasped three times and its color began to come back.

Crying, “A miracle! A miracle!” the maidens ran for the priest, and brought him. When he came to the side of the child he saw that it was indeed alive, and straightway baptized it and received it into the Church. And as soon as this had been done the little life that had flared up so suddenly went out, and the infant was buried in holy ground. If receiving an answer to earnest prayer be witchcraft were not the maidens of Lagny equally guilty with Jeanne? But this act was later included in the list of charges brought against her.

From Lagny Jeanne went to various other places in danger, or that needed encouragement or help. She made two hurried visits to Compiègne which was being menaced in more than one direction by both parties of the enemy, and was now at Soissons, now at Senlis, and presently in the latter part of May came to Crépy-en-Valois.

And here came the news that Compiègne was being invested on all sides, and that preparations to press the siege were being actively made. Eager to go at once to the aid of the place Jeanne ordered her men to get ready for the march. She had but few in her company, not more than two or three hundred, and some of them told her that they were too few to pass through the hosts of the enemy. A

warning of this sort never had any effect upon Jeanne.

“By my staff, we are enough,” she cried. “I will go to see my good friends at Compiègne.”[25]

At midnight of the twenty-second, therefore, she set forth from Crépy, and by hard riding arrived at Compiègne in the early dawn, to the great joy and surprise of the Governor, Guillaume de Flavy, and the people who set the bells to ringing and the trumpets to sounding a glad welcome.

The men-at-arms were weary with the night’s ride, but Jeanne, after going to mass, met with the Governor to arrange a plan of action.

Now Compiègne in situation was very like to Orléans, in that it lay on a river, but it was on the south instead of the north bank. Behind the city to the southward stretched the great forest of Pierrefonds, and at its feet was the River Oise. In front of the city across the river a broad meadow extended to the low hills of Picardy. It was low land, subject to floods, so that there was a raised road or causeway from the bridge of Compiègne to the foot of the hills, a mile distant. Three villages lay on this bank: at the end of the causeway was the tower and village of Margny, where was a camp of Burgundians; on the left, a mile and a half below the causeway, was Venette, where the English lay encamped; and to the right, a league distant above the causeway, stood Clairoix, where the Burgundians had another camp. The first defence of the city, facing the enemy, was a bridge fortified with a tower and boulevard, which were in turn guarded by a deep fosse.

It was Jeanne’s plan to make a sally in the late afternoon when an attack would not be expected, against Margny, which lay at the other end of the raised road. Margny taken, she would turn to the right and strike at Clairoix, the second Burgundian camp, and so cut off the Burgundians from their English allies at Venette. De Flavy agreed to the sortie, and proposed to line the ramparts of the boulevard with culverins, men, archers, and cross-bowmen to keep the English troops from coming up from below and seizing the causeway and cutting off retreat should Jeanne have to make one; and to station a number of small boats filled with archers along the further bank of the river to shoot at the enemy if the troops should be driven back, and for the rescue of such as could not win back to the boulevard.

The whole of the long May day was occupied in completing arrangements, and it was not until five o'clock in the afternoon that everything was in readiness. It had been a beautiful day, warm with May sunshine, but cooled by a breeze from the west, sweet with the scent of flowers and growing grass. The walls of the city, the windows and roofs of the houses, the buildings on the bridge, and the streets were lined with people waiting to see the Maid and her companions set forth. Presently Jeanne appeared, standard in hand, mounted on a great grey horse, and clad in a rich hucque of crimson cramoisie over her armour. At sight of her the people went wild with joy, shouting:

"Noël! Noël! Noël!" while women and girls threw flowers before her. Jeanne turned a happy face toward them, bowing and smiling, as she rode forth to her last field.

With her rode D'Aulon, his brother, Pothon le Bourgnignon, her brothers, Jean and Pierre, and her Confessor, Father Pasquerel, and a company of five hundred men. Across the bridge they clattered, then took at speed the long line of the causeway to Margny.

"Forward! they are ours!" called Jeanne's clear voice as the village was reached.

With a shout the troops hurled themselves upon the Burgundians, taking the enemy completely by surprise. A scene of confusion ensued. There were cries of triumph from the French as they chased the Burgundians hither and thither, and cries of dismay and clashing of steel from the Burgundians as they scattered before the French through the village. Everything was going as the Maid had planned; for the town was taken.

Just at this juncture Jean de Luxembourg, commander of the Burgundian camp at Clairoix, with several companions, was riding from Clairoix on a visit to the commander at Margny. They had drawn rein on the cliff above Margny, and were discussing the defences of Compiègne when, hearing the clash of arms, they looked over the bluff and saw the scrimmage. Wheeling, they made for Clairoix, and brought up their troops on a gallop. To render the post of Margny untenable took time; so when, flushed with triumph, Jeanne's men turned into the plain toward Clairoix, Luxembourg's men-at-arms set upon them, attacking their right flank. The French rolled back, overwhelmed by the onslaught. Rallying her men, Jeanne charged, and swept back the enemy. Again the French were repulsed; again the Maid drove back the Burgundians; and thus the fray raged on the flat ground of the meadow, first in favor of the one, and then of the other. As they surged with this alternative of advance and retreat the French were

pressed back to the causeway. And then, as reinforcements of the Burgundians continued to arrive a panic suddenly seized the French, and they broke and ran for the bridge and the boats. In vain Jeanne tried to rally them to the charge. For once they were deaf to her voice.

Caring only for the safety of her band Jeanne covered the rear, charging the enemy with those who remained with her, with such effect that they were driven back full half the length of the causeway. “She that was the chief and most valiant of her band, doing deeds beyond the nature of woman.”[26]

Suddenly there sounded a loud hurrah, and from a little wood on the left there came galloping and running across the meadow land from Venette the men-at-arms and the archers of England. Assailed on all sides, for the Burgundians at Margny had rallied and re-entered the fray, the confusion of the French became extreme. A struggling, seething mass of fugitives crowded the causeway, running for their lives. Men and foot soldiers, and behind them mounted men-at-arms, spurring hard, and all making for the boulevard. The gunners on the walls trained their cannon on the mass of men, but fugitives and enemy were so commingled that friend and foe could not be distinguished, and they dared not fire. And De Flavy did nothing.

Roused to the danger of their position D’Aulon entreated Jeanne to make for the town.

“The day is lost, Pucelle,” he cried. “All are in retreat. Make for the town.” But Jeanne shook her head.

“Never,” she cried. “To the charge!”

D’Aulon, Jean and Pierre, her brothers, all her own little company, closed around her, resolved to sell their lives dearly in her defence, and D’Aulon and Pierre, seizing hold of her bridle rein, forcibly turned her toward the town, carrying her back in spite of herself.

But now they were assailed from all sides, the little company fighting, struggling, contesting every inch of ground, beating off their adversaries, and advancing little by little toward the boulevard.

“We shall make it, Jeanne,” exulted Pierre D’Arc when they were within a stone’s throw of the walls, but the words died on his lips, for at this moment came a ringing order from the gate:

“Up drawbridge: close gates: down portcullis!”

Instantly the drawbridge flew up, down came the portcullis, the gates were closed and barred. Jeanne the Maid was shut out.

A groan came from Pierre's lips, but his sister smiled at him bravely; as old D'Aulon shouted:

"Treachery! In God's name, open for the Maid."

But the gates were closed, and the drawbridge remained up. There was a second's interchange of looks between the brothers and sister as the enemy with shouts of triumph closed around them in overwhelming numbers. Only a second, but in that brief time they took a mute farewell of each other. Man after man of the little company was cut down or made prisoner. D'Aulon was seized, then Jean, then Pierre, and Jeanne found herself struggling in the midst of a multitude of Anglo-Burgundians. One seized her wrists, while a Picard archer tore her from the saddle by the long folds of her crimson hucque, and in a moment they were all upon her.

"Yield your faith to me," cried the Picard archer, who had seized her hucque.

"I have given my faith to another than you, and I will keep my oath," rang the undaunted girl's answer.

At this moment there came a wild clamour of bells from the churches of Compiègne in a turbulent call to arms to save the Maid. Their urgent pealing sounded too late.

Jeanne D'Arc had fought on her last field. The inspired Maid was a prisoner.

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[23]

Percéval De Cagny.

[24]

So spelled in the patent. A softening of the Lorraine D'Arc.

[25]

These words are on the base of a statue of her that stands in the square of the town.

[26]

Monstrelet—a Burgundian Chronicler—so writes of her.

CHAPTER XXV

In Prison Cells

> "*It was fit that the savior of France should be a woman. France herself is a woman. She has the fickleness of the sex, but also its amiable gentleness, its facile and charming pity, and the excellence of its first impulses.*"
>
> Michelet. "*Joan of Arc.*"

There were shouts of triumph and exultation as the Maid was led back over the causeway to Margny. The sun had long since set, and the dusk was dying down into darkness. All along the causeway the earth was stained with blood, and sown with broken swords, scraps of armour, and the dead of friend and foe united now in the peace of mortality. Jeanne was too great a prize for a mere archer to claim, so Jean de Luxembourg bought her immediately from the man, allowing him to retain her hucque of crimson cramoisie, her saddle cloth, and horse with caparisons. Then she was taken to his camp at Clairoix.

Thither came also the great Duke of Burgundy from his camp at Coudon, eager to see the girl who had almost uprooted the dominion of the English in France. Thither also assembled the English and Burgundians from the other camps in numbers, with cries and rejoicings over the taking of the Maid. Had a great victory been won the effect could not have been greater. It broke the spell. The Maid was human, like other women. So they were "as joyous as if they had taken five hundred prisoners, for they feared her more than all the French captains put together."

Several times Philip of Burgundy had expressed a wish to see Jeanne the Maid, especially after receiving her letters summoning him to his rightful allegiance. Now as he found her sitting calmly in the quarters to which she had been committed, he could not forbear an exclamation of surprise at her youth and

loveliness.

“So you are the Pucelle?” he cried.

“I am Jeanne the Maid, messire,” she answered, regarding him with grave earnestness. “And you, I doubt not, are that Burgundy who hath beguiled the gentle King with fair words and false promises?”

“I am Philip, Duke of Burgundy,” he replied haughtily. “What I have done hath been for our royal master, Henry, King of England and of France.”

“Ay! and for your country’s wreck and woe.”

“Those are bold words, Pucelle,” ejaculated the duke, flushing. “Have a care. Neither man nor witch may so speak to Burgundy.”

“My lord duke, if they be not true then most humbly do I entreat your pardon. If they be not true, why then do you besiege the good city of Compiègne, bringing suffering upon your own people? They are French, as you are.”

“The city was promised me,” he uttered angrily. “Charles the Dauphin gave it me. ’Twas in the truce. He broke his faith.”

“And how kept you yours?” asked the girl dauntlessly. “I think, my lord, that Paris once was promised Charles. How was that faith kept?”

But Philip, without reply, turned upon his heel angrily, and left the room. Forthwith he sent dispatches to the Regent, to the Dukes of Brittany and Savoy, to his city of St. Quentin, and to the town of Gand that all Christendom might know that the Witch of the Armagnacs was taken.

“By the pleasure of our Blessed Creator,” he wrote, “such grace has come to pass that she whom they call the Maid has been taken. The great news of this capture should be spread everywhere and brought to the knowledge of all, that they may see the error of those who could believe and lend themselves to the pretensions of such a woman. We write this in the hope of giving you joy, comfort, and consolation, and that you may thank God our Creator.”

Over France the tidings spread. From lip to lip it flew: the Maid was taken. Paris rejoiced, showing its delight by building bonfires and singing Te Deums in the Cathedral of Notre Dame. In the loyal cities and in the hearts of the peasantry there was mourning. At Tours the entire population appeared in the streets with bare feet, singing the Miserere in penance and affliction. Orléans and Blois made public prayers for her safety, and Reims had to be especially soothed by its Archbishop.

“She would not take counsel,” wrote Regnault de Chartres, Archbishop of Reims, who had always been an enemy to Jeanne, “but did everything according to her own will. But there has lately come to the King a young shepherd boy who says neither more nor less than Jeanne the Maid. He is commanded by God to go to the King, and defeat the English and Burgundians. He says that God suffered her to be taken because she was puffed up with pride, loved fine clothes, and preferred her own pleasure to any guidance.”

The archbishop’s letter silenced Reims and other cities. Silenced their outcries, that is, for they continued to send petitions to the King pleading that he would gather the money for her ransom, but he did nothing. Another Archbishop, Jacques Gélu, of Embrun, who had written Charles in favor of Jeanne after Orléans now addressed some bold words to the monarch on her behalf:

“For the recovery of this girl, and for the ransom of her life, I bid you spare neither means nor money, howsoever great the price, unless you would incur the indelible shame of most disgraceful ingratitude.”

But the King preferred the “indelible shame of disgraceful ingratitude,” for he made no effort of any sort for Jeanne’s ransom or rescue. He had been a poor discredited Dauphin, with doubts as to his own claims to the throne, contemplating flight into Scotland or Spain when Jeanne came to him at Chinon. She had resolved his doubts, restored the realm, and made him King with the sacred oil upon his brow, yet he preferred to keep his money for his pleasures than to give it for the maiden who had done so much for him. Charles the Seventh of France has been called Charles the Well-served, Charles the Victorious, and he is rightly so called; for it was always others who did his work for him, and won his victories; but Charles the Dastard is the best appellation that can be given him. The ingratitude of Princes is well known, but the heart sickens before such baseness as he showed toward the Maid of Orléans, and the mind revolts from the thought that human nature can sink to such depths.

But if Charles and the French were indifferent to the value of Jeanne others were not. The University of Paris upon receipt of the news of her capture sent at once to Burgundy, demanding that Jean de Luxembourg send forthwith “this Jeanne, violently suspected of many crimes touching heresy, to appear before the Council of Holy Inquisition.” A second letter followed this appeal, saying that it was “feared that the woman would be put out of their jurisdiction in some manner.” The University feared without cause, for no attempt was ever made to redeem the girl whose only crime was to have defended, with matchless heroism, her country and her King.

Back of the University stood the English, who were eager to get possession of her person, and were willing to pay even princely rewards for her delivery into their hands. They had their vengeance to gratify. They had always threatened to burn her if they caught her, and could she be condemned and executed as a sorceress Charles of Valois would be dishonoured through her who had crowned him, and it would appear that his cause was not the true one; that Henry of England was the true sovereign of France. Most Englishmen believed that Jeanne was really a witch, for at this time no man believed that she could accomplish her deeds without supernatural aid. Consequently, as the English did not wish to think that God was against them they pronounced her aid to be from the Evil One. So Pierre Cauchon, the Bishop of Beauvais, was sent by Bedford to Jean de Luxembourg to negotiate the purchase of the Maid. He was an enemy of France; he had a personal grudge toward Jeanne because through her success in arms he had been expelled from his diocese, and was just the right sort of man to send for dickering in such a trade. Jean de Luxembourg was needy, and already in the pay of the English, but he did not wish to let his prize go until he had his money, so Jeanne was sent north to Beaulieu in the Vermandois, where he had a strong castle, until the arrangements were perfected for her sale.

D'Aulon, her squire, was sent with her, for during this period of imprisonment Jeanne was treated honourably, and allowed attendance. She was cheerful and hopeful at Beaulieu for a time, and one day D'Aulon said to her:

"That poor town of Compiègne, which you loved so dearly, will now be placed in the hands of the enemies of France."

"It shall not be," cried Jeanne in a flash of inspiration, "for no place which the King of Heaven has put in the hands of the gentle King Charles by my aid, shall be retaken by his enemies while he does his best to keep them."

But, in spite of these brave words, the fate of the town hung heavy upon her spirit. Her guards told her tales of how the siege was progressing, and of the sufferings of the people. Jeanne chafed under inaction while her friends needed her, and watched eagerly for a chance whereby she might escape and go to their aid. She had not given her faith to any man, and was not on parole.

In one side of the chamber in which she was confined there was a window opening upon a dark corridor. Across were nailed some narrow planks, the space between them being sufficient for a very slender person to slip through. Jeanne resolved to risk an attempt.

Her guards were in an adjoining room, which also opened upon the dark

corridor, but once past their room she believed that she might gain the grounds of the château and from thence reach the wooded country that lay beyond its immediate confines. The plan worked perfectly—to a certain point. She was slight enough to slip between the narrow planks, which she did, and found herself in the corridor, which was dark and musty from long disuse. There was a huge key in the lock of the door where the guards were, and this Jeanne turned as noiselessly as possible, then darted away through the dim passageway. Alas! the porter of the château, who had not the least business in that part of the castle, suddenly came out of another room opening upon the corridor, and confronted her. Without ado the maiden was marched back to her chamber, like a naughty child, and the guards were doubled.

“It did not please God that I should escape this time,” she said plaintively to D’Aulon when he came to attend her.

Jean de Luxembourg was alarmed when he heard of the attempt. She was too rich a prize to lose, so he sent her post haste to his stronghold of Beaurevoir, which was forty miles further north, beyond St. Quentin in the plain of Picardy, and was the residence of his wife, aunt, and step-daughter.

She was shut up here at the top of a tower sixty feet high, but notwithstanding this fact her condition was much alleviated, for the ladies of the household visited her daily, becoming greatly attached to her. These good women tried to get her to lay aside her masculine attire, for it troubled and shamed them to see her in the costume of a man. Jeanne explained courteously her reasons for wearing the garb when they brought a woman’s frock to her, and besought her to put it on.

“It is best to be so dressed while in the serious work of war,” she told them. “When among men it is more seemly to wear the garb of a soldier; but,” she added graciously, “were it time for me to change the fashion of my dress I would do it for you two ladies who have been so kind rather than for any one in France except my Queen.”

Many persons visited her while she was at this castle, but as Jean de Luxembourg, the master of the house, was himself in camp before Compiègne there was the disadvantage of constant news, and the girl’s anxiety became pitiable as the tidings from her “good friends” at Compiègne daily became more unfavourable.

D’Aulon was no longer with her, and for the first time Jeanne was entirely without a friend of the old life with her. There was no word that her King or her

friends were doing anything for her, but only talk of the English and how they wished to buy her. Both visitors and guards told her of the besieged city and that their sufferings were driving the citizens to desperation. There was joy and thanksgiving in the castle upon the coming of the heralds with dispatches that seemed to be always to the advantage of the Burgundians. It preyed upon the maiden's mind; she lost confidence and hope, becoming very despondent.

"When Compiègne is taken all persons beyond the age of seven years are to be put to the sword," one of her visitors said one day.

"I would rather die than live after the destruction of such good people," she said. "Also I would rather die than be in the hands of my enemies of England." She paced the floor in great agitation after the visitor left her.

"How can God leave those good people of Compiègne, who have been and are so loyal to their King, to perish?" she cried.

And the thought came to her that she must escape, that she must go to the rescue of Compiègne. There were blows to be struck there that only she could strike. She must go to Compiègne. Jeanne was but a young girl. She could not realize that her allotted time was over. It is hard for one to accept the fact one is not needed; that everything can go on as usual without one, and Jeanne was very young. All at once the desperate expedient came to her to leap from the tower.

"Do not leap," admonished her Voices. "Be patient. God will help you, and also Compiègne."

"Then since God will aid the good people of Compiègne I desire to be with them," said Jeanne.

"You must bear these things gladly," St. Catherine told her. "Delivered you will not be until you have seen the King of England."

"Verily," cried the Maid like the child she was, "I have no wish to see him, and would rather die than be in English hands."

"Do not leap," came from St. Catherine again. "Be patient. All will be well."

But Jeanne was wrought up to too great a pitch to heed. For the first time since her Saints had come to her she deliberately disobeyed their counsels. Going to the top of the tower she commended herself to God and Our Lady and leaped.

Some time later she was found at the foot of the tower where she had fallen. She was insensible, and lay so long unconscious that the Luxembourg ladies feared that she was dead. After a time she regained consciousness, but for three days

could neither eat nor drink. The wonder is that she escaped destruction, but no bones were broken, and she was not even seriously injured.

“I have sinned,” confessed the girl humbly to her Saints when next they visited her. “I have sinned.” And of God she asked pardon for her impatience and disobedience. She was forgiven, and comforted.

“Fear naught,” Saint Catherine said consolingly. “They of Compiègne shall have succor before St. Martin’s Day.”

And now having obtained forgiveness for her sin Jeanne recovered and began to eat, and soon was well. As for Compiègne, it was delivered, as was foretold a fortnight before St. Martin’s Day. The men of the town worked bravely under De Flavy, and their courageous endurance enabled them to hold out until the twenty-fifth of October, when they were rescued by a concerted movement of Vendôme and Zaintrailles, and a sortie of the citizens. The enemy was forced to make a shameful retreat, being completely routed, abandoning their artillery and supplies. Many strong towns which adjoined Compiègne made submission to the King, but it was the loyalty and courage of Compiègne that really shattered the Anglo-Burgundian campaign of 1430.

Meantime Pierre Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, was travelling from Burgundy to Luxembourg, and thence to Bedford in the effort to complete the sale of the maiden. Jeanne’s price had been settled at ten thousand pounds in gold. It was the ransom of a prince, and Jeanne was a peasant maid, but the English had no doubt of her importance. There was delay in raising the money, but when at last Regent Bedford received a large sum from Normandy he set aside ten thousand pounds which he said “were to be devoted to the purchase of Jehanne la Pucelle, said to be a witch, and certainly a military personage, leader of the hosts of the Dauphin.” The Demoiselle de Luxembourg begged Jean, her nephew, not to sell the maiden to the English. He knew, and she knew what fate lay in store for the girl, and she besought him with tears not to take the blood money. But, pleading poverty, de Luxembourg would not listen, and the sale was made.

Jeanne now was removed to Arras, where Philip of Burgundy held his court, and here the money passed hands. Jean de Luxembourg received his ten thousand pounds, and Philip of Burgundy was rewarded with political favors. Jeanne was at last in the hands of the English, who immediately removed her to their strong fortress of Crotoy, a castle by the sea, and now that they had her they “rejoiced as greatly as if they had received all the wealth of Lombardy.”

But she was treated honourably here, like any prisoner of war. Once too some ladies of Abbeville, five leagues from Crotoy, came down the River Somme in a boat to see her. As were all women, they were much pleased with the gentle maiden, and wept when they took leave of her, kissing her affectionately, and wishing her all sorts of favours from Heaven. Jeanne thanked them warmly for their visit, and commended herself to their prayers. Another comfort was vouchsafed her here: a fellow prisoner, a priest in a dungeon of Crotoy, was allowed to visit her daily to say mass and to give her the holy communion. So that the month of her stay served to soothe and calm her mind, and give her fortitude for what was to come.

The University of Paris was becoming impatient for its prey. Its offer to see her to a speedy condemnation had not been accepted, and a sharp letter was sent to Pierre Cauchon saying that if he had been more diligent the “cause of the woman would already have been before the ecclesiastical court.” But it was not the fault of Cauchon, but of the English, who had hesitated about taking the Maid for trial to Paris. It was unquiet in the Ile de France, and all the northern country seemed turning again toward Charles; therefore there might be danger of Jeanne being captured by the French before Paris could be reached. Nor did they wish to take her to England. It was decided, in consequence, to hold the trial in Rouen in Normandy, where they were most strong, under the zealous Pierre Cauchon, and an officer of the Holy Inquisition to sit with him as co-judge.

So again Jeanne’s prison was changed. At the end of the year she was taken from Crotoy, and, travelling slowly along the coast, reached Rouen by way of Eu and Dieppe, as far away as possible from any risk of rescue. It was in the beginning of the year 1431 that she arrived at Rouen, and at once she was taken to the castle and lodged in its great tower. It was a gloomy edifice, and the room to which she was assigned was in the first story, up eight steps from the postern gate, where light and air struggled feebly through a narrow slit through the twelve foot wall.

The severities inflicted upon her here were terrible. For the first time she was heavily fettered; even at night her ankles were ironed and fastened to a chain which passed under her bed and was locked to a heavy beam at the foot. Hands, feet and throat were bound to a pillar, and she was kept in an iron cage, or huche. Also, because it was their policy to degrade her as well as to keep her, five rude English soldiers from the lowest class were given her for guards. Three of these were always to be in her room night and day, and two outside. The whole being sickens, and is filled with rage, and shame, and burning indignation at the

cruelties that were inflicted upon this modest young girl. Where were La Hire, Dunois, Alençon, Boussac, Rais, and other captains that no sword was drawn for Jeanne?

Oh, shame to England that so used her! And ten times shame to France who deserted her and sold her! A blot upon England? Yes. And upon France that she had saved. A stain that can never be obliterated as long as the world stands. She was a woman in the age of chivalry, when women were supposed to be the objects of a kind of worship, every knight being sworn to succor and help them in need and trouble. And the "Chivalry of England shamefully used and destroyed her; the Chivalry of France deserted and sold her."[27]

She was to be tried by the Church, yet she was placed in a military prison, instead of an ecclesiastical one guarded by women. There was but one solace; many times a day her Saints came to her whispering words of comfort and consolation.

"But I do not always understand," said the maiden afterward before her judges, "because of the disturbance in the prison, and the noise made by the guards."

And thus, in chains, in an iron cage, Jeanne D'Arc passed her nineteenth birthday.

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[27]

Andrew Lang.

CHAPTER XXVI

On Trial

> "*Great in everything as she was we here see her at her greatest.*"
>
> Andrew Lang. "*The Maid of France.*"

The days passed drearily enough in the prison cell, but Jeanne endured the chains, the irons, and the hideous company of the guards rather than give her parole not to attempt an escape. The monotony of her misery was varied by visitors who came to stare at her and to banter her.

In the castle in which she was confined there were many people: Bedford, the Regent, Beaufort, the Cardinal of Winchester, the child king, Henry of England, the Earl of Warwick, the chief officers of both the royal and vice-royal court, and a host of guards and men-at-arms. There were many of these who were inquisitive and malicious concerning her. One of the visitors was Pierre Manuel, advocate of the King of England.

"You would not have come here if you had not been brought," he accosted her jestingly. "Did you know before you were taken that you would be captured?"

"I feared it," Jeanne answered sadly.

"If you feared it, why were you not on your guard?"

"I did not know the day nor the hour," she answered patiently.

The Earl of Warwick himself took more than one occasion to show Jeanne to his friends, and one day he brought the Earl of Stafford and Jean de Luxembourg to see her. De Luxembourg was the same who had sold her to the English.

"Jeanne, I have come to ransom you," remarked the latter laughingly as the girl rose to a sitting posture from the bed where she was chained to give them

courteous greeting. “That is, if you will promise never again to bear arms against us.”

“In God’s name, you mock me,” she cried with a flash of spirit. “I know that you have neither the will nor the power. I know that the English mean to kill me, believing, after I am dead, that they will be able to win the Kingdom of France; but if there were a hundred thousand more Godons than there are, they shall never win the Kingdom.”

Whereupon Lord Stafford was so goaded to rage that he half drew his dagger to slay her, but Warwick stayed his hand. It was too merciful a death, and it was the English policy to have her executed ignominiously as a witch.

After long, comfortless days of waiting Jeanne was informed that she was to be tried for heresy, and piteously she asked that some of her own party should be placed among the judges; but this was refused. The charge of heresy against a girl to whom the ordinances of the Church were as the breath of life seems strange. She who lived in an ecstasy of religious fervour, who spent her time in prayer and religious exercises; who confessed regularly, and partook of the Sacraments of the Church whenever she could receive them, was accused by the Church of being a heretic and schismatic. Her great crime in the eyes of the clergy lay in affirming that she obeyed voices that came from God.

In her cell Jeanne could know but little of the arrangements that were being made for the trial, which were on such a scale as to command the attention of all Europe. No homage ever rendered her by her own party conveys such a sense of her importance as this trial which was instigated by a great nation to neutralize her influence.

Owing to the fact that the meadow land where she was captured lay in the diocese of Beauvais Pierre Cauchon claimed jurisdiction over her. He had ever been a sympathizer with the English faction, and after Jeanne’s triumphs had swept him out of his city he had fled for a while to England, and had come back to France with the Cardinal of Winchester, eager for rewards and revenge. A few months previous Winchester had recommended him to the Pope for the vacant archbishopric of Rouen, but his appointment was opposed by the clergy of that city, and the Pope had not yet come to a decision. He was a man of much learning and more ambition, and he delighted in the opportunity now afforded him of pleasing his English patrons, and avenging his private grudge.

As Cauchon was presiding officer the trial should have been held, of course, in his diocese, but it was deemed expedient to hold it in Rouen, on account of the

disturbances near Paris, and Canonical permission was obtained from the Cathedral Chapter of Rouen to hold the court in that city. Bishops, abbés, priors, representatives of the University of Paris, learned doctors, and noted priests, sixty of the greatest intellectuals of the Church,—all of them Frenchmen of the English faction,—were gathered together to bring to death a young, ignorant peasant girl.

To arrange all the preliminaries that were necessary for the opening of the trial took time, so that it was not until toward the last of February that everything was in readiness. Such cases are always preceded by an inquiry into the former life of the accused as had been done at Poictiers, for this is according to French law. This examination was made but it was not of a nature to justify or strengthen any accusation. All that the examiners could discover was that Jeanne D'Arc was a good, honest maid who had left a spotless reputation behind her in her native village. One commissioner reported that he had learned nothing which he would not willingly know of his own sister, although he had made inquiries in five or six parishes. Cauchon called him a traitor, and said that he would not pay for information that could be of no use to him.

As this investigation had been productive of nothing that could be used against her an effort was made to trap Jeanne into admissions against herself. Accordingly one morning a man entered her cell who represented himself as a shoemaker coming from Lorraine. He was a prisoner, he said, but had received permission to visit her. Jeanne was delighted to see any one from the valley of the Meuse, so gave him cordial greeting, and the two fell into conversation. During the talk the supposed cobbler said suddenly in a low tone:

"Pucelle, I am a priest. Nay," as Jeanne turned toward him with an exclamation of joy, "speak low. Some of the guards may understand French, and I am come to help you."

"A priest?" The maiden's thin, white face grew radiant. "A priest, messire? Then you can hear me in confession?"

"Gladly, my child." And forthwith the girl innocently opened up her heart to him.

The man was in reality a priest, one Nicholas Loyseleur, a representative of the University of Paris, and full of treachery and hypocrisy. He served Cauchon well, for Jeanne trusted him wholly, never dreaming that every word she said to him was overheard and recorded by secret listeners. For there was provision made for espionage, openings being in the walls through which everything that

took place in the room, every proceeding could be spied upon, and every word heard. Although the long conversations that this man held with Jeanne elicited nothing that she did not say publicly, he was always giving her advice which, when she followed it, she followed to her hurt.

The preliminaries, as has been said, threatened to be endless, but at length, on Wednesday, February twenty-first, the Great Trial began at eight o'clock in the morning in the royal chapel of the castle.

Jeanne gave a sigh of relief as the officer of the court, who was sent to conduct her to the chapel, released her from her fetters.

"You are summoned to appear before the court, Pucelle," he explained.

"May I hear mass before entering the court?" asked she wistfully.

"Nay; it is not permitted," he answered. "Come!"

So, surrounded by a strong guard, the Maid was led through the corridor to the royal chapel. It was but a short distance, but it was the first breath of fresh air that she had had in almost two months, and Jeanne inhaled it eagerly. The chapel was a large room, but it was not large enough to accommodate those who sought admission. Rouen was very full of people, and the leopards of England and the two-tailed lion of Burgundy were to be seen on every side. There was a motley populace of soldiers, citizens, priests and lawyers; for the Great Trial had brought to the town any number of churchmen and men of the robe, each with his attendant train of clerics and secretaries.

Forty-four of the assessors, as the assistants of Cauchon were called, were present in the chapel ranged in a semi-circle around the presiding Bishop. Doctors in theology, doctors in canonical and civil law, abbots and canons were there assembled in the solemnity of their priestly and professional robes; clerks, ready with their pens to record proceedings, lords, and notables of every degree of rank: all gathered to see how easily the Witch would be undone.

To none of these worthies did Jeanne give attention as she was led through the spectators to a solitary bench which stood where all might see on a dais on one side of the room, near to the Bishop's stand. But, raising her large, grave eyes, she gazed earnestly at the Judge, Pierre Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, who this day presided alone. It was a cold cruel face upon which she looked; an intellectual face also, on which ambition sat. No man is so merciless toward an obstacle that stands in the way of his advancement as a cold intellectual man. Involuntarily Jeanne shuddered as she looked at him.

After she was seated Cauchon addressed her, summarizing the accusations, and all the public reports and suspicions upon which the trial was based, exhorting her sternly. Then he required her to take the oath upon the Scriptures, to speak the truth, and to answer all questions addressed to her.

“I know not what things I may be asked,” said Jeanne clearly. “Perhaps you may ask me questions which I cannot answer.”

As the sweet girlish voice rose in answer to the Bishop’s command there was a stir in the assembly and every eye was turned upon the maiden in the prisoner’s seat. They saw a slender girl, just past nineteen, dressed in a page’s suit of black, her dark hair, cut short man fashion, intensifying the pallor of her face, and the melancholy of her large eyes. She looked very young as she sat there, emaciated and fetter-worn from her irons.

“Swear to tell the truth upon whatever you may be asked concerning the faith, and facts within your knowledge,” rejoined the Bishop.

“As to my father and mother,” said Jeanne, “and what I did after setting out for France, I will swear willingly; but the revelations which have come to me from God I will reveal to no man except only to Charles, my King; I shall not reveal them to you though you cut off my head, because I have received them by vision and by secret communication, and am forbidden.” After a moment’s reflection she added: “Before eight days I shall know if I may tell you of them.”

The Bishop urged her again and again to take the oath without conditions. She refused, and they were at length obliged to offer a limited oath. Then, kneeling, Jeanne crossed her hands upon the Missal and swore to answer truly whatever might be asked of her, so far as she could, concerning the common faith of Christians, but no more. Being then questioned concerning her name and early life she answered:

“In my own country I was called Jeannette; ever since coming into France[28] I have been called Jeanne. I have as surname D’Arc or Romée; in my country girls take the name of their mother.” Then she told the names of her father and mother, her godfather and godmothers, the priest who had baptized her, the place where she was born, her age, concluding with: “From my mother I learned my Pater, my Ave Marie, and my Credo. From my mother I learned all that I believe.”

“Say your Pater,” commanded the Bishop abruptly; for it was believed that no witch could repeat the Lord’s Prayer except backwards.

“Hear me in confession, and I will say it for you willingly.”

Several times she was asked to say the Pater Noster, but her reply was always the same: “No; I will not say my Pater for you unless you hear me in confession.”

“We will willingly give you one or two worthy men who speak French; will you say your Pater to them?”

“I shall not say it unless in confession,” was her answer, whereby there was an implied protest to this company of priests who had refused her all the exercises of the Church.

Cauchon ignored the appeal, and as the session was about to close forbade her to leave the prison which had been assigned her in the castle under pain of being pronounced guilty of heresy; to this the maiden returned at once:

“I do not accept such an injunction. If ever I escape, no one shall be able to reproach me with having broken my faith, as I have not given my word to any person whatever.” Then she complained that they bound her with chains and shackles.

“You tried several times to escape from the prison where you were detained,” Cauchon reminded her, “and it was to keep you more surely that you were ordered to be put in irons.”

“It is true that I wished to get away,” said Jeanne, “and I wish it still. Is not that a thing allowed to every prisoner?”

Thereupon Cauchon called in John Grey, the English gentleman who had charge of the prison, along with two of his soldiers, and enjoined them to guard the girl securely and not to permit her to talk with any one without the permission of the court. Jeanne was then led back to her cell and her irons.

Now the assessors were not all agreed as to the legality of the trial, but they feared what might befall them if they opposed Cauchon, who wielded a great influence with the English. One Nicolas de Houppeville of Rouen had spoken his mind freely at the preliminary consultation, and now as he presented himself to take a seat among the assistant judges the Bishop had him thrown into prison. This man had said:

“I do not see how we can proceed against the prisoner, as we who are opposed to her are acting as judges. Furthermore, she has already been examined by the clergy at Poictiers under the Archbishop of Reims, who is the metropolitan of the Bishop of Beauvais.”

He stated the case with clearness: the Church which had acquitted her at Poictiers seemed now to be trying Jeanne for the same offense. Cauchon reprimanded the priest sharply, and it now took all the influence that could be brought to bear upon the matter to keep him from being exiled to England. But his misfortune had a salutary effect upon the other assessors. Henceforth, Cauchon found the majority of them pliant to his will.

There had been so much confusion at the first session, the proceedings being much interrupted by shouts and noises from outside, that the next morning the sitting was held in a room at the end of the great hall of the castle. Again the captive was unchained and brought before them—a young girl, alone and friendless, before a convocation of trained men, and without counsel, advocate, or attorney. During the day before she had been interrupted at almost every word, and secretaries of the English King recorded her replies as they pleased, distorting her answers as they saw fit. Guillaume Manchon of the Cathedral Chapter, chief clerk, threatened to throw up his task if this were further permitted, being desirous that the records should be correctly kept. Again the Bishop asked Jeanne to take the oath without conditions. To which she replied:

“I swore yesterday. That ought to suffice.”

“Every person,” said the Bishop, “though he were a prince, being required to swear in any matter relating to the faith, cannot refuse.”

“I took the oath yesterday,” said she, “that ought to be sufficient for you. You ask too much of me.”

The contest ended as on the day before by Jeanne taking a limited oath. Then Jean Beaupère, a distinguished professor in theology, resumed the examination. In all this trial Jeanne was the only witness examined.

He asked about her early life, her trade, her visions, her coming to the King, the sign she had shown him, the wearing of male attire, and about the fairies of the Tree, and the healing properties of the Gooseberry Spring. The questions were purposely mixed and confused so as to entrap her into contradictions. Again and again he returned to the Sign she had shown to the King, and this Jeanne could not in loyalty reveal. Had it been known that Charles had doubts concerning his own right to the throne, it would have been claimed that he held the crown on the strength of an assurance from a sorceress. This Sign and the wearing of male attire were recurred to time after time. The whole judicial process was a succession of snares to catch an unsuspecting victim, a constant violation of justice and the most established rights. Day after day the interrogations

continued, and the maiden evinced a courage in facing the learned doctors and divines as great as she had ever shown in battle. The readiness and beauty of her answers often astonished the assembly. They asked her one day:

“Do you know that you are in the grace of God?”

This was an unfair question. If she replied, “yes,” she was presumptuous; if “no,” she condemned herself. One of the assessors, Maître Jean Lefèvre, spoke up quickly:

“That is an unsuitable question for such a girl.”

“Hold your peace,” cried Cauchon angrily. “It will be the better for you.” And Maître Jean was silent. “Answer,” commanded the Bishop, turning sternly to Jeanne.

The assembly awaited the reply in a silence so great that a pin might have been heard to fall.

“If I am not in grace, may God bring me thither; if I am, God keep me there.”

The reply was sublime. The doctors were amazed, and murmurs were heard among them. “Jeanne, you say well,” came from several. Cauchon was plainly chagrined.

At another time she was asked if she had ever been present when English blood was shed.

“In God’s name, yes. How mildly you talk! Why did they not leave France and go back to their own country?”

Thereupon a great English lord cried out: “She is a brave girl! If only she were English!”

These public hearings lasted six days, through long weary hours, filled with tiresome repetitions, and hidden stratagems to catch her unawares. But there had been little progress made, so Cauchon brought them to an abrupt close. It was high time. As at Poictiers Jeanne’s compelling personality was beginning to make itself felt. There was a visible softening toward her, and one or two of the judges tried to give her warnings or to aid her by whispered suggestions.

In the streets men were whispering that the judges were “persecuting her out of perverse vengeance, of which they gave every sign; that she was kept in a secular prison against the opinion of the court for fear of displeasing the English; that the English believed that they could have neither glory nor success while

she lived."

There was passing through Rouen one Jean de Lohier, who boldly declared that the trial was not valid. (1) It was held in a castle, where men were not at liberty to give their free and full opinions. (2) The honour of the King of France was impeached; he was a party in the suit, yet he did not appear, and had no representative. (3) The "libel," or accusation, had not been given to the Maid, and she had no counsel; she was a simple girl, tried in deep matters of faith. To Manchon, the clerk, he said: "You see how they are going on! They will catch her in her words, as when she says, 'I know for certain that I touched the apparitions.' If she said, 'so it seemed to me,' I think no man could condemn her."

Cauchon was very angry when these words came to him, and Lohier had to fly the country. It was quite time proceedings were changed. The Bishop, therefore, chose certain doctors, saying that he would not "fatigue all and each of the masters who at this moment assist us in such great numbers." He told the others that they should be kept informed of the evidence, which they might study at their leisure, and expressly forbade them to leave Rouen before the end of the trial. Then with his chosen henchmen he proceeded to make the inquiry a private one.

So Jeanne was deprived of even the brief respite which the change from cell to court afforded. The examinations were chiefly repetitions of the interrogations of the public ones, though both questions and answers were fuller and freer, but were in consequence fatiguing and more trying.

Asked one day what she meant when she said that Monseigneur Beauvais put himself in danger by bringing her to trial, she answered that what she had said to Monseigneur Beauvais was:

"You say that you are my judge. I know not whether you are so; but take care that you judge well, or you will put yourself in great danger. I warn you, so that if our Lord should chastise you for it, I may have done my duty in warning you."

"What is the danger that may befall him?"

"I know not. My Voices have told me that I shall be delivered by a great victory." Her thin face was filled with sudden radiance. "It may be that judgment may come upon him then. And they add: 'Be resigned; have no care for your martyrdom; you will come in the end to the Kingdom of Paradise.' They have told me this simply, absolutely, and without fail. I do not know if I shall have greater suffering to bear; for that I refer me to God."

It was very plain that the maiden expected to be rescued. “Delivered by a great victory” could mean but one thing to one so young as she; so day after day she answered their questions in the manner of one who is waiting expectantly for some great good to happen.

As the time passed without bringing either rescue, or help of any sort from her friends Jeanne uttered no word that could discredit or reproach them. There was never such loyalty as hers to her King and her party. A monk, Brother Isambard, was moved one day to give her some advice about submitting to the General Council of Basle, the Congregation of the Universal Church and of Christendom, wherein were men of all parties. Jeanne heard of it gladly.

“Oh! If in that place there are any of our side, I am quite willing to submit to the Council of Basle,” she cried.

“Hold your tongue, in the devil’s name,” shouted Cauchon to Isambard. Turning to Manchon, the clerk, he continued angrily: “Make no note of that answer.” But Jeanne protested:

“You write what is against me, but not what is in my favor.” Manchon had already written, “And she appeals—” He dared write no more.

In the afternoon Isambard, Brother Guillaume Duval and Jean de la Fontaine, three men who honestly wished to aid the Maid, went to the prison to give her further advice, when Warwick intercepted them.

“If any of you take the trouble to deliver her and to advise her for her good, I will have you thrown into the Seine,” he told them.

And Brother Isambard thereafter kept silence in fear of his life, while Brother Duval fled to his convent of St. Jacques, and appeared no more. The private examinations came to an end the day before Passion Sunday, and Cauchon called a meeting of the assessors to consider the evidence and decide upon further action. D’Estivet, his secretary, was instructed to make a digest of the proceedings which should form an act of accusation to be submitted to the assessors. The Bishop meantime visited Jeanne, offering his ultimatum:

If she consented to wear woman’s dress, she might hear mass, as she had so often desired, but not otherwise. To which Jeanne sorrowfully replied; that she would have done so before now if she could; but that it was not in her power to do so. It was for the sake of her womanhood that she retained man’s attire.

In Holy Week her troubles began again. Early Tuesday morning of that week Massieu, the usher of the court, appeared in the cell, removed her fetters, and

conducted her to the room at the end of the great hall where the court was held before. All the assessors were present, for Cauchon had sent out a general summons for them. The case was opened, and Cauchon made a prefatory speech in which he told her how merciful were her judges, who had no wish to punish, but rather to instruct and lead her in the right way. And now, at this late stage in the proceedings, he offered her the privilege of having as counsel one or more of the learned doctors present.

Jeanne answered him courteously:

“In the first place, concerning my good and our faith, I thank you and all the company. As for the counsellor you offer me, I thank you also, but I have no need to depart from our Lord as my counsellor.”

Thomas de Courcelles, a young doctor of the University, now began to read the charges against her. The accusations were mostly frivolous, and some were unjust. It was charged that she had received no religious training; that she had worn mandrakes; that she dressed in man’s attire; that she had bewitched her banner and her ring (this was the poor little ring of base metal which her father and mother had given her so long before); that she believed her apparitions were saints and angels; that she had blasphemed; and other charges to the number of seventy. After each one the young doctor paused to ask?

“What have you to say to this article?”

And Jeanne would reply as she could, referring all her acts to the judgment of God. It mattered little how she replied; she was foredoomed by these men. For Jeanne D’Arc was guilty of one thing: she had deeply wounded the English pride. That was her crime. She was a girl, but she had frightened them, had driven them half the length of France, taken them in their fortresses, and conquered them in the field. That was her crime, and it was intolerable. Nothing but burning her alive could satisfy the vengeance of pride so mortified.

This re-examination took several days, and then Jeanne was sent back to her cell, but not to peace. While the seventy articles and the substance of her replies were being reduced to twelve articles by Cauchon and a few picked men, she was admonished “gently and charitably” in her cell, in order to lead her back into the way of truth and to a sincere profession of the faith.

Jeanne fell ill under the strain. Even her magnificent endurance broke under the burden. She was ill with nausea and fever, and Warwick sent immediately for several medical men who were among the judges.

“Do your best for her,” he urged. “My King would on no account have her die a natural death. He bought her dear, and holds her dear, and she shall die by the law, and be burned.”

Thereupon D’Estivet, Cauchon’s secretary, escorted the leeches to the prison where, weak and in chains, Jeanne lay upon her bed.

“I have eaten a fish that was sent me by the Bishop of Beauvais,” she told them when the doctors inquired what caused the indisposition. “I doubt not that this is the cause of my illness.”

“You shameful woman,” shouted D’Estivet. “You have been eating herring, and other unwholesomeness.”[29]

“I have not,” answered Jeanne, summoning all her strength to have it out with him.

The doctors felt her pulse and found some fever. They reported to Earl Warwick that she should be bled.

“Away with your bleeding,” cried he. “She is artful, and might kill herself.”

Nevertheless, they bled her and she grew better. As soon as she was somewhat recovered Cauchon proceeded with his “charitable admonitions.”

“We have come to bring you consolation in your suffering,” he said. “Wise and learned men have scrutinized your answers concerning the faith which have seemed to them perilous. But you are only a poor, illiterate woman, and we come to offer you learned and wise men, watchful and honest, who will give you, as is their duty, the knowledge which you have not. Take heed to our words, for if you be obstinate, consulting only your own unschooled brain, we must abandon you. You see to what peril you expose yourself, and it is this we would avoid for you with all the power of our affection.”

“I thank you for what you say to me for my good,” answered Jeanne wearily. “It seems to me, seeing how ill I am, that I am in great danger of death. If it be that God do His pleasure on me, I ask of you that I may have my confession and my Saviour also, and that I may be put in holy ground.”

“If you desire to have the rites and Sacraments of the Church,” said Cauchon, “you must do as good Catholics ought to do, and submit to Holy Church.”

“I can say no other thing to you,” she said, turning from them. Then they exhorted her powerfully, citing chapter and verse from the Scriptures, telling her finally that if she would not obey and submit to the Church she would be

abandoned as a “Saracen.”

“I am a good Christian,” she told them. “I have been baptized; I shall die a good Christian. I love God; I serve Him. I wish to help and sustain the Church with all my power.” And that being all they could get from her they left her for the time being.

The sittings in the room at the end of the great hall of the castle were resumed on May second, all the assessors being present. Cauchon summed up all the trial, saying that in spite of the diligence and gentleness of the doctors their efforts had produced nothing. It seemed good, therefore, that the woman should be admonished before them all. Maître Jean Chatillon, the lord Archdeacon of Evreux, was invited to make the address whereby he might “persuade her to leave the criminal path where she now is and return again to that of truth.”

Jeanne listened dutifully to a long preamble by Maître Chatillon, and finally bade her admonisher to come to the point.

“Read your book, and then I will answer,” she said. “I refer myself to God, my master in all things. I love Him with all my heart.”

The trial was turning upon the point as to whether she was willing to submit all her words and deeds to the judgment of the holy Mother Church.

“The Church,” she exclaimed. “I love it, and desire to sustain it with my whole power, for the sake of our Christian faith. It is not I who should be hindered from going to church, and hearing mass.” As to what she had done for her King and her country she submitted it all to God, who had sent her. The question of submission was again asked, and she replied that she submitted all to God, our Lady, and the saints.

“And my opinion is,” she added, “that God and the Church are one.”

To Maître Jean’s specific exhortations, touching upon her submission to the Church, her dress, her visions, and revelations, she gave her old answers.

“I will say no more,” she answered briefly with some impatience, when they urged her further, and threatened her with the sentence of fire. “And if I saw the fire, I should say all that I am saying to you, and naught else.”

A week later she was led forth from her cell again, but this time she was taken to the torture chamber of the great tower, where she found nine of her judges awaiting her, and was once more adjured to speak the truth, with the threat of torture if she remained obdurate. But with the rack and screws before her, and

the executioner ready for his work, she said:

“Truly, if you were to tear me limb from limb, and separate soul from body, I will tell you nothing more; and if I were to say anything else, I should always declare that you had compelled me to do it by force.”

She told them that she had asked her Voices if, hard pressed as she was, she should submit to the Church.

“If you would have God come to your aid, wait on Him for all your doings,” was their answer.

“Shall I burn?” she had asked them.

“Wait on our Lord. He will help you.”

Torture was spared that day, as being likely to profit her little, “considering her hardness of heart,” and she was returned to her cell. Cauchon afterward put the question of torture to fourteen of his assessors. Two voted for it: Courcelles, and the spy, Loyseleur, who held that it might be “a salutary medicine for her soul.” The majority, however, were in favor of mercy, considering that there was enough for her condemnation without it.

A few days later the decision of the University of Paris, to whom the twelve articles had been sent, arrived. After an explanation of the consideration which had been given to each article, that learned tribunal gave its verdict upon each indictment; concluding with:

“If the beforesaid woman, charitably exhorted and admonished by competent judges, does not return spontaneously to the Catholic faith, publicly abjure her errors, and give full satisfaction to her judges, she is hereby given up to the secular judge to receive the reward of her deeds.”

In accordance with this decision the final session of the court was held on the twenty-third of May in a small room near Jeanne’s cell to hear Maître Pierre Maurice deliver their final admonition to the captive.

Jeanne listened as always with courtesy to the preacher, though he was expounding to her all her faults. All this to a girl who had lived with but one motive: the service of God, and the deliverance of her country. When he had finished she was again questioned personally. Her answer was clear and undaunted:

“What I have always said in the trial, and held, I wish still to say and maintain. If I were condemned, if I saw the torch lighted, the faggots prepared, and the

executioner ready to kindle the fire, and if I myself were in the fire, I would not say otherwise, and would maintain to the death all that I have said."

And Manchon, the clerk, was so struck by this reply that he wrote on the margin of his paper: "Responsio Johannae superba."

"Have you nothing further to say?" asked Cauchon of promoter and prisoner.

"No;" was the reply, and he declared the trial concluded.

"We summon you to-morrow to hear the law which will be laid down by us, to be carried out afterward and proceeded with according to law and right."

Jeanne was led back to her prison and the company of John Grey's men. It was the twenty-third of May, and she had been a prisoner a year. A year, and for nearly five months of that time she had been chained and ironed like a wild beast. Through almost four months of it she had been tortured, badgered, and bullied through the most cruel and unjust trial the world has ever known. And she had faced this daily torment with high spirit and undaunted mien. But she was weary, and worn, and the despondency that follows a period of high exaltation came upon her. Her Voices had promised "deliverance by a great victory," and deliverance had not come. The next day there would be the sentence, and death by fire. All night the girl lay in her chains striving to commune with her saintly visitors, but her guards were noisy, and she could catch but little of what they were saying:

"Answer boldly all that is said to you," they told her. "God will help you. Fear naught."

The morning came, and found her listless, sad, and inexpressibly weary. The false Loyseleur was on hand early, urging her to submit to the Church.

"Do all that you are told, and you may be saved," he said to her. "Accept the woman's dress, and do as I tell you; then you will be given over to the Church. Otherwise you are in peril of death."

Came also Jean Beaupère, one of the assessors.

"You will soon be led to the scaffold to be preached to," he said. "If you are a good Christian place all your deeds and words in the ordering of our Holy Mother Church, and especially of the ecclesiastical judges."

So they talked to her. Presently the cart came that was to carry her to the cemetery of St. Ouen, which was to be the place of her sentence. Loyseleur, Massieu and a number of the priests rode with her, exhorting, explaining, and

pleading with her to submit. They drove through the marketplace that she might see the preparations that had been made for the execution of the sentence should she persist in her obduracy. Jeanne was not spared one pang. A lofty scaffold with a stake upon it, the logs all arranged ready for the lighting, stood in the midst of the marketplace waiting for its victim.

It was a beautiful day in May. The blue sky had not one cloud to mar its cerulean depths. The streets were filled with crowds of excited people who pushed and struggled behind the rows of erect English soldiers who guarded the passage of the tumbril to the place of sentence: all speaking of life, life and liberty. And beside Loyseleur was whispering, “Submit! Submit!”

Before the stately church of St. Ouen there was an open space that afforded room for a large assemblage of people. Here were erected two platforms, one facing the other. On one of these, in the midst of prelates and nobles, Cardinal Winchester sat with the Bishop of Beauvais and the Earl of Warwick; on the other was the preacher, Maître Guillaume Erad, for it was usual to preach to a witch before burning her. Here also stood Jeanne, and the priests who had accompanied her. Below and all around were a vast concourse of people, and many soldiers.

When all were in their places the preacher arose, and began his sermon: “A branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine.” It was long and eloquent. When it was half over he suddenly began to apostrophise France and her King: “Ah, France! thou art much abused; thou hast always been the most Christian of nations, and Charles, who calls himself thy king and governor, hath joined himself, a heretic and schismatic, which he is, to the words and deeds of a worthless woman, defamed and full of dishonour; and not only he but all the clergy within his jurisdiction and lordship by whom she hath been examined and not reproved, as she hath said.” Then pointing at the Maid, he cried: “It is to thee, Jeanne, that I speak. I tell thee that thy king is a heretic and schismatic.”

Jeanne could bear, and had borne much; but she could not stand an assault upon her King. Clearly her voice rang out as it had been wont to do on field of battle:

“By my faith, sire, saving your respect, I swear upon my life that my King is the most noble Christian of all Christians, that he is not what you say.”

So she spoke, defending the craven who had made no effort in her behalf. There was a sensation among the people as she made her cry; a stir as though moved in spite of themselves, and voices began to murmur excitedly. At this the English soldiers who surrounded the two platforms in a close ring drew closer, and made

threatening gestures toward the crowd which silenced them. The preacher resumed his sermon, which he concluded with a last solemn exhortation to the prisoner to yield submission to the Church.

As her Voices had bade her do, Jeanne replied to the preacher's words boldly: "I have told you Doctors that all my deeds and words should be sent to Rome to our Holy Father, the Pope, to whom, and to God first, I appeal. As for my deeds, I burden no man with them, neither my King nor any other. If fault there be, it is my own and no other's."

Three times she was asked if she was willing to renounce those of her acts and words which the court condemned. To which she replied only:

"I appeal to God, and to our Holy Father, the Pope."

She was told that the Pope was too far away, and that the Ordinaries were judges each in his own diocese, and that it was necessary that she should confess that the clergy and officers of the Church had a right to determine in her case. Then the Bishop began to read her sentence. He had prepared two: one in case she recanted; the other, the death by fire. It was this latter that he now began to pronounce. And all around the maiden there broke forth a tumult of voices urging her to submit. Some among the crowd dared to call to her entreatingly:

"Submit, Jeanne, submit. Save yourself."

Almost distracted, the girl folded her hands, and raised her eyes. "St. Michael, help," she called pleadingly. Her Voices were speaking, but in the confusion she could not hear, but about her sounded those others: "Submit! Submit! Why will you burn?"

There is a limit to human endurance. Through months the girl had preserved a clear mind that had guided her through the tortuous intricacies of the snares that treacherous legality and perverted ingenuity could devise for her; she had been loyal, in despite of all perils, to her belief in her mission, to her faith in her Voices, to her duty to her King: but now—the indomitable spirit broke under the strain. She could bear no more.

"I submit," she cried in anguish. "I am willing to hold all that the Church ordains, all that you judges shall say and pronounce. I will obey your orders in everything. Since the men of the Church decide that my apparitions and revelations are neither sustainable nor credible, I do not wish to believe or to sustain them. I yield in everything to you, and to our Holy Mother Church."

"Then sign," cried a churchman, thrusting forward a paper. "Sign, and so

abjure.”

The girl looked at him, bewildered and confused by the commotion about her.

“Abjure?” she said. “What is abjure?”

Massieu, who had been among those who conducted her thither, now began to explain. “Sign,” he said, “Sign.”

“Sign,” cried Erad, the preacher. “Sign, and you will be put in charge of the Church.”

Jeanne could not write, but she mechanically made her mark, placing it where they told her. Then one of them guiding her hand, traced the name, Jehanne, at the bottom of the page. Jeanne gave one last cry as she permitted it:

“All that I did was done for good, and it was well to do it.”

And Manchon, the clerk, wrote on the margin of his record, “And Jeanne in fear of the fire said that she would obey the Church.”

This done Cauchon substituted the other sentence:

“Seeing that thou hast returned to the bosom of the Church by the grace of God, and hast revoked and denied all thy errors, we, the Bishop aforesaid, commit thee to perpetual prison, with the bread of sorrow and water of anguish, to purge thy soul by solitary penitence.”

A tumult arose in the square at this, and stones were thrown amid cries of disappointment and rage; for the English feared that they were to be cheated of their prey, and many were angered that there was to be no burning. In the midst of it, Jeanne called feverishly to the priests about her:

“Now, you people of the Church, lead me to your prison; let me be no longer in the hands of the English.”

One of the priests left her side, and ran over to Cauchon to ask where she was to be taken.

“Back whence she came,” said Cauchon grimly.

Dismayed, miserable beyond words, Jeanne was taken back to the irons, and the unspeakable torment of her awful cell.

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“Into France.” A phrase used frequently by people living on the borderland; also because all the country about Domremy and adjacent villages was held by the enemy. This must be crossed to reach the king. Where he dwelt was regarded as the real France.

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Herring, sprats, shad—in warm countries acquire, probably from their food, highly poisonous properties so as to be dangerous to persons eating them.

CHAPTER XXVII

For Her Country

> "*There was grandeur in that peasant girl,—in her exalted faith at Domremy, in her heroism at Orléans, in her triumph at Reims, in her trial and martyrdom at Rouen. But unless she had suffered, nothing would have remained of this grandeur in the eyes of posterity.*"
>
> Lord. "*Great Women" in "Beacon Lights of History.*"

In the afternoon the Duchess of Bedford sent a tailor to Jeanne with a woman's dress. She put it on without a word, allowed her hair to be dressed in feminine fashion, and to be covered by a coif. Courcelles, Loyseleur, Isambard and other priests also visited her, telling her of the great pity and mercy of the churchmen, and warning her that should she return to her errors the Church must abandon her. And so at last they left her.

Left her to her thoughts and her conscience which now began to trouble her. For in that moment of recantation Jeanne had been false to the highest that was in her: the Voice of God speaking in her heart which was higher than the Church.

"I have sinned," she cried in anguish. "I have sinned grievously." And piteously she invoked her Saints.

In the meantime life in that cell was a horror of which it is well not to think. She was supposed now to be under the gentle ministrations of the Church, but she was still a captive, shorn, degraded, hopeless, lacerated by fetters, and weighed down by heavy chains; for even at night when she lay on her bed her feet were in irons, with couples fastened to a chain, and attached by a log to a great beam of wood. Cauchon had been given to understand that the English would not be content with "perpetual imprisonment on bread of anguish and water of affliction" for this captive. The girl must burn, but now this could not be done

unless she relapsed. Relapse she must, willingly or unwillingly. A word to John Grey's varlets would help matters, and the word was given.

It was on Thursday, May twenty-fourth, that Jeanne recanted, and took the woman's dress. On Sunday following she awoke to find that her feminine attire had been taken from her while she slept, and on her bed lay the old page's suit of black.

"Sirs," she said protestingly in her gentle voice, "this dress is forbidden me. Give me the woman's dress, I pray you."

The guards refused, laughing. Jeanne knew what the end would be now, but she accepted her fate calmly. The tidings flew that by this act she had revoked her abjuration. Monday word was sent to Cauchon and his acolytes, who flocked at once to the castle. They found the girl overborne with grief, her face tear-stained and disfigured; the hearts of some of them were moved to compassion.

"Why have you done this?" demanded Cauchon.

"It is more suitable for me to wear it, being among men," said the Maid, taking the blame of the whole matter. "I have resumed it because the promise to me has not been kept; that is to say, that I should go to mass and should receive my Saviour, and that I should be taken out of irons."

"Did you not promise and swear not to resume the dress of a man?"

"No; I am not aware that I took any such oath. I would rather die than be in irons. But if you will release me from these irons, and let me go to mass, and lie in gentle prison, I will be good and do as the Church desires."

"Since last Thursday have you heard your Voices?" asked the Bishop, wishing to find some basis for the charge of "relapse."

"Yes;" Jeanne's sad face brightened at once.

"What did they say to you?"

"God made known to me by Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret the great pity there was for the treason to which I consented by making revocation and abjuration in order to save my life. I have condemned myself that my life might be saved. On Thursday my Voices told me to answer that preacher boldly, and he was a false preacher, who preached. He accused me of many things that I never did. If I said that God did not send me, I should condemn myself, for God did send me. My Voices have told me that I committed sin in declaring that what I had done was wrong. All that I said and revoked, I said for fear of the fire."

And Manchon, the clerk, wrote on the margin of his record: “Responsio mortifera.” “The answer that caused her death.”

“Do you believe that your Voices are St. Margaret and St. Catherine?”

“Yes, I do believe it,” she cried gladly. “And I believe that they come from God. I would rather do penance once for all; that is to say, in dying, than endure any longer the misery of a prison. I have done nothing against God and the faith, in spite of all they have made me revoke. What was in the schedule of abjuration I did not understand. I did not intend to revoke anything except according to our Lord’s pleasure. If the judges will have me do so, I will resume woman’s dress; for the rest, I can do no more.”

It was enough. She had relapsed, and the will of her enemies could now be accomplished. The next day Cauchon assembled his assessors in the chapel of his house, the palace of the Archbishop of Rouen. They all agreed that Jeanne must be handed over to the secular arm of the Church, praying that it “might deal gently with her.” If she showed signs of sincere penitence, she was to be allowed to receive the sacrament of confession so long denied to her. Then the Maid was cited to appear the next morning at eight o’clock in the Old Market Place, “in order that she may be declared relapsed, excommunicate, and heretic, and that it may be done to her as is customary in such cases.”

Very early on Wednesday morning, May the thirtieth, Brother Martin Ladvenu went to the cell to tell the Maid of her approaching death, and “to lead her to true contrition and repentance, and also to hear her confession.”

Terrified and trembling, Jeanne received the announcement with bitter weeping; her heart failing before the imminence of the stake. She was but a girl, and it was a terrible ordeal that lay before her. What wonder that she wept?

“Alas!” she cried, “will they treat me so horribly and cruelly, and must my body, which has never been corrupted, be burned to ashes to-day! Ah! I would far rather be beheaded seven times than burned. Had I been in the prison of the Church, to which I submitted, and been guarded by church-folk, and not by my enemies and adversaries, this would never have befallen me. Oh, I appeal before God, the great Judge, against these wrongs that they do me.”

In the midst of the girl’s outburst, Cauchon entered the cell. She turned upon him quickly.

“Bishop, I die through you.”

“Ah, Jeanne, be patient. You die because you have not kept your promise, but

have returned to errors."

"If you had put me in the Church's prison, and given me women for keepers, this would not have happened. For this I summon you before God."

"Now then, Jeanne, did not your Voices promise you deliverance?"

"Yes;" she admitted sadly.

"Then you must perceive that they are evil and come not from God. Had this not been true they would not have deceived you."

"I see that I have been deceived," she said. They had said, "Take all things peacefully: heed not this martyrdom. Thou shalt come at last into the Kingdom of Paradise." They had spoken also of deliverance by a great victory, but Jeanne misunderstood the message. So now she said sadly, "I see that I have been deceived. But," she added, "be they good spirits or bad spirits, they really appeared to me."

And now she was allowed to receive the Sacraments, for this would be proof that the Maid had again recanted. The sacrament was brought irreverently, without stole or candles, so that Ladvenu remonstrated indignantly, not being willing to administer a diminished rite. And at his request the Host was sent with a train of priests chanting litanies as they went through the streets with torches burning.

Without the prison in the courtyard, in the streets, everywhere in the city the people gathered to pray for her, their hearts touched with pity at her sad fate.

The maiden received the Sacrament with tears and devotion, the churchmen expounding views and exhorting her during all the time that it was administered. Pierre Maurice spoke kindly to her at its close.

"Ah, Sieur Pierre," she said, "where shall I be to-night?"

"Have you not good faith in the Lord?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered. "God helping me I shall be in Paradise."

Dressed in the long black robe that the victims of the Inquisition wore, with a mitre set on her head, bearing the inscription: "Heretic, Relapsed, Apostate, Idolater," she was led for the last time out through the corridor and down the steps to the cart which was waiting to carry her to the place of doom. Isambard, Massieu, the usher of the court, both her friends, accompanied her. As the cart, escorted by one hundred and twenty English men-at-arms, started, a man pushed his way through them, and flung himself weeping at Jeanne's feet. It was

Loyseleur, the spy, who now implored her pardon. Jeanne forgave him, and the guards, who would have killed him but for the intervention of Warwick, drove him away.

The streets, the windows and balconies of the houses, every place where a foothold could be had, were crowded with people who wished to get a good view of the Maid on her last journey. Many secretly sympathised with her, but dared not show it for fear of their English masters.

Three scaffolds had been erected in the Old Market Place: one for the high ecclesiastics and the great English lords; one for the accused and her preacher,—for Jeanne was not allowed to go to her doom without another exhortation; while in the middle of the square a wooden platform stood on a mass of plaster with a great beam rising perpendicularly from it. At the foot of this innumerable faggots of wood were piled. The pile was purposely built high so that the executioner could not shorten her sufferings, as was often done. A placard was set over the mass of plaster and faggots with the words, “Jeanne, self-styled the Maid, liar, mischief-maker, abuser of the people, diviner, superstitious, blasphemer of God, presumptuous, false to the faith of Christ, boaster, idolater, cruel, dissolute, an invoker of devils, apostate, schismatic, heretic.”

A large number of soldiers ranged around the square keeping back the turbulent crowd who pressed upon them. Openly these soldiers rejoiced as the cart that contained the Warrior Maid was driven into the square. Soon the Witch who had humbled the pride of England would be done to death. The victor of Orléans and Patay would ride no more. An humbled France would soon be prostrate before the might of England. Jeanne looked on all that sea of faces, some sympathetic, others openly exultant, with brimming eyes.

“Rouen! Rouen!” she cried wonderingly; “and am I to die here?”

A silence fell upon the multitude as the Maid took her place upon the platform with the preacher, Nicholas Midi, and he began his sermon from the text. “If any of the members suffer, all the other members suffer with it.”

Jeanne sat quietly through the sermon, her hands folded in her lap, praying silently. After a flood of invective the preacher closed his sermon and bade her, “Go in peace.”

When the words that flung her from the communion of the Holy Church ended Pierre Cauchon rose, and once more exhorted her, heaping a shower of abuse upon her helpless head, and so delivered her to the secular arm of the Church, with the words:

“We give you over to the secular power, entreating it to moderate its sentence and spare you pain of death and mutilation of limb.”

A great hush of awe fell upon the people that was broken presently by a sweet, girlish voice, broken by sobs, as Jeanne knelt upon the platform, and offered up her last supplication.

She invoked the blessed Trinity, the blessed Virgin Mary, and all the saints of Paradise. She called pleadingly upon her own St. Michael for help and to aid her “in devotion, lamentation, and true confession of faith.” Very humbly she begged forgiveness of all men whether of her party or the other. She asked the priests present to say a mass for her soul, and all whom she might have offended to forgive her, and declared that what she had done, good or bad, she alone was to answer.

And as she knelt, weeping and praying, the entire crowd, touched to the heart, broke into a burst of weeping and lamentation. Winchester wept, and the judges wept. Pierre Cauchon was overwhelmed with emotion. Here and there an English soldier laughed, and suddenly a hoarse voice cried:

“You priests, are you going to keep us here all day?”

Without any formal sentence, the Bailiff of Rouen waved his hand, saying, “Away with her.”

Jeanne was seized roughly by the soldiers and dragged to the steps of the stake. There she asked for a cross. One of the English soldiers who kept the way took a piece of staff, broke it across his knees in unequal parts, and, binding them hurriedly together, handed to her. She thanked him brokenly, took it, and kissing it pressed it against her bosom. She then prayed Massieu to bring a cross from the church that she might look upon it through the smoke.

From the church of Saint Saviour a tall cross was brought, and Brother Isambard held it before her to the end; for she said:

“Hold it high before me until the moment of death, that the cross on which God is hanging may be continually before my eyes.”

Then bravely as she had climbed the scaling ladders at Orléans and Jargeau the Maid ascended the steps of the scaffold to the stake. The good priest, Isambard, accompanied her with words of consolation. As she was being bound to the stake she looked her last upon the towers and hills of the fair city, and again the cry escaped her lips:

“Ah, Rouen! I greatly fear that you shall suffer for my death.”

Cauchon, hoping that now some word of denouncement against her King might be uttered, came to the foot of the scaffold; once again she cried to him:

“Bishop, I die through you.”

Only once did her spirit falter. When the executioner applied the torch to the faggots, and a dense volume of smoke rolled up she gasped,

“Water, holy water!”

Then, in quick forgetfulness of self, for Brother Isambard still remained with her, though the pitiless flames had already begun to ascend—she bade him go down lest the fire should catch his robes. And so at last she was left alone.

Upward leaped the red flames, eager for their prey; upward curled the dense, suffocating smoke; the air quivered and whirled with red, stifling heat; and suddenly, from out of that fiery, awful furnace, there came the clarion tones of the Maid, clear as on the battle field, exultant with the triumph of a great victory:

“My Voices were from God! They have not deceived me! Jesus! Jesus!”

And so died the Maid; a martyr, not for religion, but for her country. She died, but the lesson of her life lives on: faith and work; for by these two may marvels be wrought and the destiny of nations changed.

“The men-at-arms will fight; God will give the victory.”

CHAPTER XXVIII

At Domremy

> "*To our Holy Father, the Pope, to whom, and to God first, I appeal.*"
>
> Jeanne's *own words in the Square of St. Ouen*.

There were many signs and wonders told of the execution after Jeanne's death. It was said that a dove was seen to fly upward toward Heaven at the moment that her spirit took its flight; that the executioner later in the day went weeping to Friar Isambard, confessing that he was lost, for he had burnt a saint; that an English soldier who had sworn to light a faggot on the pyre had fallen in a swoon as he threw the burning brand; that her heart, that great heart that beat only for France, was not consumed by the flame: these and many other things were told. The truth of the matter was that even her enemies were not easy in their minds about her death. There was more than a suspicion that what she had said might be true: that she was sent from God.

The news of her death swept over France, bringing grief and consternation to those who loved her, and satisfaction to those that feared.

In the afternoon of a gracious day in June, some two weeks after the tragedy at Rouen, two young women might have been seen coming through the forest down the hill path beyond Greux from the Chapel of Our Lady of Bermont. It was Saturday, the Holy Virgin's day, and the two had been to make their orisons at the shrine. But though the Valley of Colours had never seemed so lovely, so flowery, so fragrant as it did on this golden afternoon, a young matron and her maiden companion, the two, walked in silence and with lagging steps through the tangle of vines and grasses that grew along the pathway.

"It is more than two years since Jeanne went away," spoke the younger one suddenly, voicing the name that was in both their hearts. "Oh, Mengette, it

grieves me to think of her shut up in a gloomy dungeon when she loved the fields so."

"Yes, Hauviette. And how strange it is that Jeanne D'Arc, who was always so good and pious, is up before the Church charged with heresy. Jeanne a heretic? Pouf! The very idea of such a thing!" Mengette laughed scornfully, then caught her breath with a sob. "To think of it, when she loves the Church so. It's my belief that those who try her are the heretics."

"Mengette, if any one should hear you!" Hauviette cast a fearful glance about her. "It would go hard with you."

"I care not who hears me," declared Mengette with a toss of her head. "Have we not boldly told all who came to Domremy to inquire concerning her of her goodness and purity? Ay! even though they were Burgundians or English they were told the truth though some of them would fain have heard otherwise. Beside, should any chance to hear me, Robert, my husband, would not let harm come to me."

In spite of her sadness Hauviette could not repress a smile. Mengette had been married two years, and her belief in her husband's all powerfulness had become a proverb in the village. But the maiden only remarked:

"I would that we could hear how it fares with Jeanne. It is a long trial." She sighed.

"Yes." Mengette sighed also, and silence fell once more between them. Long before Domremy had heard that Jeanne was held in durance, and at length that she was on trial before the learned men of the University. All feared for the result, for what chance would a peasant maid stand with such wise men?

Down the hillside path, through Greux, and on through the Bois Chesnu went the two friends, until presently they emerged into the clearing where stood the Fairy Tree in solitary grandeur. With one accord they paused under its spreading branches.

"The commissioners from Rouen were so curious about the tree," commented Mengette, glancing up at it lovingly. "So many questions did they ask concerning it, and the Gooseberry Spring. And, Hauviette, did Isabeau tell you that they wanted to know whether Jeanne ever carried a mandrake?"

"Yes, she told me," answered Hauviette. "As though Jeanne would do such a thing! Look, Mengette!" she broke off suddenly. "Something has happened, for the people are running all about the streets of the village."

“And the most of them are going toward the D’Arc house,” cried Mengette excitedly. “There must be news of Jeanne. Let us hurry, Hauviette.”

Quickly the intervening space between the forest and the village was passed, and Jeanne’s two friends soon entered the dooryard of the cottage. Colin de Greux left the crowd of villagers who clustered about the yard talking in low tones, and came to meet them.

“There is news,” he told them in trembling accents. “It is all over. Poor Jeanne!” He paused abruptly, and covered his face with his hands.

“What do you mean, Colin?” cried Mengette, while Hauviette grew white, and clasping her hands over her heart stood waiting the answer with bated breath. “Is she—is she dead?”

Colin nodded. “Burned,” he said briefly. “As a heretic and a sorceress. The Curé has just received word.”

“Oh,” gasped Mengette. “It can’t be true; it can’t be!” But Hauviette could not speak. More than the others had she loved Jeanne.

“Yes; it’s true,” affirmed Colin with emotion. “And to think that I teased her so. And made her go to Toul, and, and—” His voice broke.

At this Hauviette recovered herself a little, and laid her hand softly on his arm.

“She forgave that, Colin, I know,” she said comfortingly. “Jeanne would harbour naught against you.”

“I know,” he said. “For when she left Domremy for Vaucouleurs she stopped as she passed through Greux, and said: ‘I go to Vaucouleurs, Colin. God give you good fortune.’ And He has,” continued the young man, “for I have prospered beyond any other in the village. ’Tis as though her mere wish had brought it to pass.”

“Perhaps it did,” said the maiden gently, finding comfort for her own grief in consoling him. “But see! Mengette has gone to Jacques and Isabeau. Let us go also, that we may comfort them. Jeanne would like us to do that.”

“You are like her,” he said, looking up at her suddenly, and taking the little hand that lay so lightly upon his sleeve. “You think of others before yourself. Yes; let us go to them.”

Hand in hand they made their way through the sorrowing people into the cottage. Jacques D’Arc lay upon the open cupboard bed, completely prostrated by grief,

and Isabeau bent over him, ministering to him in woe too deep for tears. Beside them stood the good Curé, the tears flowing unrestrainedly down his cheeks.

“Grieve not,” he said. “I believe that the child went straight into Paradise. I confessed her too often not to know that she was pure as a lily flower. In Paradise she dwells beyond all trouble. We who are left behind must not grieve. You have other children left you. Jean and Pierre are held to ransom, and they will soon return.”

And so he tried to comfort them, but for some griefs there is no consolation. Jacques D’Arc’s was one for which there was no cure. His heart broke under its weight of anguish, and a few days thereafter he died.

Some time later Pierre and Jean returned to their mother, and took her with them to Orléans, where she resided the rest of her long life, the recipient of many honours from the city that did not forget its Maid. Twenty years later there came a day when the long dormant manhood of Charles Seventh was stirred to action, and he was minded to make amends to the memory of her who had done so much for him. At his instigation Isabeau carried her daughter’s appeal to Rome.

“I have told your doctors that all my deeds and words should be sent to Rome to our Holy Father, the Pope, to whom, and to God first, I appeal,” Jeanne had cried on the platform at St. Ouen on the day of her abjuration. She had been told then that the Pope was too far off; so now Isabeau carried that appeal to him, asking for justice to be done to her daughter’s memory.

The case was reopened, witnesses examined, even some of the assessors who had sat with Cauchon testifying in her favour, and Jeanne’s name was cleared by the Church of every charge against her. Thankful that her child would no longer rest under the ban of the Church she loved so well, Isabeau returned to Orléans, and spent the remainder of her days in peace.

In peace, for at last the land was cleared of the English and only at Calais had the invader a foothold, and Charles dwelt in his own capitol at Paris. All of Jeanne’s prophecies had come to pass.

Jean, her brother, was made captain of Vaucouleurs when bluff old Robert de Baudricourt was gathered to his fathers. Pierre married, and lived with his wife and mother at Orléans. Both brothers took the name of Du Lys, which the King had conferred upon them through Jeanne, and were ranked among the nobility, honoured and revered for the sake of one who coveted no honour save that of serving her country—plain Jeanne D’Arc.

THE END

Transcriber Notes:

Spelling and punctuation inaccuracies were silently corrected.

Accented and hyphenated words were standardized.

The author’s punctuation style has not been changed.

Archaic and variable spelling has been retained.

Footnotes 16 and 17 reference the same note and it has been duplicated.

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