

At eight that evening she entered Orleans, riding a white horse, her standard carried before her. The people thronged to meet her, wild with joy, "as if she had been an angel of God." "They felt comforted and, as it were, dis-besieged by the divine virtue there was said to be in that simple Maid." They crowded so upon her, that one of their torches set fire to the border of her standard, and when she bent forward and crushed out the flame, the little brave action seemed a miracle to the excited multitude. After returning thanks to God in the cathedral, she rode to the house of Jacques Boucher, treasurer to the Duke of Orleans, and was hospitably received by his wife and his young daughter Charlotte, whom she took to share her chamber during her stay in the city.

The next Sunday, May 1st, Dunois went to fetch the army from Blois. The Maid rode with him a little way, and he and his following passed unmolested by the English forts. The days of his absence were spent by Joan in making friends with the citizens, in attending mass and riding out to reconnoitre the enemy's siege-works. The enthusiastic people followed her everywhere, fearing nothing so long as they were near her. On Tuesday some reinforcements arrived, and news came that the army was on its way.

This time they took the northern side of the river, and on May 4th Joan went a league out of the city to meet them. The whole army passed the line of forts and entered Orleans. The besiegers made no sign, and it is not wonderful that the English soldiers, seeing that strange apathy of their leaders, believed Joan to be a witch, whose arts it would be useless to resist.

The same day, towards evening she lay down to rest

but suddenly she started up and called her squire, saying, "My counsel tells me to go against the English." While he was arming her, she heard voices in the street shouting that the French were suffering loss. She rushed out, and meeting her page on the way:

"Ah, graceless boy!" she exclaimed, "you never told me the blood of France was being spilt."

Her hostess finished arming her, then she sprang upon her horse, took her standard which the page handed her out of a window, and galloped to the eastern gate, her horse's hoofs striking sparks as she passed.

For the first time she now saw real war, and her courage did not fail. Standing at the edge of the fosse, she urged her men on to the assault. This first success, moderate in itself, was of immense value to the National party, for it restored to the French that faith in themselves of which the long series of their defeats had almost deprived them. And their reverse had as great an effect upon the English. Their failure appeared to them out of the natural course of events, a wicked miracle, a thing brought about by sorcery. The brave yeomen of Henry V were learning to fear.

On Friday, May 6th, Joan and about 3,000 men crossed to an island, in the Loire, passed from it to the shore by an extempore bridge of two boats, and planted her standard before the rampart of the Augustins. But her troops had not all crossed from Orleans, and those who were with her, seeing that the English were coming to reinforce their fellows, were seized with fear, and hurried back to the boats. The garrison rushed out and pursued the fugitives with jeers and insults. The defeat of the French appeared certain, but Joan, who had been trying to cover the retreat, faced round, and

with a small brave company charged the pursuers. The panic was on their side now. They saw the Witch of France riding down upon them, her charmed standard flying, her eyes flashing with terrible wrath, and they turned and fled before her. Once more she planted her flag before the rampart, and this time she was well supported.

The bastille was taken after an obstinate defence,

and to prevent riot and pillage she ordered it to be set on fire.

She would gladly have stayed with her soldiers who were left that night to be ready for the next day's assault, but the chiefs, seeing that she was very weary, persuaded her to return with them into Orleans. They had another

reason for parting her from the troops. While she was resting they held a council, and agreed not to renew the attack on the morrow, but recall the troops into the city, which was now well victualled, and there await reinforcements. A knight was sent to tell her of their over-cautious decision:

"God had already done much to help them; now they would wait." Wait!—how Joan must have hated that word! "You have been in your council," she said, "and I have been in mine. Be sure that God's counsel will hold good and come to pass, and that all other counsel shall perish."

Then she turned to Pasquerel, who was standing near.

"Rise early to-morrow," she said, "and keep near me all day, for I shall have much to do, and blood shall flow above my breast."

She rose at dawn, and after hearing mass, started for the assault. Her host urged her to take food before going; a shad was "being got ready, he told her.

"Keep it till evening," she said, gaily, "I will come back over the bridge."

If the French fought for the deliverance of Orleans and the kingdom, the English were defending their ancient glory and their own lives; the fort once taken, there would be small chance of escape for any of its garrison.

Under cannon-fire and through flights of arrows, the assailants leaped into the fosse and swarmed up the escarpment, "as if they believed themselves immortal."

The English met them at the top; again and again they were driven back, again and again the Maid cheered them on, crying:

"Fear not!—the place is yours!"

At last, as if to force victory, she sprang into the fosse, and was setting a scaling-ladder against the wall when an arrow pierced her between the neck and shoulder. She was carried to a place of shelter, weeping

for pain and fright; but her strong courage soon reasserted itself; she drew out the arrow with her own hand, and had the wound dressed with oil, forbidding the men-at-arms to "charm" it, as they in their superstitious kindness wanted to do. She then confessed herself, and so, hastened back to the rampart.

There was no success yet for the French, and the captains came to Joan, telling her they intended to retire and suspend the attack until next day. She besought them to persevere. She tried to break their resolve with brave words. She went to Dunois with prayers and promises.

"In God's name, you shall enter shortly. Doubt not, and the English shall have no more power over you!"

Her entreaties prevailed. Then she ordered the men

to rest a while, eat and drink, and when they had done so, bade them renew the attack "in God's name."

She mounted her horse again and rode to a vineyard a little way off, where, out of the turmoil of battle, she prayed a few minutes. On her return she stationed herself near the rampart, holding her standard.

"Watch until my banner touches the fort," she said to a gentleman who stood near. Presently the wind caught it and blew it against the wall.

"It touches, Joan, it touches!" exclaimed the gentleman.

She cried to the troops:

"Go in now, all is yours!"

By evening Joan reentered Orleans, where she and her men were received with great joy, all the bells of the city ringing out the news of victory. The Maid's wound was dressed carefully, and after her usual supper of bread with a little wine and water, she lay down to sleep.

Very early next morning, those watching in Orleans saw the English quit their bastiles and set themselves before the walls in order of battle. The alarm was given, and the French, led by Joan, came out of the city and ranged themselves in front of their enemies. While the armies stood face to face, as it were waiting for a signal to begin to fight, Joan had a camp-altar brought, and the priests said mass. Then she asked:

"Are the faces of the English towards us, or their backs?"

She was told that they were retreating, and at that moment flames shot up from some of their forts which they had set on fire.

"In God's name," said Joan, "let them go. My

Lord does not choose that we shall fight to-day. You shall have them another time."

Crowds rushed out from Orleans to destroy the unburnt bastiles, and dragged back the stores and cannon the English had been obliged to leave. But soon the excitement of victory gave way to the enthusiasm of thankfulness. A few days ago the city had been surrounded by enemies, threatened with the sword, more than threatened by famine. But in one marvellous week God and the Maid had delivered it. Now let her who had led the people to victory lead them also to give thanks. They thronged after her. They followed her from church to church, praising God and the saints, God and the Maid, before their rescued altars. Night fell on their rejoicings, and early next morning the Maid left them, eager to rejoin the King, and render an account of her success. Her time for rest was not yet. She had as yet only given the sign promised to the doctors of Poitiers—only begun the great work she was sent to do.

Scholars, high in place, great in learning, paid her their tribute of praise. But the common people were her most eager admirers and lovers. During her journey from Orleans to Tours, they crowded about her, trying to touch her hands, her dress, the trappings of her horse—even stooping down to kiss the hoof-prints of her horse on the road.

Charles came to meet her at Tours. When she knelt before him, he took off his cap, as to a queen, raised her, and seemed "as if he gladly would have kissed her, for the joy he had." He would have ennobled her at once, and he desired her to take for her arms the lilies of France, with a royal crown and a sword drawn to defend it.

Empty honours and easy lip-gratitude were at her service, but she, who had only one noble ambition, cared nothing for them. She wanted but one boon from the King—ready

action. Now was the time to go to Reims, while the English were weakened and disheartened. Let the King come—she would conduct him there safely and without hindrance—but let him come at once, for she had much to do, and little time wherein to do it.

"Make use of me," she pleaded, "for I shall last only one year."

Her bold proposal amazed Charles and his council. Go to Reims, to a city held by the English, through a country guarded by hostile troops!

The King, half-persuaded, agreed to go, but not until the English had been driven from the Loire. The captains declared that it would be unwise to march northward while the southern provinces remained so exposed to the enemy, and Joan, whose good sense equalled her courage, deferred to their judgment. An army was assembled, and put under command of the Duke of Alencon, but the King required him to do nothing without the Maid's advice. While she was near Charles, and her brave words were in his ears, he almost believed in her.

On the 9th of June, just a month after her departure from Orleans, Joan returned there with her army. During the campaign she made the city her headquarters, to the delight of its people, who "could not have enough of gazing at her." On the 11th she led the troops against Jargeau, a strong town, bravely defended, but the assailants

had the advantage of numbers, and, once their fears were forgotten, went boldly to the attack. Joan and the Duke, commanders though they were, went

down into the fosse like the rest, and the Maid was climbing a scaling-ladder, when a stone hurled from the rampart struck her to the earth. But she was up in a moment, shouting:

"Friends, friends, go on! Our Lord has condemned the English! They are ours! Be of good courage!" The men swarmed over the walls, and the place was taken. The more important captives were sent down the Loire to Orleans, where Joan and Alencon returned the day after their victory. Soon after, near Patay they came upon the English, who had been warned of their approach, and were getting ready for battle. The Duke asked Joan what was to be done.

"Have you good spurs?" she inquired.

"What!" exclaimed some who stood by; "should we turn our backs?"

"Not so, in God's name!" she answered. "The English shall do that. They will be beaten, and you will want your spurs to pursue them."

Some of the chiefs hung back.

"In God's name, we must fight them!" she cried "Though they were hung to the clouds, we should have them. To-day the King shall have the greatest victory he has won for long. My counsel tells me they are ours."

In slain and prisoners the English lost nearly 3,000 men. Joan was very indignant at the cruelty of the victors.

Seeing one of them strike down a wounded prisoner she sprang from her horse, raised the poor soldier in her arms, and held him thus while he confessed to a priest whom she had sent for, tenderly comforting him until he died. It was always so with her. Before and during the fight she was the stern champion of France; but when



it was over she became again a pitying woman, weeping for her dead enemies, and praying for their souls.

Now Joan held her rightful place in the army. Every true and honest man believed in her; even those who had doubted her at Orleans confessed now not only her goodness and courage, but also the instinctive military skill she had shown both in sieges and in the field. Soldiers and leaders were alike eager to follow her to Reims. With nothing to consult and combat but their frank likes and dislikes, her task would have been an easy one; but to do her voices' bidding, she had to hew or wind her way through the intrigues of a court.

Charles demurred at going to Reims at all. He hated trouble, and his life in the south had been pleasant enough. All Joan's victories had as yet done him no substantial good. He was as poor as ever, and the excited men who flocked to the Maid's banner were to him objects less of pride than of distrust.

The Maid, foreseeing more delays, sick at heart of his apathy, could not control her tears, and he, bewildered by a grief he could not understand, spoke to her kindly, paid her many compliments, and advised her to take some rest. Still weeping, she besought him to have faith, promising that he should recover his kingdom and be crowned before long.

On Friday, June 24th, she brought the army of the Loire to Gien, whence she sent a letter to the loyal city of Tournay, telling its people of her late successes, and praying them to come to the coronation.

Two days after her arrival at Gien, the justly impatient girl quitted the town with some of her troops and encamped in the fields beyond it. Her persistence

carried the day. On the 29th, the King and an army of 12,000 men set out for Reims.

On July 5th it reached Troyes. Joan had written to the citizens, requiring them to receive the King, and Charles also bade them surrender, promising them amnesty and easy terms. But the place was well garrisoned, and they determined to resist.

A council was held, and nearly all who were at it advised returning southward. But among those faint hearts was one man who believed in Joan—the old chancellor—and he spoke boldly for her. "When the King undertook this journey, he did it not because of the great might of the men-at-arms, nor because of the great wealth he had, nor because the journey seemed possible to him, but because Joan told him to go forward and be crowned at Reims, such being the good pleasure of God." While he was yet speaking, Joan herself knocked at the door. She was let in, and the Archbishop told her the cause of the debate.

She turned to the King.

"Will you believe me?" she asked.

"Speak," he replied, "and if you speak reasonably and profitably, we will gladly believe you."

"Will you believe me?" she said again.

"Yes," repeated Charles, "according to what you say."

That cold answer might well have checked her, but she spoke on:

"Gracious King of France, if you will remain before your city of Troyes, it shall be yours within three days by force or by love—doubt it not."

"We would wait six, if we could be sure of having it," said the Archbishop.