

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF JOAN OF ARC by Mark Twain



*PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS
OF JOAN OF ARC*

**By The Sieur Louis De Conte
(her page and secretary)**

Consider this unique and imposing distinction. Since the writing of human history began, Joan of Arc is the only person, of either sex, who has ever held supreme command of the military forces of a nation at the age of seventeen

LOUIS KOSSUTH.

Freely translated out of the ancient French into modern English from the original unpublished manuscript in the National Archives of France

By Jean Francois Alden

Authorities examined in verification
of the truthfulness of this narrative:

J. E. J. QUICHERAT, Condamnation
et Rehabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc.

J. FABRE, Proces de Condamnation
de Jeanne d'Arc.

H. A. WALLON, Jeanne d'Arc.

M. SEPET, Jeanne d'Arc.

J. MICHELET, Jeanne d'Arc.

BERRIAT DE SAINT-PRIX, La
Famille de Jeanne d'Arc.

La Comtesse A. DE CHABANNES,
La Vierge Lorraine.

Monseigneur RICARD, Jeanne d'Arc
la Venerable.

Lord RONALD GOWER, F.S.A.,
Joan of Arc. JOHN O'HAGAN, Joan of Arc.

JANET TUCKEY, Joan of Arc the
Maid.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

To arrive at a just estimate of a renowned man's character one must judge it by the standards of his time, not ours. Judged by the standards of one century, the noblest characters of an earlier one lose much of their luster; judged by the standards of to-day, there is probably no illustrious man of four or five centuries ago whose character could meet the test at all points. But 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, 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.

When we reflect that her century was the brutalest, the wickedest, the rottenest in history since the darkest ages, we are lost in wonder at the miracle of such a product from such a soil. The contrast between her and her century is the contrast between day and night. She was truthful when lying was the common speech of men; she was honest when honesty was become a lost virtue; she was a keeper of promises when the keeping of a promise was expected of no one; she gave her great mind to great thoughts and great purposes when other great minds wasted themselves

upon pretty fancies or upon poor ambitions; she was modest, and fine, and delicate when to be loud and coarse might be said to be universal; she was full of pity when a merciless cruelty was the rule; she was steadfast when stability was unknown, and honorable in an age which had forgotten what honor was; she was a rock of convictions in a time when men believed in nothing and scoffed at all things; she was unfailingly true to an age that was false to the core; she maintained her personal dignity unimpaired in an age of fawnings and servilities; she was of a dauntless courage when hope and courage had perished in the hearts of her nation; she was spotlessly pure in mind and body when society in the highest places was foul in both—she was all these things in an age when crime was the common business of lords and princes, and when the highest personages in Christendom were able to astonish even that infamous era and make it stand aghast at the spectacle of their atrocious lives black with unimaginable treacheries, butcheries, and beastialities.

She was perhaps the only entirely unselfish person whose name has a place in profane history. No vestige or suggestion of self-seeking can be found in any word or deed of hers. When she had rescued her King from his vagabondage, and set his crown upon his head, she was offered rewards and honors, but she refused them all, and would take nothing. All she would take for herself—if the King would grant

it—was leave to go back to her village home, and tend her sheep again, and feel her mother's arms about her, and be her housemaid and helper. The selfishness of this unspoiled general of victorious armies, companion of princes, and idol of an applauding and grateful nation, reached but that far and no farther.

The work wrought by Joan of Arc may fairly be regarded as ranking any recorded in history, when one considers the conditions under which it was undertaken, the obstacles in the way, and the means at her disposal. Caesar carried conquests far, but he did it with the trained and confident veterans of Rome, and was a trained soldier himself; and Napoleon swept away the disciplined armies of Europe, but he also was a trained soldier, and he began his work with patriot battalions inflamed and inspired by the miracle-working new breath of Liberty breathed upon them by the Revolution—eager young apprentices to the splendid trade of war, not old and broken men-at-arms, despairing survivors of an age-long accumulation of monotonous defeats; but Joan of Arc, a mere child in years, ignorant, unlettered, a poor village girl unknown and without influence, found a great nation lying in chains, helpless and hopeless under an alien domination, its treasury bankrupt, its soldiers disheartened and dispersed, all spirit torpid, all courage dead in the hearts of the people through long years of foreign and domestic outrage and oppression, their

King cowed, resigned to its fate, and preparing to fly the country; and she laid her hand upon this nation, this corpse, and it rose and followed her. She led it from victory to victory, she turned back the tide of the Hundred Years' War, she fatally crippled the English power, and died with the earned title of DELIVERER OF FRANCE, which she bears to this day.

And for all reward, the French King, whom she had crowned, stood supine and indifferent, while French priests took the noble child, the most innocent, the most lovely, the most adorable the ages have produced, and burned her alive at the stake.

A PECULIARITY OF JOAN OF ARC'S HISTORY

The details of the life of Joan of Arc form a biography which is unique among the world's biographies in one respect: It is the only story of a human life which comes to us under oath, the only one which comes to us from the witness-stand. The official records of the Great Trial of 1431, and of the Process of Rehabilitation of a quarter of a century later, are still preserved in the National Archives of France, and they furnish with remarkable fullness the facts of her life. The history of no other life of that remote time is known with either the certainty or the comprehensiveness that attaches to hers.

The Sieur Louis de Conte is faithful to her official history in his Personal Recollections, and thus far his trustworthiness is unimpeachable; but his mass of added particulars must depend for credit upon his word alone.

THE TRANSLATOR.

THE SIEUR LOUIS DE CONTE

To his Great-Great-Grand Nephews and Nieces

This is the year 1492. I am eighty-two years of age. The things I am going to tell you are things which I saw myself as a child and as a youth.

In all the tales and songs and histories of Joan of Arc, which you and the rest of the world read and sing and study in the books wrought in the late invented art of printing, mention is made of me, the Sieur Louis de Conte—I was her page and secretary, I was with her from the beginning until the end.

I was reared in the same village with her. I played with her every day, when we were little children together, just as you play with your mates. Now that we perceive how great she was, now that her name fills the whole world, it seems strange that what I am saying is true; for it is as if a perishable paltry candle should

speaking of the eternal sun riding in the heavens and say, "He was gossip and housemate to me when we were candles together." And yet it is true, just as I say. I was her playmate, and I fought at her side in the wars; to this day I carry in my mind, fine and clear, the picture of that dear little figure, with breast bent to the flying horse's neck, charging at the head of the armies of France, her hair streaming back, her silver mail plowing steadily deeper and deeper into the thick of the battle, sometimes nearly drowned from sight by tossing heads of horses, uplifted sword-arms, wind-blow plumes, and intercepting shields. I was with her to the end; and when that black day came whose accusing shadow will lie always upon the memory of the mitered French slaves of England who were her assassins, and upon France who stood idle and essayed no rescue, my hand was the last she touched in life.

As the years and the decades drifted by, and the spectacle of the marvelous child's meteor flight across the war firmament of France and its extinction in the smoke-clouds of the stake receded deeper and deeper into the past and grew ever more strange, and wonderful, and divine, and pathetic, I came to comprehend and recognize her at last for what she was—the most noble life that was ever born into this world save only One.

BOOK I IN DOMREMY

Chapter 1 When Wolves Ran Free in Paris

I, THE SIEUR LOUIS DE CONTE, was born in Neufchateau, on the 6th of January, 1410; that is to say, exactly two years before Joan of Arc was born in Domremy. My family had fled to those distant regions from the neighborhood of Paris in the first years of the century. In politics they were Armagnacs—patriots; they were for our own French King, crazy and impotent as he was. The Burgundian party, who were for the English, had stripped them, and done it well. They took everything but my father's small nobility, and when he reached Neufchateau he reached it in poverty and with a broken spirit. But the political atmosphere there was the sort he liked, and that was something. He came to a region of comparative quiet; he left behind him a region peopled with furies, madmen, devils, where slaughter was a daily pastime and no man's life safe for a moment. In Paris, mobs roared through the streets nightly, sacking, burning, killing, unmolested, uninterrupted. The sun rose upon wrecked and smoking

buildings, and upon mutilated corpses lying here, there, and yonder about the streets, just as they fell, and stripped naked by thieves, the unholy gleaners after the mob. None had the courage to gather these dead for burial; they were left there to rot and create plagues.

And plagues they did create. Epidemics swept away the people like flies, and the burials were conducted secretly and by night, for public funerals were not allowed, lest the revelation of the magnitude of the plague's work unman the people and plunge them into despair. Then came, finally, the bitterest winter which had visited France in five hundred years. Famine, pestilence, slaughter, ice, snow—Paris had all these at once. The dead lay in heaps about the streets, and wolves entered the city in daylight and devoured them.

Ah, France had fallen low—so low! For more than three quarters of a century the English fangs had been bedded in her flesh, and so cowed had her armies become by ceaseless rout and defeat that it was said and accepted that the mere sight of an English army was sufficient to put a French one to flight.

When I was five years old the prodigious disaster of Agincourt fell upon France; and although the English King went home to enjoy his glory, he left the country prostrate and a prey to roving bands of Free Companions in the service of the Burgundian party, and one of these bands came raiding through Neufchateau

one night, and by the light of our burning roof-thatch I saw all that were dear to me in this world (save an elder brother, your ancestor, left behind with the court) butchered while they begged for mercy, and heard the butchers laugh at their prayers and mimic their pleadings. I was overlooked, and escaped without hurt. When the savages were gone I crept out and cried the night away watching the burning houses; and I was all alone, except for the company of the dead and the wounded, for the rest had taken flight and hidden themselves.

I was sent to Domremy, to the priest, whose housekeeper became a loving mother to me. The priest, in the course of time, taught me to read and write, and he and I were the only persons in the village who possessed this learning.

At the time that the house of this good priest, Guillaume Fronte, became my home, I was six years old. We lived close by the village church, and the small garden of Joan's parents was behind the church. As to that family there were Jacques d'Arc the father, his wife Isabel Romee; three sons—Jacques, ten years old, Pierre, eight, and Jean, seven; Joan, four, and her baby sister Catherine, about a year old. I had these children for playmates from the beginning. I had some other playmates besides—particularly four boys: Pierre Morel, Etienne Roze, Noel Rainguesson, and Edmond Aubrey, whose father was maire at that time; also two

girls, about Joan's age, who by and by became her favorites; one was named Haumetter, the other was called Little Mengette. These girls were common peasant children, like Joan herself. When they grew up, both married common laborers. Their estate was lowly enough, you see; yet a time came, many years after, when no passing stranger, howsoever great he might be, failed to go and pay his reverence to those two humble old women who had been honored in their youth by the friendship of Joan of Arc.

These were all good children, just of the ordinary peasant type; not bright, of course—you would not expect that—but good-hearted and companionable, obedient to their parents and the priest; and as they grew up they became properly stocked with narrowness and prejudices got at second hand from their elders, and adopted without reserve; and without examination also—which goes without saying. Their religion was inherited, their politics the same. John Huss and his sort might find fault with the Church, in Domremy it disturbed nobody's faith; and when the split came, when I was fourteen, and we had three Popes at once, nobody in Domremy was worried about how to choose among them—the Pope of Rome was the right one, a Pope outside of Rome was no Pope at all. Every human creature in the village was an Armagnac—a patriot—and if we children hotly hated nothing else in the world, we did certainly hate the English and

Burgundian name and polity in that way.

Chapter 2

The Fairy Tree of Domremy

OUR DOMREMY was like any other humble little hamlet of that remote time and region. It was a maze of crooked, narrow lanes and alleys shaded and sheltered by the overhanging thatch roofs of the barnlike houses. The houses were dimly lighted by wooden-shuttered windows—that is, holes in the walls which served for windows. The floors were dirt, and there was very little furniture. Sheep and cattle grazing was the main industry; all the young folks tended flocks.

The situation was beautiful. From one edge of the village a flowery plain extended in a wide sweep to the river—the Meuse; from the rear edge of the village a grassy slope rose gradually, and at the top was the great oak forest—a forest that was deep and gloomy and dense, and full of interest for us children, for many murders had been done in it by outlaws in old times, and in still earlier times prodigious dragons that spouted fire and poisonous vapors from their nostrils had their homes in there. In fact, one was still living in there in our own time. It was as long as a tree, and had a body as big around as a tierce, and scales like overlapping great tiles, and deep ruby eyes as large as a

cavalier's hat, and an anchor-fluke on its tail as big as I don't know what, but very big, even unusually so for a dragon, as everybody said who knew about dragons. It was thought that this dragon was of a brilliant blue color, with gold mottlings, but no one had ever seen it, therefore this was not known to be so, it was only an opinion. It was not my opinion; I think there is no sense in forming an opinion when there is no evidence to form it on. If you build a person without any bones in him he may look fair enough to the eye, but he will be limber and cannot stand up; and I consider that evidence is the bones of an opinion. But I will take up this matter more at large at another time, and try to make the justness of my position appear. As to that dragon, I always held the belief that its color was gold and without blue, for that has always been the color of dragons. That this dragon lay but a little way within the wood at one time is shown by the fact that Pierre Morel was in there one day and smelt it, and recognized it by the smell. It gives one a horrid idea of how near to us the deadliest danger can be and we not suspect it.

In the earliest times a hundred knights from many remote places in the earth would have gone in there one after another, to kill the dragon and get the reward, but in our time that method had gone out, and the priest had become the one that abolished dragons. Pere Guillaume Fronte did it in this case. He had a procession, with candles and incense and banners, and marched around

the edge of the wood and exorcised the dragon, and it was never heard of again, although it was the opinion of many that the smell never wholly passed away. Not that any had ever smelt the smell again, for none had; it was only an opinion, like that other—and lacked bones, you see. I know that the creature was there before the exorcism, but whether it was there afterward or not is a thing which I cannot be so positive about.

In a noble open space carpeted with grass on the high ground toward Vaucouleurs stood a most majestic beech tree with wide-reaching arms and a grand spread of shade, and by it a limpid spring of cold water; and on summer days the children went there—oh, every summer for more than five hundred years—went there and sang and danced around the tree for hours together, refreshing themselves at the spring from time to time, and it was most lovely and enjoyable. Also they made wreaths of flowers and hung them upon the tree and about the spring to please the fairies that lived there; for they liked that, being idle innocent little creatures, as all fairies are, and fond of anything delicate and pretty like wild flowers put together in that way. And in return for this attention the fairies did any friendly thing they could for the children, such as keeping the spring always full and clear and cold, and driving away serpents and insects that sting; and so there was never any unkindness between the fairies and the children during more than five hundred years—tradition said a

thousand—but only the warmest affection and the most perfect trust and confidence; and whenever a child died the fairies mourned just as that child's playmates did, and the sign of it was there to see; for before the dawn on the day of the funeral they hung a little immortelle over the place where that child was used to sit under the tree. I know this to be true by my own eyes; it is not hearsay. And the reason it was known that the fairies did it was this—that it was made all of black flowers of a sort not known in France anywhere.

Now from time immemorial all children reared in Domremy were called the Children of the Tree; and they loved that name, for it carried with it a mystic privilege not granted to any others of the children of this world. Which was this: whenever one of these came to die, then beyond the vague and formless images drifting through his darkening mind rose soft and rich and fair a vision of the Tree—if all was well with his soul. That was what some said. Others said the vision came in two ways: once as a warning, one or two years in advance of death, when the soul was the captive of sin, and then the Tree appeared in its desolate winter aspect—then that soul was smitten with an awful fear. If repentance came, and purity of life, the vision came again, this time summer-clad and beautiful; but if it were otherwise with that soul the vision was withheld, and it passed from life knowing its doom. Still others said that the vision came but once, and then

only to the sinless dying forlorn in distant lands and pitifully longing for some last dear reminder of their home. And what reminder of it could go to their hearts like the picture of the Tree that was the darling of their love and the comrade of their joys and comforter of their small griefs all through the divine days of their vanished youth?

Now the several traditions were as I have said, some believing one and some another. One of them I knew to be the truth, and that was the last one. I do not say anything against the others; I think they were true, but I only know that the last one was; and it is my thought that if one keep to the things he knows, and not trouble about the things which he cannot be sure about, he will have the steadier mind for it—and there is profit in that. I know that when the Children of the Tree die in a far land, then—if they be at peace with God—they turn their longing eyes toward home, and there, far-shining, as through a rift in a cloud that curtains heaven, they see the soft picture of the Fairy Tree, clothed in a dream of golden light; and they see the bloomy mead sloping away to the river, and to their perishing nostrils is blown faint and sweet the fragrance of the flowers of home. And then the vision fades and passes—but they know, they know! and by their transfigured faces you know also, you who stand looking on; yes, you know the message that has come, and that it has come from heaven.

Joan and I believed alike about this matter. But Pierre Morel and Jacques d'Arc, and many others believed that the vision appeared twice—to a sinner. In fact, they and many others said they knew it. Probably because their fathers had known it and had told them; for one gets most things at second hand in this world.

Now one thing that does make it quite likely that there were really two apparitions of the Tree is this fact: From the most ancient times if one saw a villager of ours with his face ash-white and rigid with a ghastly fright, it was common for every one to whisper to his neighbor, "Ah, he is in sin, and has got his warning." And the neighbor would shudder at the thought and whisper back, "Yes, poor soul, he has seen the Tree."

Such evidences as these have their weight; they are not to be put aside with a wave of the hand. A thing that is backed by the cumulative evidence of centuries naturally gets nearer and nearer to being proof all the time; and if this continue and continue, it will some day become authority—and authority is a bedded rock, and will abide.

In my long life I have seen several cases where the tree appeared announcing a death which was still far away; but in none of these was the person in a state of sin. No; the apparition was in these cases only a special grace; in place of deferring the tidings of that soul's redemption till the day of death, the apparition brought them long before, and with them peace—peace

that might no more be disturbed—the eternal peace of God. I myself, old and broken, wait with serenity; for I have seen the vision of the Tree. I have seen it, and am content.

Always, from the remotest times, when the children joined hands and danced around the Fairy Tree they sang a song which was the Tree's song, the song of L'Arbre fee de Bourlemont. They sang it to a quaint sweet air—a solacing sweet air which has gone murmuring through my dreaming spirit all my life when I was weary and troubled, resting me and carrying me through night and distance home again. No stranger can know or feel what that song has been, through the drifting centuries, to exiled Children of the Tree, homeless and heavy of heart in countries foreign to their speech and ways. You will think it a simple thing, that song, and poor, perchance; but if you will remember what it was to us, and what it brought before our eyes when it floated through our memories, then you will respect it. And you will understand how the water wells up in our eyes and makes all things dim, and our voices break and we cannot sing the last lines:

"And when, in Exile wand'ring, we Shall fainting yearn for glimpse of thee, Oh, rise upon our sight!"

And you will remember that Joan of Arc sang this song with us around the Tree when she was a little child, and always loved it. And that hallows it, yes, you will grant that:

L'ARBRE FEE DE BOURLEMONT

SONG OF THE CHILDREN

Now what has kept
your leaves so green,
Arbre Fee de
Bourlemont?

The children's tears!
They brought each grief,
And you did comfort
them and cheer
Their bruised hearts,
and steal a tear
That, healed, rose a
leaf.

And what has built
you up so strong,
Arbre Fee de
Bourlemont?

The children's love!
They've loved you long

Ten hundred years, in
sooth,
They've nourished you
with praise and song,
And warmed your
heart and kept it young—
A thousand years of
youth!

Bide always green in
our young hearts,
Arbre Fee de
Bourlemont!

And we shall always
youthful be,
Not heeding Time his
flight;
And when, in exile
wand'ring, we
Shall fainting yearn
for glimpse of thee,
Oh, rise upon our
sight!

The fairies were still there when we were children, but we never saw them; because, a hundred

years before that, the priest of Domremy had held a religious function under the tree and denounced them as being blood-kin to the Fiend and barred them from redemption; and then he warned them never to show themselves again, nor hang any more immortelles, on pain of perpetual banishment from that parish.

All the children pleaded for the fairies, and said they were their good friends and dear to them and never did them any harm, but the priest would not listen, and said it was sin and shame to have such friends. The children mourned and could not be comforted; and they made an agreement among themselves that they would always continue to hang flower-wreaths on the tree as a perpetual sign to the fairies that they were still loved and remembered, though lost to sight.

But late one night a great misfortune befell. Edmond Aubrey's mother passed by the Tree, and the fairies were stealing a dance, not thinking anybody was by; and they were so busy, and so intoxicated with the wild happiness of it, and with the bumpers of dew sharpened up with honey which they had been drinking, that they noticed nothing; so Dame Aubrey stood there astonished and admiring, and saw the little fantastic atoms holding hands, as many as three hundred of them, tearing around in a great ring half as big as an ordinary bedroom, and leaning away back and spreading their mouths with laughter and song, which she could hear quite distinctly, and kicking their legs up

as much as three inches from the ground in perfect abandon and hilarity—oh, the very maddest and witchingest dance the woman ever saw.

But in about a minute or two minutes the poor little ruined creatures discovered her. They burst out in one heartbreaking squeak of grief and terror and fled every which way, with their wee hazel-nut fists in their eyes and crying; and so disappeared.

The heartless woman—no, the foolish woman; she was not heartless, but only thoughtless—went straight home and told the neighbors all about it, whilst we, the small friends of the fairies, were asleep and not witting the calamity that was come upon us, and all unconscious that we ought to be up and trying to stop these fatal tongues. In the morning everybody knew, and the disaster was complete, for where everybody knows a thing the priest knows it, of course. We all flocked to Pere Fronte, crying and begging—and he had to cry, too, seeing our sorrow, for he had a most kind and gentle nature; and he did not want to banish the fairies, and said so; but said he had no choice, for it had been decreed that if they ever revealed themselves to man again, they must go. This all happened at the worst time possible, for Joan of Arc was ill of a fever and out of her head, and what could we do who had not her gifts of reasoning and persuasion? We flew in a swarm to her bed and cried out, "Joan, wake! Wake, there is no moment to lose! Come and plead for the

fairies—come and save them; only you can do it!"

But her mind was wandering, she did not know what we said nor what we meant; so we went away knowing all was lost. Yes, all was lost, forever lost; the faithful friends of the children for five hundred years must go, and never come back any more.

It was a bitter day for us, that day that Pere Fronte held the function under the tree and banished the fairies. We could not wear mourning that any could have noticed, it would not have been allowed; so we had to be content with some poor small rag of black tied upon our garments where it made no show; but in our hearts we wore mourning, big and noble and occupying all the room, for our hearts were ours; they could not get at them to prevent that.

The great tree—l'Arbre Fee de Bourlemont was its beautiful name—was never afterward quite as much to us as it had been before, but it was always dear; is dear to me yet when I go there now, once a year in my old age, to sit under it and bring back the lost playmates of my youth and group them about me and look upon their faces through my tears and break my heart, oh, my God! No, the place was not quite the same afterward. In one or two ways it could not be; for, the fairies' protection being gone, the spring lost much of its freshness and coldness, and more than two-thirds of its volume, and the banished serpents and stinging insects returned, and multiplied, and became a torment and

have remained so to this day.

When that wise little child, Joan, got well, we realized how much her illness had cost us; for we found that we had been right in believing she could save the fairies. She burst into a great storm of anger, for so little a creature, and went straight to Pere Fronte, and stood up before him where he sat, and made reverence and said:

"The fairies were to go if they showed themselves to people again, is it not so?"

"Yes, that was it, dear."

"If a man comes prying into a person's room at midnight when that person is half-naked, will you be so unjust as to say that that person is showing himself to that man?"

"Well—no." The good priest looked a little troubled and uneasy when he said it.

"Is a sin a sin, anyway, even if one did not intend to commit it?"

Pere Fronte threw up his hands and cried out:

"Oh, my poor little child, I see all my fault," and he drew her to his side and put an arm around her and tried to make his peace with her, but her temper was up so high that she could not get it down right away, but buried her head against his breast and broke out crying and said:

"Then the fairies committed no sin, for there was no intention to commit one, they not knowing that any

one was by; and because they were little creatures and could not speak for themselves and say the law was against the intention, not against the innocent act, because they had no friend to think that simple thing for them and say it, they have been sent away from their home forever, and it was wrong, wrong to do it!"

The good father hugged her yet closer to his side and said:

"Oh, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings the heedless and unthinking are condemned; would God I could bring the little creatures back, for your sake. And mine, yes, and mine; for I have been unjust. There, there, don't cry—nobody could be sorrier than your poor old friend—don't cry, dear."

"But I can't stop right away, I've got to. And it is no little matter, this thing that you have done. Is being sorry penance enough for such an act?"

Pere Fronte turned away his face, for it would have hurt her to see him laugh, and said:

"Oh, thou remorseless but most just accuser, no, it is not. I will put on sackcloth and ashes; there—are you satisfied?"

Joan's sobs began to diminish, and she presently looked up at the old man through her tears, and said, in her simple way:

"Yes, that will do—if it will clear you."

Pere Fronte would have been moved to laugh again, perhaps, if he had not remembered in time that

he had made a contract, and not a very agreeable one. It must be fulfilled. So he got up and went to the fireplace, Joan watching him with deep interest, and took a shovelful of cold ashes, and was going to empty them on his old gray head when a better idea came to him, and he said:

"Would you mind helping me, dear?"

"How, father?"

He got down on his knees and bent his head low, and said:

"Take the ashes and put them on my head for me."

The matter ended there, of course. The victory was with the priest. One can imagine how the idea of such a profanation would strike Joan or any other child in the village. She ran and dropped upon her knees by his side and said:

"Oh, it is dreadful. I didn't know that that was what one meant by sackcloth and ashes—do please get up, father."

"But I can't until I am forgiven. Do you forgive me?"

"I? Oh, you have done nothing to me, father; it is yourself that must forgive yourself for wronging those poor things. Please get up, father, won't you?"

"But I am worse off now than I was before. I thought I was earning your forgiveness, but if it is my own, I can't be lenient; it would not become me. Now

what can I do? Find me some way out of this with your wise little head."

The Pere would not stir, for all Joan's pleadings. She was about to cry again; then she had an idea, and seized the shovel and deluged her own head with the ashes, stammering out through her chokings and suffocations:

"There—now it is done. Oh, please get up, father."

The old man, both touched and amused, gathered her to his breast and said:

"Oh, you incomparable child! It's a humble martyrdom, and not of a sort presentable in a picture, but the right and true spirit is in it; that I testify."

Then he brushed the ashes out of her hair, and helped her scour her face and neck and properly tidy herself up. He was in fine spirits now, and ready for further argument, so he took his seat and drew Joan to his side again, and said:

"Joan, you were used to make wreaths there at the Fairy Tree with the other children; is it not so?"

That was the way he always started out when he was going to corner me up and catch me in something—just that gentle, indifferent way that fools a person so, and leads him into the trap, he never noticing which way he is traveling until he is in and the door shut on him. He enjoyed that. I knew he was going to drop corn along in front of Joan now. Joan answered:

"Yes, father."

"Did you hang them on the tree?"

"No, father."

"Didn't hang them there?"

"No."

"Why didn't you?"

"I—well, I didn't wish to."

"Didn't wish to?"

"No, father."

"What did you do with them?"

"I hung them in the church."

"Why didn't you want to hang them in the tree?"

"Because it was said that the fairies were of kin to the Fiend, and that it was sinful to show them honor."

"Did you believe it was wrong to honor them so?"

"Yes. I thought it must be wrong."

"Then if it was wrong to honor them in that way, and if they were of kin to the Fiend, they could be dangerous company for you and the other children, couldn't they?"

"I suppose so—yes, I think so."

He studied a minute, and I judged he was going to spring his trap, and he did. He said:

"Then the matter stands like this. They were banned creatures, of fearful origin; they could be dangerous company for the children. Now give me a rational reason, dear, if you can think of any, why you call it a wrong to drive them into banishment, and why

you would have saved them from it. In a word, what loss have you suffered by it?"

How stupid of him to go and throw his case away like that! I could have boxed his ears for vexation if he had been a boy. He was going along all right until he ruined everything by winding up in that foolish and fatal way. What had she lost by it! Was he never going to find out what kind of a child Joan of Arc was? Was he never going to learn that things which merely concerned her own gain or loss she cared nothing about? Could he never get the simple fact into his head that the sure way and the only way to rouse her up and set her on fire was to show her where some other person was going to suffer wrong or hurt or loss? Why, he had gone and set a trap for himself—that was all he had accomplished.

The minute those words were out of his mouth her temper was up, the indignant tears rose in her eyes, and she burst out on him with an energy and passion which astonished him, but didn't astonish me, for I knew he had fired a mine when he touched off his ill-chosen climax.

"Oh, father, how can you talk like that? Who owns France?"

"God and the King."

"Not Satan?"

"Satan, my child? This is the footstool of the Most High—Satan owns no handful of its soil."

"Then who gave those poor creatures their home? God. Who protected them in it all those centuries? God. Who allowed them to dance and play there all those centuries and found no fault with it? God. Who disapproved of God's approval and put a threat upon them? A man. Who caught them again in harmless sports that God allowed and a man forbade, and carried out that threat, and drove the poor things away from the home the good God gave them in His mercy and His pity, and sent down His rain and dew and sunshine upon it five hundred years in token of His peace? It was their home—theirs, by the grace of God and His good heart, and no man had a right to rob them of it. And they were the gentlest, truest friends that children ever had, and did them sweet and loving service all these five long centuries, and never any hurt or harm; and the children loved them, and now they mourn for them, and there is no healing for their grief. And what had the children done that they should suffer this cruel stroke? The poor fairies could have been dangerous company for the children? Yes, but never had been; and could is no argument. Kinsmen of the Fiend? What of it? Kinsmen of the Fiend have rights, and these had; and children have rights, and these had; and if I had been there I would have spoken—I would have begged for the children and the fiends, and stayed your hand and saved them all. But now—oh, now, all is lost; everything is lost, and there is no help more!"

Then she finished with a blast at that idea that fairy kinsmen of the Fiend ought to be shunned and denied human sympathy and friendship because salvation was barred against them. She said that for that very reason people ought to pity them, and do every humane and loving thing they could to make them forget the hard fate that had been put upon them by accident of birth and no fault of their own. "Poor little creatures!" she said. "What can a person's heart be made of that can pity a Christian's child and yet can't pity a devil's child, that a thousand times more needs it!"

She had torn loose from Pere Fronte, and was crying, with her knuckles in her eyes, and stamping her small feet in a fury; and now she burst out of the place and was gone before we could gather our senses together out of this storm of words and this whirlwind of passion.

The Pere had got upon his feet, toward the last, and now he stood there passing his hand back and forth across his forehead like a person who is dazed and troubled; then he turned and wandered toward the door of his little workroom, and as he passed through it I heard him murmur sorrowfully:

"Ah, me, poor children, poor fiends, they have rights, and she said true—I never thought of that. God forgive me, I am to blame."

When I heard that, I knew I was right in the

thought that he had set a trap for himself. It was so, and he had walked into it, you see. I seemed to feel encouraged, and wondered if mayhap I might get him into one; but upon reflection my heart went down, for this was not my gift.

Chapter 3

All Aflame with Love of France



SPEAKING of this matter reminds me of many incidents, many things that I could tell, but I think I will not try to do it now. It will be more to my present humor to call back a little glimpse of the simple and colorless good times we used to have in our village

homes in those peaceful days—especially in the winter. In the summer we children were out on the breezy uplands with the flocks from dawn till night, and then there was noisy frolicking and all that; but winter was the cozy time, winter was the snug time. Often we gathered in old Jacques d'Arc's big dirt-floored apartment, with a great fire going, and played games, and sang songs, and told fortunes, and listened to the old villagers tell tales and histories and lies and one thing and another till twelve o'clock at night.

One winter's night we were gathered there—it was the winter that for years afterward they called the hard winter—and that particular night was a sharp one. It blew a gale outside, and the screaming of the wind was a stirring sound, and I think I may say it was beautiful, for I think it is great and fine and beautiful to hear the wind rage and storm and blow its clarions like that, when you are inside and comfortable. And we were. We had a roaring fire, and the pleasant spit-spit of the snow and sleet falling in it down the chimney, and the yarning and laughing and singing went on at a noble rate till about ten o'clock, and then we had a supper of hot porridge and beans, and meal cakes with butter, and appetites to match.

Little Joan sat on a box apart, and had her bowl and bread on another one, and her pets around her helping. She had more than was usual of them or economical, because all the outcast cats came and took

up with her, and homeless or unlovable animals of other kinds heard about it and came, and these spread the matter to the other creatures, and they came also; and as the birds and the other timid wild things of the woods were not afraid of her, but always had an idea she was a friend when they came across her, and generally struck up an acquaintance with her to get invited to the house, she always had samples of those breeds in stock. She was hospitable to them all, for an animal was an animal to her, and dear by mere reason of being an animal, no matter about its sort or social station; and as she would allow of no cages, no collars, no fetters, but left the creatures free to come and go as they liked, that contented them, and they came; but they didn't go, to any extent, and so they were a marvelous nuisance, and made Jacques d'Arc swear a good deal; but his wife said God gave the child the instinct, and knew what He was doing when He did it, therefore it must have its course; it would be no sound prudence to meddle with His affairs when no invitation had been extended. So the pets were left in peace, and here they were, as I have said, rabbits, birds, squirrels, cats, and other reptiles, all around the child, and full of interest in her supper, and helping what they could. There was a very small squirrel on her shoulder, sitting up, as those creatures do, and turning a rocky fragment of prehistoric chestnut-cake over and over in its knotty hands, and hunting for the less indurated places, and

giving its elevated bushy tail a flirt and its pointed ears a toss when it found one—signifying thankfulness and surprise—and then it filed that place off with those two slender front teeth which a squirrel carries for that purpose and not for ornament, for ornamental they never could be, as any will admit that have noticed them.

Everything was going fine and breezy and hilarious, but then there came an interruption, for somebody hammered on the door. It was one of those ragged road-stragglers—the eternal wars kept the country full of them. He came in, all over snow, and stamped his feet, and shook, and brushed himself, and shut the door, and took off his limp ruin of a hat, and slapped it once or twice against his leg to knock off its fleece of snow, and then glanced around on the company with a pleased look upon his thin face, and a most yearning and famished one in his eye when it fell upon the victuals, and then he gave us a humble and conciliatory salutation, and said it was a blessed thing to have a fire like that on such a night, and a roof overhead like this, and that rich food to eat, and loving friends to talk with—ah, yes, this was true, and God help the homeless, and such as must trudge the roads in this weather.

Nobody said anything. The embarrassed poor creature stood there and appealed to one face after the other with his eyes, and found no welcome in any, the

smile on his own face flickering and fading and perishing, meanwhile; then he dropped his gaze, the muscles of his face began to twitch, and he put up his hand to cover this womanish sign of weakness.

"Sit down!"

This thunder-blast was from old Jacques d'Arc, and Joan was the object of it. The stranger was startled, and took his hand away, and there was Joan standing before him offering him her bowl of porridge. The man said:

"God Almighty bless you, my darling!" and then the tears came, and ran down his cheeks, but he was afraid to take the bowl.

"Do you hear me? Sit down, I say!"

There could not be a child more easy to persuade than Joan, but this was not the way. Her father had not the art; neither could he learn it. Joan said:

"Father, he is hungry; I can see it."

"Let him work for food, then. We are being eaten out of house and home by his like, and I have said I would endure it no more, and will keep my word. He has the face of a rascal anyhow, and a villain. Sit down, I tell you!"

"I know not if he is a rascal or no, but he is hungry, father, and shall have my porridge—I do not need it."

"If you don't obey me I'll—Rascals are not entitled to help from honest people, and no bite nor sup

shall they have in this house. Joan!"

She set her bowl down on the box and came over and stood before her scowling father, and said:

"Father, if you will not let me, then it must be as you say; but I would that you would think—then you would see that it is not right to punish one part of him for what the other part has done; for it is that poor stranger's head that does the evil things, but it is not his head that is hungry, it is his stomach, and it has done no harm to anybody, but is without blame, and innocent, not having any way to do a wrong, even if it was minded to it. Please let—"

"What an idea! It is the most idiotic speech I ever heard."

But Aubrey, the maire, broke in, he being fond of an argument, and having a pretty gift in that regard, as all acknowledged. Rising in his place and leaning his knuckles upon the table and looking about him with easy dignity, after the manner of such as be orators, he began, smooth and persuasive:

"I will differ with you there, gossip, and will undertake to show the company"—here he looked around upon us and nodded his head in a confident way—"that there is a grain of sense in what the child has said; for look you, it is of a certainty most true and demonstrable that it is a man's head that is master and supreme ruler over his whole body. Is that granted? Will any deny it?" He glanced around again; everybody

indicated assent. "Very well, then; that being the case, no part of the body is responsible for the result when it carries out an order delivered to it by the head; ergo, the head is alone responsible for crimes done by a man's hands or feet or stomach—do you get the idea? am I right thus far?" Everybody said yes, and said it with enthusiasm, and some said, one to another, that the maire was in great form to-night and at his very best—which pleased the maire exceedingly and made his eyes sparkle with pleasure, for he overheard these things; so he went on in the same fertile and brilliant way. "Now, then, we will consider what the term responsibility means, and how it affects the case in point. Responsibility makes a man responsible for only those things for which he is properly responsible"—and he waved his spoon around in a wide sweep to indicate the comprehensive nature of that class of responsibilities which render people responsible, and several exclaimed, admiringly, "He is right!—he has put that whole tangled thing into a nutshell—it is wonderful!" After a little pause to give the interest opportunity to gather and grow, he went on: "Very good. Let us suppose the case of a pair of tongs that falls upon a man's foot, causing a cruel hurt. Will you claim that the tongs are punishable for that? The question is answered; I see by your faces that you would call such a claim absurd. Now, why is it absurd? It is absurd because, there being no reasoning

faculty—that is to say, no faculty of personal command—in a pair of tongs, personal responsibility for the acts of the tongs is wholly absent from the tongs; and, therefore, responsibility being absent, punishment cannot ensue. Am I right?" A hearty burst of applause was his answer. "Now, then, we arrive at a man's stomach. Consider how exactly, how marvelously, indeed, its situation corresponds to that of a pair of tongs. Listen—and take careful note, I beg you. Can a man's stomach plan a murder? No. Can it plan a theft? No. Can it plan an incendiary fire? No. Now answer me—can a pair of tongs?" (There were admiring shouts of "No!" and "The cases are just exact!" and "Don't he do it splendid!") "Now, then, friends and neighbors, a stomach which cannot plan a crime cannot be a principal in the commission of it—that is plain, as you see. The matter is narrowed down by that much; we will narrow it further. Can a stomach, of its own motion, assist at a crime? The answer is no, because command is absent, the reasoning faculty is absent, volition is absent—as in the case of the tongs. We perceive now, do we not, that the stomach is totally irresponsible for crimes committed, either in whole or in part, by it?" He got a rousing cheer for response. "Then what do we arrive at as our verdict? Clearly this: that there is no such thing in this world as a guilty stomach; that in the body of the veriest rascal resides a pure and innocent stomach; that, whatever it's

owner may do, it at least should be sacred in our eyes; and that while God gives us minds to think just and charitable and honorable thoughts, it should be, and is, our privilege, as well as our duty, not only to feed the hungry stomach that resides in a rascal, having pity for its sorrow and its need, but to do it gladly, gratefully, in recognition of its sturdy and loyal maintenance of its purity and innocence in the midst of temptation and in company so repugnant to its better feelings. I am done."

Well, you never saw such an effect! They rose—the whole house rose—an clapped, and cheered, and praised him to the skies; and one after another, still clapping and shouting, they crowded forward, some with moisture in their eyes, and wrung his hands, and said such glorious things to him that he was clear overcome with pride and happiness, and couldn't say a word, for his voice would have broken, sure. It was splendid to see; and everybody said he had never come up to that speech in his life before, and never could do it again. Eloquence is a power, there is no question of that. Even old Jacques d'Arc was carried away, for once in his life, and shouted out:

"It's all right, Joan—give him the porridge!"

She was embarrassed, and did not seem to know what to say, and so didn't say anything. It was because she had given the man the porridge long ago and he had already eaten it all up. When she was asked why she had not waited until a decision was arrived at, she said

the man's stomach was very hungry, and it would not have been wise to wait, since she could not tell what the decision would be. Now that was a good and thoughtful idea for a child.

The man was not a rascal at all. He was a very good fellow, only he was out of luck, and surely that was no crime at that time in France. Now that his stomach was proved to be innocent, it was allowed to make itself at home; and as soon as it was well filled and needed nothing more, the man unwound his tongue and turned it loose, and it was really a noble one to go. He had been in the wars for years, and the things he told and the way he told them fired everybody's patriotism away up high, and set all hearts to thumping and all pulses to leaping; then, before anybody rightly knew how the change was made, he was leading us a sublime march through the ancient glories of France, and in fancy we saw the titanic forms of the twelve paladins rise out of the mists of the past and face their fate; we heard the tread of the innumerable hosts sweeping down to shut them in; we saw this human tide flow and ebb, ebb and flow, and waste away before that little band of heroes; we saw each detail pass before us of that most stupendous, most disastrous, yet most adored and glorious day in French legendary history; here and there and yonder, across that vast field of the dead and dying, we saw this and that and the other paladin dealing his prodigious blows with weary arm

and failing strength, and one by one we saw them fall, till only one remained—he that was without peer, he whose name gives name to the Song of Songs, the song which no Frenchman can hear and keep his feelings down and his pride of country cool; then, grandest and pitifulest scene of all, we saw his own pathetic death; and our stillness, as we sat with parted lips and breathless, hanging upon this man's words, gave us a sense of the awful stillness that reigned in that field of slaughter when that last surviving soul had passed.

And now, in this solemn hush, the stranger gave Joan a pat or two on the head and said:

"Little maid—whom God keep!—you have brought me from death to life this night; now listen: here is your reward," and at that supreme time for such a heart-melting, soul-rousing surprise, without another word he lifted up the most noble and pathetic voice that was ever heard, and began to pour out the great Song of Roland!

Think of that, with a French audience all stirred up and ready. Oh, where was your spoken eloquence now! what was it to this! How fine he looked, how stately, how inspired, as he stood there with that mighty chant welling from his lips and his heart, his whole body transfigured, and his rags along with it.

Everybody rose and stood while he sang, and their faces glowed and their eyes burned; and the tears came and flowed down their cheeks and their forms

began to sway unconsciously to the swing of the song, and their bosoms to heave and pant; and moanings broke out, and deep ejaculations; and when the last verse was reached, and Roland lay dying, all alone, with his face to the field and to his slain, lying there in heaps and winrows, and took off and held up his gauntlet to God with his failing hand, and breathed his beautiful prayer with his paling lips, all burst out in sobs and wailings. But when the final great note died out and the song was done, they all flung themselves in a body at the singer, stark mad with love of him and love of France and pride in her great deeds and old renown, and smothered him with their embracings; but Joan was there first, hugged close to his breast, and covering his face with idolatrous kisses.

The storm raged on outside, but that was no matter; this was the stranger's home now, for as long as he might please.

Chapter 4

Joan Tames the Mad Man

ALL CHILDREN have nicknames, and we had ours. We got one apiece early, and they stuck to us; but Joan was richer in this matter, for, as time went on, she earned a second, and then a third, and so on, and we gave them to her. First and last she had as many as half a dozen. Several of these she never lost. Peasant-girls

are bashful naturally; but she surpassed the rule so far, and colored so easily, and was so easily embarrassed in the presence of strangers, that we nicknamed her the Bashful. We were all patriots, but she was called the Patriot, because our warmest feeling for our country was cold beside hers. Also she was called the Beautiful; and this was not merely because of the extraordinary beauty of her face and form, but because of the loveliness of her character. These names she kept, and one other—the Brave.

We grew along up, in that plodding and peaceful region, and got to be good-sized boys and girls—big enough, in fact, to begin to know as much about the wars raging perpetually to the west and north of us as our elders, and also to feel as stirred up over the occasional news from these red fields as they did. I remember certain of these days very clearly. One Tuesday a crowd of us were romping and singing around the Fairy Tree, and hanging garlands on it in memory of our lost little fairy friends, when Little Mengette cried out:

"Look! What is that?"

When one exclaims like that in a way that shows astonishment and apprehension, he gets attention. All the panting breasts and flushed faces flocked together, and all the eager eyes were turned in one direction—down the slope, toward the village.

"It's a black flag."

"A black flag! No—is it?"

"You can see for yourself that it is nothing else."

"It is a black flag, sure! Now, has any ever seen the like of that before?"

"What can it mean?"

"Mean? It means something dreadful—what else?"

"That is nothing to the point; anybody knows that without the telling. But what?—that is the question."

"It is a chance that he that bears it can answer as well as any that are here, if you contain yourself till he comes."

"He runs well. Who is it?"

Some named one, some another; but presently all saw that it was Etienne Roze, called the Sunflower, because he had yellow hair and a round pock-marked face. His ancestors had been Germans some centuries ago. He came straining up the slope, now and then projecting his flag-stick aloft and giving his black symbol of woe a wave in the air, whilst all eyes watched him, all tongues discussed him, and every heart beat faster and faster with impatience to know his news. At last he sprang among us, and struck his flag-stick into the ground, saying:

"There! Stand there and represent France while I get my breath. She needs no other flag now."

All the giddy chatter stopped. It was as if one had announced a death. In that chilly hush there was no

sound audible but the panting of the breath-blown boy. When he was presently able to speak, he said:

"Black news is come. A treaty has been made at Troyes between France and the English and Burgundians. By it France is betrayed and delivered over, tied hand and foot, to the enemy. It is the work of the Duke of Burgundy and that she-devil, the Queen of France. It marries Henry of England to Catharine of France—"

"Is not this a lie? Marries the daughter of France to the Butcher of Agincourt? It is not to be believed. You have not heard aright."

"If you cannot believe that, Jacques d'Arc, then you have a difficult task indeed before you, for worse is to come. Any child that is born of that marriage—if even a girl—is to inherit the thrones of both England and France, and this double ownership is to remain with its posterity forever!"

"Now that is certainly a lie, for it runs counter to our Salic law, and so is not legal and cannot have effect," said Edmond Aubrey, called the Paladin, because of the armies he was always going to eat up some day. He would have said more, but he was drowned out by the clamors of the others, who all burst into a fury over this feature of the treaty, all talking at once and nobody hearing anybody, until presently Haumette persuaded them to be still, saying:

"It is not fair to break him up so in his tale; pray

let him go on. You find fault with his history because it seems to be lies. That were reason for satisfaction—that kind of lies—not discontent. Tell the rest, Etienne."

"There is but this to tell: Our King, Charles VI., is to reign until he dies, then Henry V. of England is to be Regent of France until a child of his shall be old enough to—"

"That man is to reign over us—the Butcher? It is lies! all lies!" cried the Paladin. "Besides, look you—what becomes of our Dauphin? What says the treaty about him?"

"Nothing. It takes away his throne and makes him an outcast."

Then everybody shouted at once and said the news was a lie; and all began to get cheerful again, saying, "Our King would have to sign the treaty to make it good; and that he would not do, seeing how it serves his own son."

But the Sunflower said: "I will ask you this: Would the Queen sign a treaty disinheriting her son?"

"That viper? Certainly. Nobody is talking of her. Nobody expects better of her. There is no villainy she will stick at, if it feed her spite; and she hates her son. Her signing it is of no consequence. The King must sign."

"I will ask you another thing. What is the King's condition? Mad, isn't he?"

"Yes, and his people love him all the more for it."

It brings him near to them by his sufferings; and pitying him makes them love him."

"You say right, Jacques d'Arc. Well, what would you of one that is mad? Does he know what he does? No. Does he do what others make him do? Yes. Now, then, I tell you he has signed the treaty."

"Who made him do it?"

"You know, without my telling. The Queen."

Then there was another uproar—everybody talking at once, and all heaping execrations upon the Queen's head. Finally Jacques d'Arc said:

"But many reports come that are not true. Nothing so shameful as this has ever come before, nothing that cuts so deep, nothing that has dragged France so low; therefore there is hope that this tale is but another idle rumor. Where did you get it?"

The color went out of his sister Joan's face. She dreaded the answer; and her instinct was right.

"The cure of Maxey brought it."

There was a general gasp. We knew him, you see, for a trusty man.

"Did he believe it?"

The hearts almost stopped beating. Then came the answer:

"He did. And that is not all. He said he knew it to be true."

Some of the girls began to sob; the boys were struck silent. The distress in Joan's face was like that

which one sees in the face of a dumb animal that has received a mortal hurt. The animal bears it, making no complaint; she bore it also, saying no word. Her brother Jacques put his hand on her head and caressed her hair to indicate his sympathy, and she gathered the hand to her lips and kissed it for thanks, not saying anything. Presently the reaction came, and the boys began to talk. Noel Rainguesson said:

"Oh, are we never going to be men! We do grow along so slowly, and France never needed soldiers as she needs them now, to wipe out this black insult."

"I hate youth!" said Pierre Morel, called the Dragon-fly because his eyes stuck out so. "You've always got to wait, and wait, and wait—and here are the great wars wasting away for a hundred years, and you never get a chance. If I could only be a soldier now!"

"As for me, I'm not going to wait much longer," said the Paladin; "and when I do start you'll hear from me, I promise you that. There are some who, in storming a castle, prefer to be in the rear; but as for me, give me the front or none; I will have none in front of me but the officers."

Even the girls got the war spirit, and Marie Dupont said:

"I would I were a man; I would start this minute!" and looked very proud of herself, and glanced about for applause.

"So would I," said Cecile Letellier, sniffing the air like a war-horse that smells the battle; "I warrant you I would not turn back from the field though all England were in front of me."

"Pooh!" said the Paladin; "girls can brag, but that's all they are good for. Let a thousand of them come face to face with a handful of soldiers once, if you want to see what running is like. Here's little Joan—next she'll be threatening to go for a soldier!"

The idea was so funny, and got such a good laugh, that the Paladin gave it another trial, and said: "Why you can just see her!—see her plunge into battle like any old veteran. Yes, indeed; and not a poor shabby common soldier like us, but an officer—an officer, mind you, with armor on, and the bars of a steel helmet to blush behind and hide her embarrassment when she finds an army in front of her that she hasn't been introduced to. An officer? Why, she'll be a captain! A captain, I tell you, with a hundred men at her back—or maybe girls. Oh, no common-soldier business for her! And, dear me, when she starts for that other army, you'll think there's a hurricane blowing it away!"

Well, he kept it up like that till he made their sides ache with laughing; which was quite natural, for certainly it was a very funny idea—at that time—I mean, the idea of that gentle little creature, that wouldn't hurt a fly, and couldn't bear the sight of blood, and was so girlish and shrinking in all ways, rushing

into battle with a gang of soldiers at her back. Poor thing, she sat there confused and ashamed to be so laughed at; and yet at that very minute there was something about to happen which would change the aspect of things, and make those young people see that when it comes to laughing, the person that laughs last has the best chance. For just then a face which we all knew and all feared projected itself from behind the Fairy Tree, and the thought that shot through us all was, crazy Benoist has gotten loose from his cage, and we are as good as dead! This ragged and hairy and horrible creature glided out from behind the tree, and raised an ax as he came. We all broke and fled, this way and that, the girls screaming and crying. No, not all; all but Joan. She stood up and faced the man, and remained so. As we reached the wood that borders the grassy clearing and jumped into its shelter, two or three of us glanced back to see if Benoist was gaining on us, and that is what we saw—Joan standing, and the maniac gliding stealthily toward her with his ax lifted. The sight was sickening. We stood where we were, trembling and not able to move. I did not want to see the murder done, and yet I could not take my eyes away. Now I saw Joan step forward to meet the man, though I believed my eyes must be deceiving me. Then I saw him stop. He threatened her with his ax, as if to warn her not to come further, but she paid no heed, but went steadily on, until she was right in front of him—right under his ax. Then

she stopped, and seemed to begin to talk with him. It made me sick, yes, giddy, and everything swam around me, and I could not see anything for a time—whether long or brief I do not know. When this passed and I looked again, Joan was walking by the man's side toward the village, holding him by his hand. The ax was in her other hand.

One by one the boys and girls crept out, and we stood there gazing, open-mouthed, till those two entered the village and were hid from sight. It was then that we named her the Brave.

We left the black flag there to continue its mournful office, for we had other matter to think of now. We started for the village on a run, to give warning, and get Joan out of her peril; though for one, after seeing what I had seen, it seemed to me that while Joan had the ax the man's chance was not the best of the two. When we arrived the danger was past, the madman was in custody. All the people were flocking to the little square in front of the church to talk and exclaim and wonder over the event, and it even made the town forget the black news of the treaty for two or three hours.

All the women kept hugging and kissing Joan, and praising her, and crying, and the men patted her on the head and said they wished she was a man, they would send her to the wars and never doubt but that she would strike some blows that would be heard of. She

had to tear herself away and go and hide, this glory was so trying to her diffidence.

Of course the people began to ask us for the particulars. I was so ashamed that I made an excuse to the first comer, and got privately away and went back to the Fairy Tree, to get relief from the embarrassment of those questionings. There I found Joan, but she was there to get relief from the embarrassment of glory. One by one the others shirked the inquirers and joined us in our refuge. Then we gathered around Joan, and asked her how she had dared to do that thing. She was very modest about it, and said:

"You make a great thing of it, but you mistake; it was not a great matter. It was not as if I had been a stranger to the man. I know him, and have known him long; and he knows me, and likes me. I have fed him through the bars of his cage many times; and last December, when they chopped off two of his fingers to remind him to stop seizing and wounding people passing by, I dressed his hand every day till it was well again."

"That is all well enough," said Little Mengette, "but he is a madman, dear, and so his likings and his gratitude and friendliness go for nothing when his rage is up. You did a perilous thing."

"Of course you did," said the Sunflower. "Didn't he threaten to kill you with the ax?"

"Yes."

"Didn't he threaten you more than once?"

"Yes."

"Didn't you feel afraid?"

"No—at least not much—very little."

"Why didn't you?"

She thought a moment, then said, quite simply:

"I don't know."

It made everybody laugh. Then the Sunflower said it was like a lamb trying to think out how it had come to eat a wolf, but had to give it up.

Cecile Letellier asked, "Why didn't you run when we did?"

"Because it was necessary to get him to his cage; else he would kill some one. Then he would come to the like harm himself."

It is noticeable that this remark, which implies that Joan was entirely forgetful of herself and her own danger, and had thought and wrought for the preservation of other people alone, was not challenged, or criticized, or commented upon by anybody there, but was taken by all as matter of course and true. It shows how clearly her character was defined, and how well it was known and established.

There was silence for a time, and perhaps we were all thinking of the same thing—namely, what a poor figure we had cut in that adventure as contrasted with Joan's performance. I tried to think up some good way of explaining why I had run away and left a little

girl at the mercy of a maniac armed with an ax, but all of the explanations that offered themselves to me seemed so cheap and shabby that I gave the matter up and remained still. But others were less wise. Noel Rainguesson fidgeted awhile, then broke out with a remark which showed what his mind had been running on:

"The fact is, I was taken by surprise. That is the reason. If I had had a moment to think, I would no more have thought of running than I would think of running from a baby. For, after all, what is Theophile Benoit, that I should seem to be afraid of him? Pooh! the idea of being afraid of that poor thing! I only wish he would come along now—I'd show you!"

"So do I!" cried Pierre Morel. "If I wouldn't make him climb this tree quicker than—well, you'd see what I would do! Taking a person by surprise, that way—why, I never meant to run; not in earnest, I mean. I never thought of running in earnest; I only wanted to have some fun, and when I saw Joan standing there, and him threatening her, it was all I could do to restrain myself from going there and just tearing the livers and lights out of him. I wanted to do it bad enough, and if it was to do over again, I would! If ever he comes fooling around me again, I'll—"

"Oh, hush!" said the Paladin, breaking in with an air of disdain; "the way you people talk, a person would think there's something heroic about standing up and

facing down that poor remnant of a man. Why, it's nothing! There's small glory to be got in facing him down, I should say. Why, I wouldn't want any better fun than to face down a hundred like him. If he was to come along here now, I would walk up to him just as I am now—I wouldn't care if he had a thousand axes—and say—"

And so he went on and on, telling the brave things he would say and the wonders he would do; and the others put in a word from time to time, describing over again the gory marvels they would do if ever that madman ventured to cross their path again, for next time they would be ready for him, and would soon teach him that if he thought he could surprise them twice because he had surprised them once, he would find himself very seriously mistaken, that's all.

And so, in the end, they all got back their self-respect; yes, and even added somewhat to it; indeed when the sitting broke up they had a finer opinion of themselves than they had ever had before.

Chapter 5

Domremy Pillaged and Burned

THEY WERE peaceful and pleasant, those young and smoothly flowing days of ours; that is, that was the case as a rule, we being remote from the seat of war; but at intervals roving bands approached near enough

for us to see the flush in the sky at night which marked where they were burning some farmstead or village, and we all knew, or at least felt, that some day they would come yet nearer, and we should have our turn. This dull dread lay upon our spirits like a physical weight. It was greatly augmented a



couple of years after the Treaty of Troyes.

It was truly a dismal year for France. One day we had been over to have one of our occasional pitched battles with those hated Burgundian boys of the village of Maxey, and had been whipped, and were arriving on our side of the river after dark, bruised and weary, when we heard the bell ringing the tocsin. We ran all the way, and when we got to the square we found it crowded with the excited villagers, and weirdly lighted by smoking and flaring torches.

On the steps of the church stood a stranger, a Burgundian priest, who was telling the people news which made them weep, and rave, and rage, and curse, by turns. He said our old mad King was dead, and that now we and France and the crown were the property of an English baby lying in his cradle in London. And he urged us to give that child our allegiance, and be its faithful servants and well-wishers; and said we should now have a strong and stable government at last, and that in a little time the English armies would start on their last march, and it would be a brief one, for all that it would need to do would be to conquer what odds and ends of our country yet remained under that rare and almost forgotten rag, the banner of France.

The people stormed and raged at him, and you could see dozens of them stretch their fists above the sea of torch-lighted faces and shake them at him; and it was all a wild picture, and stirring to look at; and the

priest was a first-rate part of it, too, for he stood there in the strong glare and looked down on those angry people in the blandest and most indifferent way, so that while you wanted to burn him at the stake, you still admired the aggravating coolness of him. And his winding-up was the coolest thing of all. For he told them how, at the funeral of our old King, the French King-at-Arms had broken his staff of office over the coffin of "Charles VI. and his dynasty," at the same time saying, in a loud voice, "God grant long life to Henry, King of France and England, our sovereign lord!" and then he asked them to join him in a hearty Amen to that! The people were white with wrath, and it tied their tongues for the moment, and they could not speak. But Joan was standing close by, and she looked up in his face, and said in her sober, earnest way:

"I would I might see thy head struck from thy body!"—then, after a pause, and crossing herself—"if it were the will of God."

This is worth remembering, and I will tell you why: it is the only harsh speech Joan ever uttered in her life. When I shall have revealed to you the storms she went through, and the wrongs and persecutions, then you will see that it was wonderful that she said but one bitter thing while she lived.

From the day that that dreary news came we had one scare after another, the marauders coming almost to our doors every now and then; so that we lived in

ever-increasing apprehension, and yet were somehow mercifully spared from actual attack. But at last our turn did really come. This was in the spring of '28. The Burgundians swarmed in with a great noise, in the middle of a dark night, and we had to jump up and fly for our lives. We took the road to Neufchateau, and rushed along in the wildest disorder, everybody trying to get ahead, and thus the movements of all were impeded; but Joan had a cool head—the only cool head there—and she took command and brought order out of that chaos. She did her work quickly and with decision and despatch, and soon turned the panic flight into a quite steady-going march. You will grant that for so young a person, and a girl at that, this was a good piece of work.

She was sixteen now, shapely and graceful, and of a beauty so extraordinary that I might allow myself any extravagance of language in describing it and yet have no fear of going beyond the truth. There was in her face a sweetness and serenity and purity that justly reflected her spiritual nature. She was deeply religious, and this is a thing which sometimes gives a melancholy cast to a person's countenance, but it was not so in her case. Her religion made her inwardly content and joyous; and if she was troubled at times, and showed the pain of it in her face and bearing, it came of distress for her country; no part of it was chargeable to her religion.

A considerable part of our village was destroyed, and when it became safe for us to venture back there we realized what other people had been suffering in all the various quarters of France for many years—yes, decades of years. For the first time we saw wrecked and smoke-blackened homes, and in the lanes and alleys carcasses of dumb creatures that had been slaughtered in pure wantonness—among them calves and lambs that had been pets of the children; and it was pity to see the children lament over them.

And then, the taxes, the taxes! Everybody thought of that. That burden would fall heavy now in the commune's crippled condition, and all faces grew long with the thought of it. Joan said:

"Paying taxes with naught to pay them with is what the rest of France has been doing these many years, but we never knew the bitterness of that before. We shall know it now."

And so she went on talking about it and growing more and more troubled about it, until one could see that it was filling all her mind.

At last we came upon a dreadful object. It was the madman—hacked and stabbed to death in his iron cage in the corner of the square. It was a bloody and dreadful sight. Hardly any of us young people had ever seen a man before who had lost his life by violence; so this cadaver had an awful fascination for us; we could not take our eyes from it. I mean, it had that sort of

fascination for all of us but one. That one was Joan. She turned away in horror, and could not be persuaded to go near it again. There—it is a striking reminder that we are but creatures of use and custom; yes, and it is a reminder, too, of how harshly and unfairly fate deals with us sometimes. For it was so ordered that the very ones among us who were most fascinated with mutilated and bloody death were to live their lives in peace, while that other, who had a native and deep horror of it, must presently go forth and have it as a familiar spectacle every day on the field of battle.

You may well believe that we had plenty of matter for talk now, since the raiding of our village seemed by long odds the greatest event that had really ever occurred in the world; for although these dull peasants may have thought they recognized the bigness of some of the previous occurrences that had filtered from the world's history dimly into their minds, the truth is that they hadn't. One biting little fact, visible to their eyes of flesh and felt in their own personal vitals, became at once more prodigious to them than the grandest remote episode in the world's history which they had got at second hand and by hearsay. It amuses me now when I recall how our elders talked then. They fumed and fretted in a fine fashion.

"Ah, yes," said old Jacques d'Arc, "things are come to a pretty pass, indeed! The King must be informed of this. It is time that he cease from idleness

and dreaming, and get at his proper business." He meant our young disinherited King, the hunted refugee, Charles VII.

"You say well," said the maire. "He should be informed, and that at once. It is an outrage that such things would be permitted. Why, we are not safe in our beds, and he taking his ease yonder. It shall be made known, indeed it shall—all France shall hear of it!"

To hear them talk, one would have imagined that all the previous ten thousand sackings and burnings in France had been but fables, and this one the only fact. It is always the way; words will answer as long as it is only a person's neighbor who is in trouble, but when that person gets into trouble himself, it is time that the King rise up and do something.

The big event filled us young people with talk, too. We let it flow in a steady stream while we tended the flocks. We were beginning to feel pretty important now, for I was eighteen and the other youths were from one to four years older—young men, in fact. One day the Paladin was arrogantly criticizing the patriot generals of France and said:

"Look at Dunois, Bastard of Orleans—call him a general! Just put me in his place once—never mind what I would do, it is not for me to say, I have no stomach for talk, my way is to act and let others do the talking—but just put me in his place once, that's all! And look at Saintrilles—pooh! and that blustering La

Hire, now what a general that is!"

It shocked everybody to hear these great names so flippantly handled, for to us these renowned soldiers were almost gods. In their far-off splendor they rose upon our imaginations dim and huge, shadowy and awful, and it was a fearful thing to hear them spoken of as if they were mere men, and their acts open to comment and criticism. The color rose in Joan's face, and she said:

"I know not how any can be so hardy as to use such words regarding these sublime men, who are the very pillars of the French state, supporting it with their strength and preserving it at daily cost of their blood. As for me, I could count myself honored past all deserving if I might be allowed but the privilege of looking upon them once—at a distance, I mean, for it would not become one of my degree to approach them too near."

The Paladin was disconcerted for a moment, seeing by the faces around him that Joan had put into words what the others felt, then he pulled his complacency together and fell to fault-finding again. Joan's brother Jean said:

"If you don't like what our generals do, why don't you go to the great wars yourself and better their work? You are always talking about going to the wars, but you don't go."

"Look you," said the Paladin, "it is easy to say

that. Now I will tell you why I remain chafing here in a bloodless tranquillity which my reputation teaches you is repulsive to my nature. I do not go because I am not a gentleman. That is the whole reason. What can one private soldier do in a contest like this? Nothing. He is not permitted to rise from the ranks. If I were a gentleman would I remain here? Not one moment. I can save France—ah, you may laugh, but I know what is in me, I know what is hid under this peasant cap. I can save France, and I stand ready to do it, but not under these present conditions. If they want me, let them send for me; otherwise, let them take the consequences; I shall not budge but as an officer."

"Alas, poor France—France is lost!" said Pierre d'Arc.

"Since you sniff so at others, why don't you go to the wars yourself, Pierre d'Arc?"

"Oh, I haven't been sent for, either. I am no more a gentleman than you. Yet I will go; I promise to go. I promise to go as a private under your orders—when you are sent for."

They all laughed, and the Dragon-fly said:

"So soon? Then you need to begin to get ready; you might be called for in five years—who knows? Yes, in my opinion you'll march for the wars in five years."

"He will go sooner," said Joan. She said it in a low voice and musingly, but several heard it.

"How do you know that, Joan?" said the Dragon-fly, with a surprised look. But Jean d'Arc broke in and said:

"I want to go myself, but as I am rather young yet, I also will wait, and march when the Paladin is sent for."

"No," said Joan, "he will go with Pierre."

She said it as one who talks to himself aloud without knowing it, and none heard it but me. I glanced at her and saw that her knitting-needles were idle in her hands, and that her face had a dreamy and absent look in it. There were fleeting movements of her lips as if she might be occasionally saying parts of sentences to herself. But there was no sound, for I was the nearest person to her and I heard nothing. But I set my ears open, for those two speeches had affected me uncannily, I being superstitious and easily troubled by any little thing of a strange and unusual sort.

Noel Rainguesson said:

"There is one way to let France have a chance for her salvation. We've got one gentleman in the commune, at any rate. Why can't the Scholar change name and condition with the Paladin? Then he can be an officer. France will send for him then, and he will sweep these English and Burgundian armies into the sea like flies."

I was the Scholar. That was my nickname, because I could read and write. There was a chorus of

approval, and the Sunflower said:

"That is the very thing—it settles every difficulty. The Sieur de Conte will easily agree to that. Yes, he will march at the back of Captain Paladin and die early, covered with common-soldier glory."

"He will march with Jean and Pierre, and live till these wars are forgotten," Joan muttered; "and at the eleventh hour Noel and the Paladin will join these, but not of their own desire." The voice was so low that I was not perfectly sure that these were the words, but they seemed to be. It makes one feel creepy to hear such things.

"Come, now," Noel continued, "it's all arranged; there's nothing to do but organize under the Paladin's banner and go forth and rescue France. You'll all join?"

All said yes, except Jacques d'Arc, who said:

"I'll ask you to excuse me. It is pleasant to talk war, and I am with you there, and I've always thought I should go soldiering about this time, but the look of our wrecked village and that carved-up and bloody madman have taught me that I am not made for such work and such sights. I could never be at home in that trade. Face swords and the big guns and death? It isn't in me. No, no; count me out. And besides, I'm the eldest son, and deputy prop and protector of the family. Since you are going to carry Jean and Pierre to the wars, somebody must be left behind to take care of our Joan and her sister. I shall stay at home, and grow old

in peace and tranquillity."

"He will stay at home, but not grow old," murmured Joan.

The talk rattled on in the gay and careless fashion privileged to youth, and we got the Paladin to map out his campaigns and fight his battles and win his victories and extinguish the English and put our King upon his throne and set his crown upon his head. Then we asked him what he was going to answer when the King should require him to name his reward. The Paladin had it all arranged in his head, and brought it out promptly:

"He shall give me a dukedom, name me premier peer, and make me Hereditary Lord High Constable of France."

"And marry you to a princess—you're not going to leave that out, are you?"

The Paladin colored a trifle, and said, brusquely:

"He may keep his princesses—I can marry more to my taste."

Meaning Joan, though nobody suspected it at that time. If any had, the Paladin would have been finely ridiculed for his vanity. There was no fit mate in that village for Joan of Arc. Every one would have said that.

In turn, each person present was required to say what reward he would demand of the King if he could change places with the Paladin and do the wonders the Paladin was going to do. The answers were given in fun, and each of us tried to outdo his predecessors in

the extravagance of the reward he would claim; but when it came to Joan's turn, and they rallied her out of her dreams and asked her to testify, they had to explain to her what the question was, for her thought had been absent, and she had heard none of this latter part of our talk. She supposed they wanted a serious answer, and she gave it. She sat considering some moments, then she said:

"If the Dauphin, out of his grace and nobleness, should say to me, 'Now that I am rich and am come to my own again, choose and have,' I should kneel and ask him to give command that our village should nevermore be taxed."

It was so simple and out of her heart that it touched us and we did not laugh, but fell to thinking. We did not laugh; but there came a day when we remembered that speech with a mournful pride, and were glad that we had not laughed, perceiving then how honest her words had been, and seeing how faithfully she made them good when the time came, asking just that boon of the King and refusing to take even any least thing for herself.

Chapter 6

Joan and Archangel Michael

ALL THROUGH her childhood and up to the middle of her fourteenth year, Joan had been the most

light-hearted creature and the merriest in the village, with a hop-skip-and-jump gait and a happy and catching laugh; and this disposition, supplemented by her warm and sympathetic nature and frank and winning ways, had made her everybody's pet. She had been a hot patriot all this time, and sometimes the war news had sobered her spirits and wrung her heart and made her acquainted with tears, but always when these interruptions had run their course her spirits rose and she was her old self again.

But now for a whole year and a half she had been mainly grave; not melancholy, but given to thought, abstraction, dreams. She was carrying France upon her heart, and she found the burden not light. I knew that this was her trouble, but others attributed her abstraction to religious ecstasy, for she did not share her thinkings with the village at large, yet gave me glimpses of them, and so I knew, better than the rest, what was absorbing her interest. Many a time the idea crossed my mind that she had a secret—a secret which she was keeping wholly to herself, as well from me as from the others. This idea had come to me because several times she had cut a sentence in two and changed the subject when apparently she was on the verge of a revelation of some sort. I was to find this secret out, but not just yet.

The day after the conversation which I have been reporting we were together in the pastures and fell to

talking about France, as usual. For her sake I had always talked hopefully before, but that was mere lying, for really there was not anything to hang a rag of hope for France upon. Now it was such a pain to lie to her, and cost me such shame to offer this treachery to one so snow-pure from lying and treachery, and even from suspicion of such baseness in others, as she was, that I was resolved to face about now and begin over again, and never insult her more with deception. I started on the new policy by saying—still opening up with a small lie, of course, for habit is habit, and not to be flung out of the window by any man, but coaxed downstairs a step at a time:

"Joan, I have been thinking the thing all over last night, and have concluded that we have been in the wrong all this time; that the case of France is desperate; that it has been desperate ever since Agincourt; and that to-day it is more than desperate, it is hopeless."

I did not look her in the face while I was saying it; it could not be expected of a person. To break her heart, to crush her hope with a so frankly brutal speech as that, without one charitable soft place in it—it seemed a shameful thing, and it was. But when it was out, the weight gone, and my conscience rising to the surface, I glanced at her face to see the result.

There was none to see. At least none that I was expecting. There was a barely perceptible suggestion of wonder in her serious eyes, but that was all; and she

said, in her simple and placid way:

"The case of France hopeless? Why should you think that? Tell me."

It is a most pleasant thing to find that what you thought would inflict a hurt upon one whom you honor, has not done it. I was relieved now, and could say all my say without any furtivenesses and without embarrassment. So I began:

"Let us put sentiment and patriotic illusions aside, and look at the facts in the face. What do they say? They speak as plainly as the figures in a merchant's account-book. One has only to add the two columns up to see that the French house is bankrupt, that one-half of its property is already in the English sheriff's hands and the other half in nobody's—except those of irresponsible raiders and robbers confessing allegiance to nobody. Our King is shut up with his favorites and fools in inglorious idleness and poverty in a narrow little patch of the kingdom—a sort of back lot, as one may say—and has no authority there or anywhere else, hasn't a farthing to his name, nor a regiment of soldiers; he is not fighting, he is not intending to fight, he means to make no further resistance; in truth, there is but one thing that he is intending to do—give the whole thing up, pitch his crown into the sewer, and run away to Scotland. There are the facts. Are they correct?"

"Yes, they are correct."

"Then it is as I have said: one needs but to add

them together in order to realize what they mean."

She asked, in an ordinary, level tone:

"What—that the case of France is hopeless?"

"Necessarily. In face of these facts, doubt of it is impossible."

"How can you say that? How can you feel like that?"

"How can I? How could I think or feel in any other way, in the circumstances? Joan, with these fatal figures before, you, have you really any hope for France—really and actually?"

"Hope—oh, more than that! France will win her freedom and keep it. Do not doubt it."

It seemed to me that her clear intellect must surely be clouded to-day. It must be so, or she would see that those figures could mean only one thing. Perhaps if I marshaled them again she would see. So I said:

"Joan, your heart, which worships France, is beguiling your head. You are not perceiving the importance of these figures. Here—I want to make a picture of them, here on the ground with a stick. Now, this rough outline is France. Through its middle, east and west, I draw a river."

"Yes, the Loire."

"Now, then, this whole northern half of the country is in the tight grip of the English."

"Yes."

"And this whole southern half is really in nobody's hands at all—as our King confesses by meditating desertion and flight to a foreign land. England has armies here; opposition is dead; she can assume full possession whenever she may choose. In very truth, all France is gone, France is already lost, France has ceased to exist. What was France is now but a British province. Is this true?"

Her voice was low, and just touched with emotion, but distinct:

"Yes, it is true."

"Very well. Now add this clinching fact, and surely the sum is complete: When have French soldiers won a victory? Scotch soldiers, under the French flag, have won a barren fight or two a few years back, but I am speaking of French ones. Since eight thousand Englishmen nearly annihilated sixty thousand Frenchmen a dozen years ago at Agincourt, French courage has been paralyzed. And so it is a common saying to-day that if you confront fifty French soldiers with five English ones, the French will run."

"It is a pity, but even these things are true."

"Then certainly the day for hoping is past."

I believed the case would be clear to her now. I thought it could not fail to be clear to her, and that she would say, herself, that there was no longer any ground for hope. But I was mistaken; and disappointed also. She said, without any doubt in her tone:

"France will rise again. You shall see."

"Rise?—with this burden of English armies on her back!"

"She will cast it off; she will trample it under foot!" This with spirit.

"Without soldiers to fight with?"

"The drums will summon them. They will answer, and they will march."

"March to the rear, as usual?"

"No; to the front—ever to the front—always to the front! You shall see."

"And the pauper King?"

"He will mount his throne—he will wear his crown."

"Well, of a truth this makes one's head dizzy. Why, if I could believe that in thirty years from now the English domination would be broken and the French monarch's head find itself hooped with a real crown of sovereignty—"

"Both will have happened before two years are sped."

"Indeed? and who is going to perform all these sublime impossibilities?"

"God."

It was a reverent low note, but it rang clear.

What could have put those strange ideas in her head? This question kept running in my mind during two or three days. It was inevitable that I should think

of madness. What other way was there to account for such things? Grieving and brooding over the woes of France had weakened that strong mind, and filled it with fantastic phantoms—yes, that must be it.

But I watched her, and tested her, and it was not so. Her eye was clear and sane, her ways were natural, her speech direct and to the point. No, there was nothing the matter with her mind; it was still the soundest in the village and the best. She went on thinking for others, planning for others, sacrificing herself for others, just as always before. She went on ministering to her sick and to her poor, and still stood ready to give the wayfarer her bed and content herself with the floor. There was a secret somewhere, but madness was not the key to it. This was plain.

Now the key did presently come into my hands, and the way that it happened was this. You have heard all the world talk of this matter which I am about to speak of, but you have not heard an eyewitness talk of it before.

I was coming from over the ridge, one day—it was the 15th of May, '28—and when I got to the edge of the oak forest and was about to step out of it upon the turfy open space in which the haunted beech tree stood, I happened to cast a glance from cover, first—then I took a step backward, and stood in the shelter and concealment of the foliage. For I had caught sight of Joan, and thought I would devise some sort of

playful surprise for her. Think of it—that trivial conceit was neighbor, with but a scarcely measurable interval of time between, to an event destined to endure forever in histories and songs.

The day was overcast, and all that grassy space wherein the Tree stood lay in a soft rich shadow. Joan sat on a natural seat formed by gnarled great roots of the Tree. Her hands lay loosely, one reposing in the other, in her lap. Her head was bent a little toward the ground, and her air was that of one who is lost to thought, steeped in dreams, and not conscious of herself or of the world. And now I saw a most strange thing, for I saw a white shadow come slowly gliding along the grass toward the Tree. It was of grand proportions—a robed form, with wings—and the whiteness of this shadow was not like any other whiteness that we know of, except it be the whiteness of lightnings, but even the lightnings are not so intense as it was, for one can look at them without hurt, whereas this brilliancy was so blinding that it pained my eyes and brought the water into them. I uncovered my head, perceiving that I was in the presence of something not of this world. My breath grew faint and difficult, because of the terror and the awe that possessed me.

Another strange thing. The wood had been silent—smitten with that deep stillness which comes when a storm-cloud darkens a forest, and the wild creatures lose heart and are afraid; but now all the birds

burst forth into song, and the joy, the rapture, the ecstasy of it was beyond belief; and was so eloquent and so moving, withal, that it was plain it was an act of worship. With the first note of those birds Joan cast herself upon her knees, and bent her head low and crossed her hands upon her breast.

She had not seen the shadow yet. Had the song of the birds told her it was coming? It had that look to me. Then the like of this must have happened before. Yes, there might be no doubt of that.

The shadow approached Joan slowly; the extremity of it reached her, flowed over her, clothed her in its awful splendor. In that immortal light her face, only humanly beautiful before, became divine; flooded with that transforming glory her mean peasant habit was become like to the raiment of the sun-clothed children of God as we see them thronging the terraces of the Throne in our dreams and imaginings.

Presently she rose and stood, with her head still bowed a little, and with her arms down and the ends of her fingers lightly laced together in front of her; and standing so, all drenched with that wonderful light, and yet apparently not knowing it, she seemed to listen—but I heard nothing. After a little she raised her head, and looked up as one might look up toward the face of a giant, and then clasped her hands and lifted them high, imploringly, and began to plead. I heard some of the words. I heard her say:

"But I am so young! oh, so young to leave my mother and my home and go out into the strange world to undertake a thing so great! Ah, how can I talk with men, be comrade with men?—soldiers! It would give me over to insult, and rude usage, and contempt. How can I go to the great wars, and lead armies?—I a girl, and ignorant of such things, knowing nothing of arms, nor how to mount a horse, nor ride it.... Yet—if it is commanded—"

Her voice sank a little, and was broken by sobs, and I made out no more of her words. Then I came to myself. I reflected that I had been intruding upon a mystery of God—and what might my punishment be? I was afraid, and went deeper into the wood. Then I carved a mark in the bark of a tree, saying to myself, it may be that I am dreaming and have not seen this vision at all. I will come again, when I know that I am awake and not dreaming, and see if this mark is still here; then I shall know.

Chapter 7

She Delivers the Divine Command

I HEARD my name called. It was Joan's voice. It startled me, for how could she know I was there? I said to myself, it is part of the dream; it is all dream—voice, vision and all; the fairies have done this. So I crossed myself and pronounced the name of God, to break the enchantment. I knew I was awake now and free from the spell, for no spell can withstand this exorcism. Then I heard my name called again, and I stepped at once from under cover, and there indeed was Joan, but not looking as she had



looked in the dream. For she was not crying now, but was looking as she had used to look a year and a half before, when her heart was light and her spirits high. Her old-time energy and fire were back, and a something like exaltation showed itself in her face and bearing. It was almost as if she had been in a trance all that time and had come awake again. Really, it was just as if she had been away and lost, and was come back to us at last; and I was so glad that I felt like running to call everybody and have them flock around her and give her welcome. I ran to her excited and said:

"Ah, Joan, I've got such a wonderful thing to tell you about! You would never imagine it. I've had a dream, and in the dream I saw you right here where you are standing now, and—"

But she put up her hand and said:

"It was not a dream."

It gave me a shock, and I began to feel afraid again.

"Not a dream?" I said, "how can you know about it, Joan?"

"Are you dreaming now?"

"I—I suppose not. I think I am not."

"Indeed you are not. I know you are not. And you were not dreaming when you cut the mark in the tree."

I felt myself turning cold with fright, for now I knew of a certainty that I had not been dreaming, but

had really been in the presence of a dread something not of this world. Then I remembered that my sinful feet were upon holy ground—the ground where that celestial shadow had rested. I moved quickly away, smitten to the bones with fear. Joan followed, and said:

"Do not be afraid; indeed there is no need. Come with me. We will sit by the spring and I will tell you all my secret."

When she was ready to begin, I checked her and said:

"First tell me this. You could not see me in the wood; how did you know I cut a mark in the tree?"

"Wait a little; I will soon come to that; then you will see."

"But tell me one thing now; what was that awful shadow that I saw?"

"I will tell you, but do not be disturbed; you are not in danger. It was the shadow of an archangel—Michael, the chief and lord of the armies of heaven."

I could but cross myself and tremble for having polluted that ground with my feet.

"You were not afraid, Joan? Did you see his face—did you see his form?"

"Yes; I was not afraid, because this was not the first time. I was afraid the first time."

"When was that, Joan?"

"It is nearly three years ago now."

"So long? Have you seen him many times?"

"Yes, many times."

"It is this, then, that has changed you; it was this that made you thoughtful and not as you were before. I see it now. Why did you not tell us about it?"

"It was not permitted. It is permitted now, and soon I shall tell all. But only you, now. It must remain a secret for a few days still."

"Has none seen that white shadow before but me?"

"No one. It has fallen upon me before when you and others were present, but none could see it. To-day it has been otherwise, and I was told why; but it will not be visible again to any."

"It was a sign to me, then—and a sign with a meaning of some kind?"

"Yes, but I may not speak of that."

"Strange—that that dazzling light could rest upon an object before one's eyes and not be visible."

"With it comes speech, also. Several saints come, attended by myriads of angels, and they speak to me; I hear their voices, but others do not. They are very dear to me—my Voices; that is what I call them to myself."

"Joan, what do they tell you?"

"All manner of things—about France, I mean."

"What things have they been used to tell you?"

She sighed, and said:

"Disasters—only disasters, and misfortunes, and

humiliation. There was naught else to foretell."

"They spoke of them to you beforehand?" "Yes. So that I knew what was going to happen before it happened. It made me grave—as you saw. It could not be otherwise. But always there was a word of hope, too. More than that: France was to be rescued, and made great and free again. But how and by whom—that was not told. Not until to-day." As she said those last words a sudden deep glow shone in her eyes, which I was to see there many times in after-days when the bugles sounded the charge and learn to call it the battle-light. Her breast heaved, and the color rose in her face. "But to-day I know. God has chosen the meanest of His creatures for this work; and by His command, and in His protection, and by His strength, not mine, I am to lead His armies, and win back France, and set the crown upon the head of His servant that is Dauphin and shall be King."

I was amazed, and said:

"You, Joan? You, a child, lead armies?"

"Yes. For one little moment or two the thought crushed me; for it is as you say—I am only a child; a child and ignorant—ignorant of everything that pertains to war, and not fitted for the rough life of camps and the companionship of soldiers. But those weak moments passed; they will not come again. I am enlisted, I will not turn back, God helping me, till the English grip is loosed from the throat of France. My

Voices have never told me lies, they have not lied to-day. They say I am to go to Robert de Baudricourt, governor of Vaucouleurs, and he will give me men-at-arms for escort and send me to the King. A year from now a blow will be struck which will be the beginning of the end, and the end will follow swiftly."

"Where will it be struck?"

"My Voices have not said; nor what will happen this present year, before it is struck. It is appointed me to strike it, that is all I know; and follow it with others, sharp and swift, undoing in ten weeks England's long years of costly labor, and setting the crown upon the Dauphin's head—for such is God's will; my Voices have said it, and shall I doubt it? No; it will be as they have said, for they say only that which is true."

These were tremendous sayings. They were impossibilities to my reason, but to my heart they rang true; and so, while my reason doubted, my heart believed—believed, and held fast to the belief from that day. Presently I said:

"Joan, I believe the things which you have said, and now I am glad that I am to march with you to the great wars—that is, if it is with you I am to march when I go."

She looked surprised, and said:

"It is true that you will be with me when I go to the wars, but how did you know?"

"I shall march with you, and so also will Jean and

Pierre, but not Jacques."

"All true—it is so ordered, as was revealed to me lately, but I did not know until to-day that the marching would be with me, or that I should march at all. How did you know these things?"

I told her when it was that she had said them. But she did not remember about it. So then I knew that she had been asleep, or in a trance or an ecstasy of some kind, at that time. She bade me keep these and the other revelations to myself for the present, and I said I would, and kept the faith I promised.

None who met Joan that day failed to notice the change that had come over her. She moved and spoke with energy and decision; there was a strange new fire in her eye, and also a something wholly new and remarkable in her carriage and in the set of her head. This new light in the eye and this new bearing were born of the authority and leadership which had this day been vested in her by the decree of God, and they asserted that authority as plainly as speech could have done it, yet without ostentation or bravado. This calm consciousness of command, and calm unconscious outward expression of it, remained with her thenceforth until her mission was accomplished.

Like the other villagers, she had always accorded me the deference due my rank; but now, without word said on either side, she and I changed places; she gave orders, not suggestions. I received them with the

deference due a superior, and obeyed them without comment. In the evening she said to me:

"I leave before dawn. No one will know it but you. I go to speak with the governor of Vaucouleurs as commanded, who will despise me and treat me rudely, and perhaps refuse my prayer at this time. I go first to Burey, to persuade my uncle Laxart to go with me, it not being meet that I go alone. I may need you in Vaucouleurs; for if the governor will not receive me I will dictate a letter to him, and so must have some one by me who knows the art of how to write and spell the words. You will go from here to-morrow in the afternoon, and remain in Vaucouleurs until I need you."

I said I would obey, and she went her way. You see how clear a head she had, and what a just and level judgment. She did not order me to go with her; no, she would not subject her good name to gossiping remark. She knew that the governor, being a noble, would grant me, another noble, audience; but no, you see, she would not have that, either. A poor peasant-girl presenting a petition through a young nobleman—how would that look? She always protected her modesty from hurt; and so, for reward, she carried her good name unsmirched to the end. I knew what I must do now, if I would have her approval: go to Vaucouleurs, keep out of her sight, and be ready when wanted.

I went the next afternoon, and took an obscure lodging; the next day I called at the castle and paid my

respects to the governor, who invited me to dine with him at noon of the following day. He was an ideal soldier of the time; tall, brawny, gray-headed, rough, full of strange oaths acquired here and there and yonder in the wars and treasured as if they were decorations. He had been used to the camp all his life, and to his notion war was God's best gift to man. He had his steel cuirass on, and wore boots that came above his knees, and was equipped with a huge sword; and when I looked at this martial figure, and heard the marvelous oaths, and guessed how little of poetry and sentiment might be looked for in this quarter, I hoped the little peasant-girl would not get the privilege of confronting this battery, but would have to content herself with the dictated letter.

I came again to the castle the next day at noon, and was conducted to the great dining-hall and seated by the side of the governor at a small table which was raised a couple of steps higher than the general table. At the small table sat several other guests besides myself, and at the general table sat the chief officers of the garrison. At the entrance door stood a guard of halberdiers, in morion and breastplate.

As for talk, there was but one topic, of course—the desperate situation of France. There was a rumor, some one said, that Salisbury was making preparations to march against Orleans. It raised a turmoil of excited conversation, and opinions fell thick

and fast. Some believed he would march at once, others that he could not accomplish the investment before fall, others that the siege would be long, and bravely contested; but upon one thing all voices agreed: that Orleans must eventually fall, and with it France. With that, the prolonged discussion ended, and there was silence. Every man seemed to sink himself in his own thoughts, and to forget where he was. This sudden and profound stillness, where before had been so much animation, was impressive and solemn. Now came a servant and whispered something to the governor, who said:

"Would talk with me?"

"Yes, your Excellency."

"H'm! A strange idea, certainly. Bring them in."

It was Joan and her uncle Laxart. At the spectacle of the great people the courage oozed out of the poor old peasant and he stopped midway and would come no further, but remained there with his red nightcap crushed in his hands and bowing humbly here, there, and everywhere, stupefied with embarrassment and fear. But Joan came steadily forward, erect and self-possessed, and stood before the governor. She recognized me, but in no way indicated it. There was a buzz of admiration, even the governor contributing to it, for I heard him mutter, "By God's grace, it is a beautiful creature!" He inspected her critically a moment or two, then said:

"Well, what is your errand, my child?"

"My message is to you, Robert de Baudricourt, governor of Vaucouleurs, and it is this: that you will send and tell the Dauphin to wait and not give battle to his enemies, for God will presently send him help."

This strange speech amazed the company, and many murmured, "The poor young thing is demented." The governor scowled, and said:

"What nonsense is this? The King—or the Dauphin, as you call him—needs no message of that sort. He will wait, give yourself no uneasiness as to that. What further do you desire to say to me?"

"This. To beg that you will give me an escort of men-at-arms and send me to the Dauphin."

"What for?"

"That he may make me his general, for it is appointed that I shall drive the English out of France, and set the crown upon his head."

"What—you? Why, you are but a child!"

"Yet am I appointed to do it, nevertheless."

"Indeed! And when will all this happen?"

"Next year he will be crowned, and after that will remain master of France."

There was a great and general burst of laughter, and when it had subsided the governor said:

"Who has sent you with these extravagant messages?"

"My Lord."

"What Lord?"

"The King of Heaven."

Many murmured, "Ah, poor thing, poor thing!" and others, "Ah, her mind is but a wreck!" The governor hailed Laxart, and said:

"Harkye!—take this mad child home and whip her soundly. That is the best cure for her ailment."

As Joan was moving away she turned and said, with simplicity:

"You refuse me the soldiers, I know not why, for it is my Lord that has commanded you. Yes, it is He that has made the command; therefore I must come again, and yet again; then I shall have the men-at-arms."

There was a great deal of wondering talk, after she was gone; and the guards and servants passed the talk to the town, the town passed it to the country; Domremy was already buzzing with it when we got back.

Chapter 8

Why the Scorners Relented

HUMAN NATURE is the same everywhere: it defies success, it has nothing but scorn for defeat. The village considered that Joan had disgraced it with her grotesque performance and its ridiculous failure; so all the tongues were busy with the matter, and as bilious

and bitter as they were busy; insomuch that if the tongues had been teeth she would not have survived her persecutions. Those persons who did not scold did what was worse and harder to bear; for they ridiculed her, and mocked at her, and ceased neither day nor night from their witticisms and jeerings and laughter. Haumette and Little Mengette and I stood by her, but the storm was too strong for her other friends, and they avoided her, being ashamed to be seen with her because she was so unpopular, and because of the sting of the taunts that assailed them on her account. She shed tears in secret, but none in public. In public she carried herself with serenity, and showed no distress, nor any resentment—conduct which should have softened the feeling against her, but it did not. Her father was so incensed that he could not talk in measured terms about her wild project of going to the wars like a man. He had dreamed of her doing such a thing, some time before, and now he remembered that dream with apprehension and anger, and said that rather than see her unsex herself and go away with the armies, he would require her brothers to drown her; and that if they should refuse, he would do it with his own hands.

But none of these things shook her purpose in the least. Her parents kept a strict watch upon her to keep her from leaving the village, but she said her time was not yet; that when the time to go was come she should know it, and then the keepers would watch in vain.

The summer wasted along; and when it was seen that her purpose continued steadfast, the parents were glad of a chance which finally offered itself for bringing her projects to an end through marriage. The Paladin had the effrontery to pretend that she had engaged herself to him several years before, and now he claimed a ratification of the engagement.

She said his statement was not true, and refused to marry him. She was cited to appear before the ecclesiastical court at Toul to answer for her perversity; when she declined to have counsel, and elected to conduct her case herself, her parents and all her ill-wishers rejoiced, and looked upon her as already defeated. And that was natural enough; for who would expect that an ignorant peasant-girl of sixteen would be otherwise than frightened and tongue-tied when standing for the first time in presence of the practised doctors of the law, and surrounded by the cold solemnities of a court? Yet all these people were mistaken. They flocked to Toul to see and enjoy this fright and embarrassment and defeat, and they had their trouble for their pains. She was modest, tranquil, and quite at her ease. She called no witnesses, saying she would content herself with examining the witnesses for the prosecution. When they had testified, she rose and reviewed their testimony in a few words, pronounced it vague, confused, and of no force, then she placed the Paladin again on the stand and began to search him. His

previous testimony went rag by rag to ruin under her ingenious hands, until at last he stood bare, so to speak, he that had come so richly clothed in fraud and falsehood. His counsel began an argument, but the court declined to hear it, and threw out the case, adding a few words of grave compliment for Joan, and referring to her as "this marvelous child."

After this victory, with this high praise from so imposing a source added, the fickle village turned again, and gave Joan countenance, compliment, and peace. Her mother took her back to her heart, and even her father relented and said he was proud of her. But the time hung heavy on her hands, nevertheless, for the siege of Orleans was begun, the clouds lowered darker and darker over France, and still her Voices said wait, and gave her no direct commands. The winter set in, and wore tediously along; but at last there was a change.

BOOK II IN COURT AND CAMP

Chapter 1 Joan Says Good-By

THE 5th of January, 1429, Joan came to me with her uncle Laxart, and said:

"The time is come. My Voices are not vague now, but clear, and they have told me what to do. In two months I shall be with the Dauphin."

Her spirits



were high, and her bearing martial. I caught the infection and felt a great impulse stirring in me that was like what one feels when he hears the roll of the drums and the tramp of marching men.

"I believe it," I said.

"I also believe it," said Laxart. "If she had told me before, that she was commanded of God to rescue France, I should not have believed; I should have let her seek the governor by her own ways and held myself clear of meddling in the matter, not doubting she was mad. But I have seen her stand before those nobles and mighty men unafraid, and say her say; and she had not been able to do that but by the help of God. That I know. Therefore with all humbleness I am at her command, to do with me as she will."

"My uncle is very good to me," Joan said. "I sent and asked him to come and persuade my mother to let him take me home with him to tend his wife, who is not well. It is arranged, and we go at dawn to-morrow. From his house I shall go soon to Vaucouleurs, and wait and strive until my prayer is granted. Who were the two cavaliers who sat to your left at the governor's table that day?"

"One was the Sieur Jean de Novelonpont de Metz, the other the Sieur Bertrand de Poulengy."

"Good metal—good metal, both. I marked them for men of mine.... What is it I see in your face? Doubt?"

I was teaching myself to speak the truth to her, not trimming it or polishing it; so I said:

"They considered you out of your head, and said so. It is true they pitied you for being in such misfortune, but still they held you to be mad."

This did not seem to trouble her in any way or wound her. She only said:

"The wise change their minds when they perceive that they have been in error. These will. They will march with me. I shall see them presently.. .. You seem to doubt again? Do you doubt?"

"N-no. Not now. I was remembering that it was a year ago, and that they did not belong here, but only chanced to stop a day on their journey."

"They will come again. But as to matters now in hand; I came to leave with you some instructions. You will follow me in a few days. Order your affairs, for you will be absent long."

"Will Jean and Pierre go with me?"

"No; they would refuse now, but presently they will come, and with them they will bring my parents' blessing, and likewise their consent that I take up my mission. I shall be stronger, then—stronger for that; for lack of it I am weak now." She paused a little while, and the tears gathered in her eyes; then she went on: "I would say good-by to Little Mengette. Bring her outside the village at dawn; she must go with me a little of the way—"

"And Haumette?"

She broke down and began to cry, saying:

"No, oh, no—she is too dear to me, I could not bear it, knowing I should never look upon her face again."

Next morning I brought Mengette, and we four walked along the road in the cold dawn till the village was far behind; then the two girls said their good-bys, clinging about each other's neck, and pouring out their grief in loving words and tears, a pitiful sight to see. And Joan took one long look back upon the distant village, and the Fairy Tree, and the oak forest, and the flowery plain, and the river, as if she was trying to print these scenes on her memory so that they would abide there always and not fade, for she knew she would not see them any more in this life; then she turned, and went from us, sobbing bitterly. It was her birthday and mine. She was seventeen years old.

Chapter 2

The Governor Speeds Joan

After a few days, Laxart took Joan to Vaucouleurs, and found lodging and guardianship for her with Catherine Royer, a wheelwright's wife, an honest and good woman. Joan went to mass regularly, she helped do the housework, earning her keep in that way, and if any wished to talk with her about her

mission—and many did—she talked freely, making no concealments regarding the matter now. I was soon housed near by, and witnessed the effects which followed. At once the tidings spread that a young girl was come who was appointed of God to save France. The common people flocked in crowds to look at her and speak with her, and her fair young loveliness won the half of their belief, and her deep earnestness and transparent sincerity won the other half. The well-to-do remained away and scoffed, but that is their way.

Next, a prophecy of Merlin's, more than eight hundred years old, was called to mind, which said that in a far future time France would be lost by a woman and restored by a woman. France was now, for the first time, lost—and by a woman, Isabel of Bavaria, her base Queen; doubtless this fair and pure young girl was commissioned of Heaven to complete the prophecy.

This gave the growing interest a new and powerful impulse; the excitement rose higher and higher, and hope and faith along with it; and so from Vaucouleurs wave after wave of this inspiring enthusiasm flowed out over the land, far and wide, invading all the villages and refreshing and revivifying the perishing children of France; and from these villages came people who wanted to see for themselves, hear for themselves; and they did see and hear, and believe. They filled the town; they more than filled it; inns and lodgings were packed, and yet half of the

inflow had to go without shelter. And still they came, winter as it was, for when a man's soul is starving, what does he care for meat and roof so he can but get that nobler hunger fed? Day after day, and still day after day the great tide rose. Domremy was dazed, amazed, stupefied, and said to itself, "Was this world-wonder in our familiar midst all these years and we too dull to see it?" Jean and Pierre went out from the village, stared at and envied like the great and fortunate of the earth, and their progress to Vaucouleurs was like a triumph, all the country-side flocking to see and salute the brothers of one with whom angels had spoken face to face, and into whose hands by command of God they had delivered the destinies of France.

The brothers brought the parents' blessing and godspeed to Joan, and their promise to bring it to her in person later; and so, with this culminating happiness in her heart and the high hope it inspired, she went and confronted the governor again. But he was no more tractable than he had been before. He refused to send her to the King. She was disappointed, but in no degree discouraged. She said:

"I must still come to you until I get the men-at-arms; for so it is commanded, and I may not disobey. I must go to the Dauphin, though I go on my knees."

I and the two brothers were with Joan daily, to see the people that came and hear what they said; and

one day, sure enough, the Sieur Jean de Metz came. He talked with her in a petting and playful way, as one talks with children, and said:

"What are you doing here, my little maid? Will they drive the King out of France, and shall we all turn English?"

She answered him in her tranquil, serious way:

"I am come to bid Robert de Baudricourt take or send me to the King, but he does not heed my words."

"Ah, you have an admirable persistence, truly; a whole year has not turned you from your wish. I saw you when you came before."

Joan said, as tranquilly as before:

"It is not a wish, it is a purpose. He will grant it. I can wait."

"Ah, perhaps it will not be wise to make too sure of that, my child. These governors are stubborn people to deal with. In case he shall not grant your prayer—"

"He will grant it. He must. It is not a matter of choice."

The gentleman's playful mood began to disappear—one could see that, by his face. Joan's earnestness was affecting him. It always happened that people who began in jest with her ended by being in earnest. They soon began to perceive depths in her that they had not suspected; and then her manifest sincerity and the rocklike steadfastness of her convictions were forces which cowed levity, and it could not maintain its

self-respect in their presence. The Sieur de Metz was thoughtful for a moment or two, then he began, quite soberly:

"Is it necessary that you go to the King soon?—that is, I mean—"

"Before Mid-Lent, even though I wear away my legs to the knees!"

She said it with that sort of repressed fieriness that means so much when a person's heart is in a thing. You could see the response in that nobleman's face; you could see his eye light up; there was sympathy there. He said, most earnestly:

"God knows I think you should have the men-at-arms, and that somewhat would come of it. What is it that you would do? What is your hope and purpose?"

"To rescue France. And it is appointed that I shall do it. For no one else in the world, neither kings, nor dukes, no any other, can recover the kingdom of France, and there is no help but in me."

The words had a pleading and pathetic sound, and they touched that good nobleman. I saw it plainly. Joan dropped her voice a little, and said: "But indeed I would rather spin with my poor mother, for this is not my calling; but I must go and do it, for it is my Lord's will."

"Who is your Lord?"

"He is God."

Then the Sieur de Metz, following the impressive old feudal fashion, knelt and laid his hands within Joan's in sign of fealty, and made oath that by God's help he himself would take her to the king.

The next day came the Sieur Bertrand de Poulengy, and he also pledged his oath and knightly honor to abide with her and follow her witherosever she might lead.

This day, too, toward evening, a great rumor went flying abroad through the town—namely, that the very governor himself was going to visit the young girl in her humble lodgings. So in the morning the streets and lanes were packed with people waiting to see if this strange thing would indeed happen. And happen it did. The governor rode in state, attended by his guards, and the news of it went everywhere, and made a great sensation, and modified the scoffings of the people of quality and raised Joan's credit higher than ever.

The governor had made up his mind to one thing: Joan was either a witch or a saint, and he meant to find out which it was. So he brought a priest with him to exorcise the devil that was in her in case there was one there. The priest performed his office, but found no devil. He merely hurt Joan's feelings and offended her piety without need, for he had already confessed her before this, and should have known, if he knew anything, that devils cannot abide the confessional, but utter cries of anguish and the most profane and furious

cursings whenever they are confronted with that holy office.

The governor went away troubled and full of thought, and not knowing what to do. And while he pondered and studied, several days went by and the 14th of February was come. Then Joan went to the castle and said:

"In God's name, Robert de Baudricourt, you are too slow about sending me, and have caused damage thereby, for this day the Dauphin's cause has lost a battle near Orleans, and will suffer yet greater injury if you do not send me to him soon."

The governor was perplexed by this speech, and said:

"To-day, child, to-day? How can you know what has happened in that region to-day? It would take eight or ten days for the word to come."

"My Voices have brought the word to me, and it is true. A battle was lost to-day, and you are in fault to delay me so."

The governor walked the floor awhile, talking within himself, but letting a great oath fall outside now and then; and finally he said:

"Harkye! go in peace, and wait. If it shall turn out as you say, I will give you the letter and send you to the King, and not otherwise."

Joan said with fervor:

"Now God be thanked, these waiting days are

almost done. In nine days you will fetch me the letter."

Already the people of Vaucouleurs had given her a horse and had armed and equipped her as a soldier. She got no chance to try the horse and see if she could ride it, for her great first duty was to abide at her post and lift up the hopes and spirits of all who would come to talk with her, and prepare them to help in the rescue and regeneration of the kingdom. This occupied every waking moment she had. But it was no matter. There was nothing she could not learn—and in the briefest time, too. Her horse would find this out in the first hour. Meantime the brothers and I took the horse in turn and began to learn to ride. And we had teaching in the use of the sword and other arms also.

On the 20th Joan called her small army together—the two knights and her two brothers and me—for a private council of war. No, it was not a council, that is not the right name, for she did not consult with us, she merely gave us orders. She mapped out the course she would travel toward the King, and did it like a person perfectly versed in geography; and this itinerary of daily marches was so arranged as to avoid here and there peculiarly dangerous regions by flank movements—which showed that she knew her political geography as intimately as she knew her physical geography; yet she had never had a day's schooling, of course, and was without education. I was astonished, but thought her Voices must have taught

her. But upon reflection I saw that this was not so. By her references to what this and that and the other person had told her, I perceived that she had been diligently questioning those crowds of visiting strangers, and that out of them she had patiently dug all this mass of invaluable knowledge. The two knights were filled with wonder at her good sense and sagacity.

She commanded us to make preparations to travel by night and sleep by day in concealment, as almost the whole of our long journey would be through the enemy's country.

Also, she commanded that we should keep the date of our departure a secret, since she meant to get away unobserved. Otherwise we should be sent off with a grand demonstration which would advertise us to the enemy, and we should be ambushed and captured somewhere. Finally she said:

"Nothing remains, now, but that I confide to you the date of our departure, so that you may make all needful preparation in time, leaving nothing to be done in haste and badly at the last moment. We march the 23d, at eleven of the clock at night."

Then we were dismissed. The two knights were startled—yes, and troubled; and the *Sieur Bertrand* said:

"Even if the governor shall really furnish the letter and the escort, he still may not do it in time to meet the date she has chosen. Then how can she

venture to name that date? It is a great risk—a great risk to select and decide upon the date, in this state of uncertainty."

I said:

"Since she has named the 23d, we may trust her. The Voices have told her, I think. We shall do best to obey."

We did obey. Joan's parents were notified to come before the 23d, but prudence forbade that they be told why this limit was named.

All day, the 23d, she glanced up wistfully whenever new bodies of strangers entered the house, but her parents did not appear. Still she was not discouraged, but hoped on. But when night fell at last, her hopes perished, and the tears came; however, she dashed them away, and said:

"It was to be so, no doubt; no doubt it was so ordered; I must bear it, and will."

De Metz tried to comfort her by saying:

"The governor sends no word; it may be that they will come to-morrow, and—"

He got no further, for she interrupted him, saying:

"To what good end? We start at eleven to-night."

And it was so. At ten the governor came, with his guard and arms, with horses and equipment for me and for the brothers, and gave Joan a letter to the King. Then he took off his sword, and belted it about her waist with his own hands, and said:

"You said true, child. The battle was lost, on the day you said. So I have kept my word. Now go—come of it what may."

Joan gave him thanks, and he went his way.

The lost battle was the famous disaster that is called in history the Battle of the Herrings.

All the lights in the house were at once put out, and a little while after, when the streets had become dark and still, we crept stealthily through them and out at the western gate and rode away under whip and spur.



Chapter 3

The Paladin Groans and Boasts

WE WERE
twenty-five
strong, and well
equipped. We
rode in double
file, Joan and her
brothers in the
center of the
column, with Jean

de Metz at the head of it and the Sieur Bertrand at its extreme rear. In two or three hours we should be in the enemy's country, and then none would venture to desert. By and by we began to hear groans and sobs and execrations from different points along the line, and upon inquiry found that six of our men were peasants who had never ridden a horse before, and were finding it very difficult to stay in their saddles, and moreover were now beginning to suffer considerable bodily torture. They had been seized by the governor at the last moment and pressed into the service to make up the tale, and he had placed a veteran alongside of each with orders to help him stick to the saddle, and kill him if he tried to desert.

These poor devils had kept quiet as long as they could, but their physical miseries were become so sharp by this time that they were obliged to give them vent. But we were within the enemy's country now, so there was no help for them, they must continue the march, though Joan said that if they chose to take the risk they might depart. They preferred to stay with us. We modified our pace now, and moved cautiously, and the new men were warned to keep their sorrows to themselves and not get the command into danger with their curses and lamentations.

Toward dawn we rode deep into a forest, and soon all but the sentries were sound asleep in spite of the cold ground and the frosty air.

I woke at noon out of such a solid and stupefying sleep that at first my wits were all astray, and I did not know where I was nor what had been happening. Then my senses cleared, and I remembered. As I lay there thinking over the strange events of the past month or two the thought came into my mind, greatly surprising me, that one of Joan's prophecies had failed; for where were Noel and the Paladin, who were to join us at the eleventh hour? By this time, you see, I had gotten used to expecting everything Joan said to come true. So, being disturbed and troubled by these thoughts, I opened my eyes. Well, there stood the Paladin leaning against a tree and looking down on me! How often that happens; you think of a person, or speak of a person, and there he stands before you, and you not dreaming he is near. It looks as if his being near is really the thing that makes you think of him, and not just an accident, as people imagine. Well, be that as it may, there was the Paladin, anyway, looking down in my face and waiting for me to wake. I was ever so glad to see him, and jumped up and shook him by the hand, and led him a little way from the camp—he limping like a cripple—and told him to sit down, and said:

"Now, where have you dropped down from? And how did you happen to light in this place? And what do the soldier-clothes mean? Tell me all about it."

He answered:

"I marched with you last night."

"No!" (To myself I said, "The prophecy has not all failed—half of it has come true.") "Yes, I did. I hurried up from Domremy to join, and was within a half a minute of being too late. In fact, I was too late, but I begged so hard that the governor was touched by my brave devotion to my country's cause—those are the words he used—and so he yielded, and allowed me to come."

I thought to myself, this is a lie, he is one of those six the governor recruited by force at the last moment; I know it, for Joan's prophecy said he would join at the eleventh hour, but not by his own desire. Then I said aloud:

"I am glad you came; it is a noble cause, and one should not sit at home in times like these."

"Sit at home! I could no more do it than the thunderstone could stay hid in the clouds when the storm calls it."

"That is the right talk. It sounds like you."

That pleased him.

"I'm glad you know me. Some don't. But they will, presently. They will know me well enough before I get done with this war."

"That is what I think. I believe that wherever danger confronts you you will make yourself conspicuous."

He was charmed with this speech, and it swelled him up like a bladder. He said:

"If I know myself—and I think I do—my performances in this campaign will give you occasion more than once to remember those words."

"I were a fool to doubt it. That I know."

"I shall not be at my best, being but a common soldier; still, the country will hear of me. If I were where I belong; if I were in the place of La Hire, or Saintrilles, or the Bastard of Orleans—well, I say nothing. I am not of the talking kind, like Noel Rainuesson and his sort, I thank God. But it will be something, I take it—a novelty in this world, I should say—to raise the fame of a private soldier above theirs, and extinguish the glory of their names with its shadow."

"Why, look here, my friend," I said, "do you know that you have hit out a most remarkable idea there? Do you realize the gigantic proportions of it? For look you; to be a general of vast renown, what is that? Nothing—history is clogged and confused with them; one cannot keep their names in his memory, there are so many. But a common soldier of supreme renown—why, he would stand alone! He would be the one moon in a firmament of mustard-seed stars; his name would outlast the human race! My friend, who gave you that idea?"

He was ready to burst with happiness, but he suppressed betrayal of it as well as he could. He simply waved the compliment aside with his hand and said,

with complacency:

"It is nothing. I have them often—ideas like that—and even greater ones. I do not consider this one much."

"You astonish me; you do, indeed. So it is really your own?"

"Quite. And there is plenty more where it came from"—tapping his head with his finger, and taking occasion at the same time to cant his morion over his right ear, which gave him a very self-satisfied air—"I do not need to borrow my ideas, like Noel Rainguesson."

"Speaking of Noel, when did you see him last?"

"Half an hour ago. He is sleeping yonder like a corpse. Rode with us last night."

I felt a great upleap in my heart, and said to myself, now I am at rest and glad; I will never doubt her prophecies again. Then I said aloud:

"It gives me joy. It makes me proud of our village. There is not keeping our lion-hearts at home in these great times, I see that."

"Lion-heart! Who—that baby? Why, he begged like a dog to be let off. Cried, and said he wanted to go to his mother. Him a lion-heart!—that tumble-bug!"

"Dear me, why I supposed he volunteered, of course. Didn't he?"

"Oh, yes, he volunteered the way people do to the headsman. Why, when he found I was coming up from

Domremy to volunteer, he asked me to let him come along in my protection, and see the crowds and the excitement. Well, we arrived and saw the torches filing out at the Castle, and ran there, and the governor had him seized, along with four more, and he begged to be let off, and I begged for his place, and at last the governor allowed me to join, but wouldn't let Noel off, because he was disgusted with him, he was such a cry-baby. Yes, and much good he'll do the King's service; he'll eat for six and run for sixteen. I hate a pygmy with half a heart and nine stomachs!"

"Why, this is very surprising news to me, and I am sorry and disappointed to hear it. I thought he was a very manly fellow."

The Paladin gave me an outraged look, and said:

"I don't see how you can talk like that, I'm sure I don't. I don't see how you could have got such a notion. I don't dislike him, and I'm not saying these things out of prejudice, for I don't allow myself to have prejudices against people. I like him, and have always comraded with him from the cradle, but he must allow me to speak my mind about his faults, and I am willing he shall speak his about mine, if I have any. And, true enough, maybe I have; but I reckon they'll bear inspection—I have that idea, anyway. A manly fellow! You should have heard him whine and wail and swear, last night, because the saddle hurt him. Why didn't the saddle hurt me? Pooh—I was as much at home in it as

if I had been born there. And yet it was the first time I was ever on a horse. All those old soldiers admired my riding; they said they had never seen anything like it. But him—why, they had to hold him on, all the time."

An odor as of breakfast came stealing through the wood; the Paladin unconsciously inflated his nostrils in lustful response, and got up and limped painfully away, saying he must go and look to his horse.

At bottom he was all right and a good-hearted giant, without any harm in him, for it is no harm to bark, if one stops there and does not bite, and it is no harm to be an ass, if one is content to bray and not kick. If this vast structure of brawn and muscle and vanity and foolishness seemed to have a libelous tongue, what of it? There was no malice behind it; and besides, the defect was not of his own creation; it was the work of Noel Rainguesson, who had nurtured it, fostered it, built it up and perfected it, for the entertainment he got out of it. His careless light heart had to have somebody to nag and chaff and make fun of, the Paladin had only needed development in order to meet its requirements, consequently the development was taken in hand and diligently attended to and looked after, gnat-and-bull fashion, for years, to the neglect and damage of far more important concerns. The result was an unqualified success. Noel prized the society of the Paladin above everybody else's; the Paladin preferred anybody's to Noel's. The big fellow was often seen with the little

fellow, but it was for the same reason that the bull is often seen with the gnat.

With the first opportunity, I had a talk with Noel. I welcomed him to our expedition, and said:

"It was fine and brave of you to volunteer, Noel."

His eye twinkled, and he answered:

"Yes, it was rather fine, I think. Still, the credit doesn't all belong to me; I had help."

"Who helped you?"

"The governor."

"How?"

"Well, I'll tell you the whole thing. I came up from Domremy to see the crowds and the general show, for I hadn't ever had any experience of such things, of course, and this was a great opportunity; but I hadn't any mind to volunteer. I overtook the Paladin on the road and let him have my company the rest of the way, although he did not want it and said so; and while we were gawking and blinking in the glare of the governor's torches they seized us and four more and added us to the escort, and that is really how I came to volunteer. But, after all, I wasn't sorry, remembering how dull life would have been in the village without the Paladin."

"How did he feel about it? Was he satisfied?"

"I think he was glad."

"Why?"

"Because he said he wasn't. He was taken by

surprise, you see, and it is not likely that he could tell the truth without preparation. Not that he would have prepared, if he had had the chance, for I do not think he would. I am not charging him with that. In the same space of time that he could prepare to speak the truth, he could also prepare to lie; besides, his judgment would be cool then, and would warn him against fooling with new methods in an emergency. No, I am sure he was glad, because he said he wasn't."

"Do you think he was very glad?"

"Yes, I know he was. He begged like a slave, and bawled for his mother. He said his health was delicate, and he didn't know how to ride a horse, and he knew he couldn't outlive the first march. But really he wasn't looking as delicate as he was feeling. There was a cask of wine there, a proper lift for four men. The governor's temper got afire, and he delivered an oath at him that knocked up the dust where it struck the ground, and told him to shoulder that cask or he would carve him to cutlets and send him home in a basket. The Paladin did it, and that secured his promotion to a privacy in the escort without any further debate."

"Yes, you seem to make it quite plain that he was glad to join—that is, if your premises are right that you start from. How did he stand the march last night?"

"About as I did. If he made the more noise, it was the privilege of his bulk. We stayed in our saddles because we had help. We are equally lame to-day, and

if he likes to sit down, let him; I prefer to stand."

Chapter 4

Joan Leads Us Through the Enemy

WE WERE called to quarters and subjected to a searching inspection by Joan. Then she made a short little talk in which she said that even the rude business of war could be conducted better without profanity and other brutalities of speech than with them, and that she should strictly require us to remember and apply this admonition. She ordered half an hour's horsemanship drill for the novices then, and appointed one of the veterans to conduct it. It was a ridiculous exhibition, but we learned something, and Joan was satisfied and complimented us. She did not take any instruction herself or go through the evolutions and manoeuvres, but merely sat her horse like a martial little statue and looked on. That was sufficient for her, you see. She would not miss or forget a detail of the lesson, she would take it all in with her eye and her mind, and apply it afterward with as much certainty and confidence as if she had already practised it.

We now made three night marches of twelve or thirteen leagues each, riding in peace and undisturbed, being taken for a roving band of Free Companions. Country-folk were glad to have that sort of people go by without stopping. Still, they were very wearying

marches, and not comfortable, for the bridges were few and the streams many, and as we had to ford them we found the water dismally cold, and afterward had to bed ourselves, still wet, on the frosty or snowy ground, and get warm as we might and sleep if we could, for it would not have been prudent to build fires. Our energies languished under these hardships and deadly fatigues, but Joan's did not. Her step kept its spring and firmness and her eye its fire. We could only wonder at this, we could not explain it.

But if we had had hard times before, I know not what to call the five nights that now followed, for the marches were as fatiguing, the baths as cold, and we were ambuscaded seven times in addition, and lost two novices and three veterans in the resulting fights. The news had leaked out and gone abroad that the inspired Virgin of Vaucouleurs was making for the King with an escort, and all the roads were being watched now.

These five nights disheartened the command a good deal. This was aggravated by a discovery which Noel made, and which he promptly made known at headquarters. Some of the men had been trying to understand why Joan continued to be alert, vigorous, and confident while the strongest men in the company were fagged with the heavy marches and exposure and were become morose and irritable. There, it shows you how men can have eyes and yet not see. All their lives those men had seen their own women-folks hitched up

with a cow and dragging the plow in the fields while the men did the driving. They had also seen other evidences that women have far more endurance and patience and fortitude than men—but what good had their seeing these things been to them? None. It had taught them nothing. They were still surprised to see a girl of seventeen bear the fatigues of war better than trained veterans of the army. Moreover, they did not reflect that a great soul, with a great purpose, can make a weak body strong and keep it so; and here was the greatest soul in the universe; but how could they know that, those dumb creatures? No, they knew nothing, and their reasonings were of a piece with their ignorance. They argued and discussed among themselves, with Noel listening, and arrived at the decision that Joan was a witch, and had her strange pluck and strength from Satan; so they made a plan to watch for a safe opportunity to take her life.

To have secret plottings of this sort going on in our midst was a very serious business, of course, and the knights asked Joan's permission to hang the plotters, but she refused without hesitancy. She said:

"Neither these men nor any others can take my life before my mission is accomplished, therefore why should I have their blood upon my hands? I will inform them of this, and also admonish them. Call them before me."

When they came she made that statement to them

in a plain matter-of-fact way, and just as if the thought never entered her mind that any one could doubt it after she had given her word that it was true. The men were evidently amazed and impressed to hear her say such a thing in such a sure and confident way, for prophecies boldly uttered never fall barren on superstitious ears. Yes, this speech certainly impressed them, but her closing remark impressed them still more. It was for the ringleader, and Joan said it sorrowfully:

"It is a pity that you should plot another's death when your own is so close at hand."

That man's horse stumbled and fell on him in the first ford which we crossed that night, and he was drowned before we could help him. We had no more conspiracies.

This night was harassed with ambuscades, but we got through without having any men killed. One more night would carry us over the hostile frontier if we had good luck, and we saw the night close down with a good deal of solicitude. Always before, we had been more or less reluctant to start out into the gloom and the silence to be frozen in the fords and persecuted by the enemy, but this time we were impatient to get under way and have it over, although there was promise of more and harder fighting than any of the previous nights had furnished. Moreover, in front of us about three leagues there was a deep stream with a frail wooden bridge over it, and as a cold rain mixed with

snow had been falling steadily all day we were anxious to find out whether we were in a trap or not. If the swollen stream had washed away the bridge, we might properly consider ourselves trapped and cut off from escape.

As soon as it was dark we filed out from the depth of the forest where we had been hidden and began the march. From the time that we had begun to encounter ambushes Joan had ridden at the head of the column, and she took this post now. By the time we had gone a league the rain and snow had turned to sleet, and under the impulse of the storm-wind it lashed my face like whips, and I envied Joan and the knights, who could close their visors and shut up their heads in their helmets as in a box. Now, out of the pitchy darkness and close at hand, came the sharp command:

"Halt!"

We obeyed. I made out a dim mass in front of us which might be a body of horsemen, but one could not be sure. A man rode up and said to Joan in a tone of reproof:

"Well, you have taken your time, truly. And what have you found out? Is she still behind us, or in front?"

Joan answered in a level voice:

"She is still behind."

This news softened the stranger's tone. He said:

"If you know that to be true, you have not lost your time, Captain. But are you sure? How do you

know?"

"Because I have seen her."

"Seen her! Seen the Virgin herself?"

"Yes, I have been in her camp."

"Is it possible! Captain Raymond, I ask you to pardon me for speaking in that tone just now. You have performed a daring and admirable service. Where was she camped?"

"In the forest, not more than a league from here."

"Good! I was afraid we might be still behind her, but now that we know she is behind us, everything is safe. She is our game. We will hang her. You shall hang her yourself. No one has so well earned the privilege of abolishing this pestilent limb of Satan."

"I do not know how to thank you sufficiently. If we catch her, I—"

"If! I will take care of that; give yourself no uneasiness. All I want is just a look at her, to see what the imp is like that has been able to make all this noise, then you and the halter may have her. How many men has she?"

"I counted but eighteen, but she may have had two or three pickets out."

"Is that all? It won't be a mouthful for my force. Is it true that she is only a girl?"

"Yes; she is not more than seventeen."

"It passes belief! Is she robust, or slender?"

"Slender."