LAURA RICHARDS

JOAN OF ARC

Laura Richards

Joan of Arc

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=23157891
Joan of Arc:

Содержание

CHAPTER I	4
CHAPTER II	18
CHAPTER III	28
CHAPTER IV	39
CHAPTER V	47
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	54

Laura Elizabeth Howe Richards
Joan of Arc

CHAPTER I
FRANCE IMPERISHABLE

THE SOUL OF JEANNE D'ARC

She came not into the Presence as a martyred saint might come,
Crowned, white-robed and adoring, with very reverence dumb —
She stood as a straight young soldier, confident, gallant, strong,
Who asks a boon of his captain in the sudden hush of the drum.

She said: "Now have I stayed too long in this my place of bliss,
With these glad dead that, comforted, forget what sorrow is
Upon that world whose stony stair they climbed to come to

this.

"But lo, a cry hath torn the peace wherein so long I stayed,
Like a trumpet's call at Heaven's wall from a herald unafraid,
—
A million voices in one cry, '*Where is the Maid, the Maid?*'

"I had forgot from too much joy that olden task of mine,
But I have heard a certain word shatter the chant divine,
Have watched a banner glow and grow before mine eyes for sign.

"I would return to that my land flung in the teeth of war,
I would cast down my robe and crown that pleasure me no more,
And don the armor that I knew, the valiant sword I bore.

"And angels militant shall fling the gates of Heaven wide,
And souls new-dead whose lives were shed like leaves on war's red tide
Shall cross their swords above our heads and cheer us as we ride.

"For with me goes that soldier saint, Saint Michael of the sword,
And I shall ride on his right side, a page beside his lord,
And men shall follow like swift blades to reap a sure reward.

"Grant that I answer this my call, yea, though the end may be

The naked shame, the biting flame, the last, long agony;
I would go singing down that road where fagots wait for me.

"Mine be the fire about my feet, the smoke above my head;
So might I glow, a torch to show the path my heroes tread;
My Captain! Oh, my Captain, let me go back!" she said.

– Theodosia Garrison.

In the fourth year of the Great War (1918), the sufferings of France, the immemorial battlefield of nations, were in all our hearts. We heard from time to time that France was "bled white"; that she had been injured past recovery; that she was dying. Students of History know better than this. France does not die. She bleeds; yes! she has bled, and stanched her wounds and gone gloriously on, and bled again, since the days when Gaul and Iberian, Kymrian and Phoenician, Hun and Goth, raged and fought to and fro over the patient fields of the "pleasant land." Ask Caesar and Vercingetorix, Attila and Theodoric, Clovis and Charles the Hammer, if France can die, and hear their shadowy laughter! Wave after wave, sea upon sea, of blood and carnage, sweep over her; she remains imperishable. The sun of her day of glory never sets.

Her darkest day, perhaps, was that against which her brightest flower shines white. In telling, however briefly, the story of Joan the Maid, it is necessary to call back that day, in some ways so like our own; to see what was the soil from which that flower sprang in all its radiant purity.

The Hundred Years' War prepared the soil; ploughed and harrowed, burned and pulverized: that war which began in 1340 with Edward III. of England's assuming the title of King of France and quartering the French arms with those of England; which ended in 1453 with the departure of the English from France, which they had meantime (in some part) ruled and harried. Their departure was due chiefly to the genius of a peasant girl of eighteen years.

France in the fifteenth century: what was it like?

King Charles VI. of France (to go back no further) whose reign Sully, "our own good Maximilian," calls "the grave of good laws and good morals in France," was not yet twelve years old when (in 1380) his father, Charles V., died. His majority had been fixed at fourteen, and for two years he was to remain under the guardianship of his four uncles, the Dukes of Anjou, Berry, Burgundy and Bourbon. With the fourth, his mother's brother, we have no concern, for he made little trouble; the other three were instantly in dispute as to which should rule during the two years.

The struggle was a brief one; Philip of Burgundy, surnamed the Bold, was by far the ablest of the three. When the young king was crowned at Rheims (October 4th, 1380), Philip, without a word to anyone, sat him down at his nephew's side, thus asserting himself premier peer of France, a place which was to be held by him and his house for many a long day.

At seventeen, Charles was married (in the Cathedral of

Amiens, the second jewel of France, where that of Rheims was the first) to Isabel of Bavaria, of infamous memory; and the first shadows began to darken around him.

The war with England was going on in a desultory fashion. Forty years had passed since Créçy. The Dukes of Lancaster and Gloucester, uncles and regents of Richard II., the young English king, were not the men to press matters, and Charles V. of France was wise enough to let well alone. The young king, however, and his Uncle Philip of Burgundy, thought it would be a fine thing to land in England with a powerful army, and return the bitter compliments paid by Edward III. "Across the Channel!" was the cry, and preparations were made on a grand scale. In September, 1386, thirteen hundred and eighty-seven vessels, large and small, were collected for the voyage; and Olivier de Clisson, Constable of France, built a wooden town which was to be transported to England and rebuilt after landing, "in such sort," says Froissart, "that the lords might lodge therein and retire at night, so as to be in safety from sudden awakenings, and sleep in security." Along the Flemish and Dutch coasts, vessels were loaded by torchlight with "hay in casks, biscuits in sacks, onions, peas, beans, barley, oats, candles, gaiters, shoes, boots, spurs, iron, nails, culinary utensils, and all things that can be used for the service of man."[1] The Flemings and Hollanders demanded instant payment and good prices. "If you want us and our service," they said, "pay us

[1] Guizot, "Popular History of France," III, p. 20.

on the nail; otherwise we will be neutral."[2]

The king was all impatience to embark, and hung about his ship all day. "I am very eager to be off!" he would say. "I think I shall be a good sailor, for the sea does me no harm." One would have thought he was sailing round the world, instead of across the British Channel. Unfortunately for the would-be navigator, the Duke of Berry, for whom he was waiting, was not eager to be off: did not want to go at all, in fact; answered Charles's urgent letters with advice "not to take any trouble, but to amuse himself, for the matter would probably terminate otherwise than was imagined."[3] In mid-October, when the autumn storms were due, Uncle Berry appeared, and was met by reproaches. "But for you, uncle," exclaimed Charles, "I should have been in England by this time. If anyone goes," he added, "I will."

But no one went.

"'One day when it was calm,' says the monk of St. Denis, 'the king, completely armed, went with his uncles aboard of the royal vessel; but the wind did not permit them to get more than two miles out to sea, but drove them back to the shore they had just left in spite of the sailors' efforts. The king, who saw with deep displeasure his hopes thus frustrated, had orders given to his troops to go back, and at his departure, left, by the advice of his barons, some men-of-war to unload the fleet, and place it in a place of safety as soon as possible. But the enemy gave them

---

[2] Guizot, "Popular History of France," III, p. 21. [3] Guizot, "Popular History of France," III, p. 21. [4] Belloc, "Paris," p. 248.

no time to execute the order. As soon as the calm allowed the English to set sail, they bore down on the French, burned or took in tow to their own ports the most part of the fleet, carried off the supplies, and found two thousands casks full of wine, which sufficed a long while for the wants of England.'"[3]

Charles decided to let England alone for a while, and turned his thoughts elsewhere. He would visit Paris; he would make a Royal Progress through his dominions, would show himself king indeed, free from avuncular trammels. So said, so done. Paris received him with open arms; the king was good and gentle; people liked to see him passing along the street. He abated certain taxes, restored certain liberties; hopes and gratulations were in the air. He lodged in his palace at St. Paul, that home of luxury and tragedy, with "its great ordered library, its carved reading-desks, its carefully painted books, and the perfumed silence that turns reading into a feast of all the senses,"[4] that palace "made for a time in which arms had passed from a game to a kind of cruel pageantry, and in which the search for beauty had ended in excess, and had made the decoration of life no longer ancillary to the main purpose of living, but an unconnected and insufficient end of itself."[4]

In this palace of his own building, Charles V. had died. Here his son grew up, handsome, amiable, flighty; here he brought his bride in the splendor of her then unsullied youth; here was born the prince for whom the Maid of France was to recover a lost kingdom.

After frolicking awhile with his good people of Paris, Charles started once more on his travels, and for six months wandered happily and expensively through his kingdom.

"When the king stopped anywhere, there were wanted for his own table, and for the maintenance of his following, six oxen, eighty sheep, thirty calves, seven hundred chickens, two hundred pigeons, and many other things besides. The expenses for the king were set down at two hundred and thirty livres a day, without counting the presents which the large towns felt bound to make him."[3]

Wherever he went, he heard tales of the bad government of his uncles; listened, promised amendment; those uncles remaining the while at home in much disquiet of mind. As the event turned out, their anxiety was needless. Charles's tragic fate was even then closing about him, and the power was soon to be in their hands again. In June, 1392, Olivier de Clisson was waylaid after banqueting with the king at St. Paul, stabbed by Peter de Craon, a cousin of the Duke of Brittany, and left for dead. The news coming suddenly to the king threw him into great agitation; the sight of his servant and friend, bathed in blood, added to his discomposure. He vowed revenge and declared instant war on the Duke of Brittany. In vain the other uncles sought to quiet his fury; his only reply was to summon them and his troops to Le Mans, and start with them on the fatal march to Brittany. It was in the great forest of Le Mans that the curse of the Valois,

[3] Guizot, III, p. 22.

long foreshadowed, if men had had eyes to see, came upon the unhappy king. The heat was excessive; he was clad in heavy, clinging velvets and satins. He was twice startled, first by the appearance of a white-clad madman, who, springing out of the woods, grasped his horse by the bridle, crying, "Go no further! Thou art betrayed!" then by a sudden clash of steel, lance on helmet of a page overcome by the heat. At this harsh sound, the king was seen to shudder and crouch for an instant; then, drawing his sword and rising in his stirrups, he set spurs to his horse, crying, "Forward upon these traitors! They would deliver me up to the enemy!" He charged upon his terrified followers, who scattered in all directions. Several were wounded, and more than one actually killed by the king in his frenzy. None dared approach him; he rode furiously hither and thither, shouting and slashing, till when utterly exhausted, his chamberlain, William de Martel, was able to come up behind and throw his arms round the panting body. Charles was disarmed, lifted from his horse, laid on the ground. His brother and uncles hastened to him, but he did not recognize them; his eyes were set, and he spoke no word.

"'We must go back to Le Mans,' said the Dukes of Berry and Burgundy; 'here is an end of the trip to Brittany.'

"On the way they fell in with a wagon drawn by oxen: in this they laid the King of France, having bound him for fear of a renewal of his frenzy, and so took him back, motionless and speechless, to the town."[4]

[4] Guizot, III, p. 27. [7] Guizot, III, p. 28.

Thus began the agony which was to endure for thirty long years. There were lucid intervals, in which the poor king would beg pardon of all he might have injured in his frenzy: would ask to have his hunting-knife taken away, and cry to those about him, "If any of you, by I know not what witchcraft, be guilty of my sufferings, I adjure him in the name of Jesus Christ, to torment me no more, and to put an end to me forthwith without making me linger so."[7]

He did not know his false, beautiful wife, but was in terror of her. "What woman is this?" he would say. "What does she want? Save me from her!"[7]

At first every care was given him; but in 1405, we find the poor soul being "fed like a dog, and allowed to fall ravenously upon his food. For five whole months he had not a change of clothes."[5] Finally someone was roused to shame and remorse at the piteous sight; he was washed, shaved, and decently clothed. It took twelve men to accomplish the task, but directly it was done, the poor soul became quiet, and even recognized some of those about him. Seeing Juvenal des Ursins, the Provost of Paris, he said, "Juvenal, let us not waste our time!" – surely one of the most piteous of recorded utterances.

The gleams of reason were few and feeble. In one of them, the king (in 1402) put the government of the realm into the hands of his brother, Louis, Duke of Orleans: Burgundy took fire at once, and the fight was on, a fight which only our own day can parallel.

---

[5] Guizot, III, p. 29.

We can but glance briefly at some of its principal features. In 1404 Philip the Bold of Burgundy (to whom we might apply Philip de Comines' verdict on Louis XI: "in fine, for a prince, not so bad!") died, and his son John the Fearless ruled in his stead. His reign began auspiciously. He inclined to push the war with England; he went out of his way to visit his cousin of Orleans. The two princes dined together with the Duke of Berry; took the holy communion together, parted with mutual vows of friendship. Paris was edified, and hoped for days of joyful peace. A few nights after, as Orleans was returning from dining with Queen Isabel, about eight in the evening, singing and playing with his glove, he was set upon by a band of armed men, emissaries of Burgundy, and literally hacked to pieces. Now all was confusion. The poor king was told to be angry, and was furious: sentenced Burgundy to all manner of penances, and banished him for twenty years. Unfortunately, Burgundy was at the moment preparing to enter Paris as a conqueror. Learning this, King, Queen, Dauphin and Court fled to Tours, and Burgundy found no one in Paris to conquer. This was awkward; the king's suffering person was still a necessary adjunct toward ruling the kingdom. Burgundy made overtures; begged pardon; prayed "my lord of Orleans and my lords his brothers to banish from their hearts all hatred and vengeance." The king was bidden to forgive my lord of Burgundy, and obeyed. A treaty was made; peace was declared; the king returned, and all Paris went out to meet him, shouting, "*Noël*!"

This was in 1409; that same year, Charles of Orleans, son of the murdered duke, lost his wife, Isabel of France, daughter of the king. A year later he married Bonne d'Armagnac, daughter of Bernard of that name, a Count of Southern France, bold, ambitious, unscrupulous. Count Bernard instantly took command of the Orleanist party, in the name of his son-in-law. He vowed revenge on Burgundy for the murder of Duke Louis, and called upon all good and true men to join his standard; thenceforward the party took his name, and Burgundian and Armagnac arrayed themselves against each other.

Now indeed, the evil time came upon France. She was cut literally in twain by the opposing factions. The hatred between them was not only traditional, but racial. Burgundy gathered under his banner all the northern people, those who spoke the *langue d'oil*; in the south, where the *langue d'oc* was spoken, Gascon and Provençal flocked to the standard of Armagnac. Backward and forward over terrified France raged the ferocious soldiery. Count Bernard was a brutal savage, but he was a great captain. The Albrets and many another proud clan were ready to fight under his banner; the cause did not specially matter, so long as fighting and plunder were to be had. Among them, they formed the first infantry of France. Wherever they marched, terror ran before them. They summoned the peasantry to bind on the white cross of Armagnac; he who refused lost arm, leg, or life itself, on the spot. This method of recruiting proved eminently successful, and the Count soon had a goodly army.

John the Fearless of Burgundy ("who," says a French writer, "might better have been called John the Pitiless, since the only fear he was without was that of God") was hardly less ferocious than his enemy. In one battle he slew some thousands of unarmed citizens: in another he massacred twenty-five thousand Armagnacs at one stroke. One would really think it had been the twentieth century instead of the fifteenth.

Burgundy, cunning as well as ferocious, won over to his side first Queen Isabel, false as she was fair and frail; then the Kings of Sicily and Spain. Still seeking popularity, he besieged Calais, but was driven off by the English; finally he took possession of Paris and the king, and ruled both for a time with success and satisfaction.

Both parties did homage to Henry IV. of England (1399-1413), who took the provinces they offered and kept his own counsel.

By and by there was trouble in Paris; the Butchers, a devout body, who carried axe or cleaver in one hand and rosary in the other, were scandalized by the dissolute habits of Louis the Dauphin and his followers; took it upon themselves to mend matters. They turned axe and cleaver upon the young courtiers; slew, tortured, imprisoned, at their will, with psalms and canticles on their lips. Moreover, encouraged by Burgundy, their friend and patron, they preached daily to the Dauphin, and a Carmelite monk of their following reproved him by the hour together. Bored and enraged, young Louis wrote to the

Armagnacs, begging them to deliver him. They rushed with joyous ferocity to the rescue. The Butchers were dispersed; Burgundy was forced to flee from Paris, leaving the jealously guarded person of the king in the hands of the enemy. The Orleanist princes entered Paris in triumph; everybody, everything, from the Dauphin himself to the images of Virgin and saints, was draped in the white scarf of the Armagnacs.

In 1414 a peace was patched up: it was agreed that neither the white scarf nor Burgundy's cross should be worn. Nothing special was said about the murdering, which seems to have gone on none the less, albeit less openly.

In 1413 Henry (IV.) of Lancaster died, and Henry (V.) of Monmouth reigned in his stead. The day of desultory warfare was over. Unhappy France, bleeding at every pore from the blows of her own children, must now face the might of England, led by one of the world's greatest captains. Torn by factions, weakened by loss of blood, ridden first by one furious free-booter and then another, what chance had she? Trembling, her people asked the question: the answer was Agincourt.

CHAPTER II
THE LION AND THE LILIES

"Fair stood the wind for France." —*Michael Drayton*

I yield to no one in my love and admiration for Henry V. in his nobler aspects, but I am not writing his story now. He came to France, not as the debonair and joyous prince of our affections, but as a conqueror; came, he told the unhappy French, as the instrument of God, to punish them for their sins. The phrase may have sounded less mocking then than it does to-day. France knew all about the sins; she had suffered under them, almost to death; it seemed hard that she must bear the punishment too.

Neither John of Burgundy nor Bernard of Armagnac was at Agincourt. They hovered apart, two great eagles – or vultures, shall we say? – watching, ready to pounce when their moment struck. The battle lost and won, both chiefs made a dash for Paris and the king. Armagnac made the better speed; Burgundy arrived to find his enemy, with six thousand fierce Gascons, already in possession of the city, king and Dauphin both in his hands, and the self-constituted Constable of France, in lieu of Charles d'Albret, slain in the great battle.

Savage though he was, Armagnac was a Frenchman, and

a great captain. For some months he kept not only Burgundy but England at bay, holding the royal city against all comers. He even made a dash on Harfleur (now, 1415, in the hands of the English) which might have been successful but for the cowardice of some of his followers. He promptly hanged the cowards, but the moment was lost. Returning to Paris, he found the Burgundians making headway; banished, hanged, drowned, beheaded, right and left, imposed tremendous taxes, and for a time fancied himself, and seemed almost to be, virtual king of France.

It was only seeming; Burgundy's hour was at hand. Among those banished by Armagnac was Queen Isabel, whom (after drowning one of her lovers in a sack) he had sent off to prison in the castle of Tours. Down swept John the Fearless, carried her off, proclaimed her Regent, and in her name annulled the recent tax edicts. This was a mortal blow to Armagnac. His Gascons held Paris for him, but without money he could not hold them. Furious, he laid hands on whatever he could find; "borrowed" church vessels of gold and silver and melted them down to pay his men. All would not do. Paris now hated as much as it feared him and his Gascons. A little while, and hate, aided by treachery, triumphed over fear. One night the keys of the St. Germain gate were stolen from their keeper – some say by his own son. Eight hundred Burgundians crept in, headed by the Sire de l'Isle-Adam: crept, pounced, first on that Palace where Tragedy and Madness kept watch and watch; then, the king once

in their hands, on the holders of the city. The Dauphin fled to the Bastille. Armagnac and his chief followers were betrayed and imprisoned. The banished Butchers returned, thirsting for blood. The hunt was up.

What followed was a foreshadowing of St. Bartholomew, of the Terror, of the Commune. Paris went mad, mad as her king in the forest of Le Mans. All day long frenzied bands, citizens and Burgundians together, roamed the streets, seizing and slaying; all night the tocsin rang, rousing the maddened people to still wilder delirium. On the night of June 12th, 1418, they broke open the prisons and murdered their inmates without discrimination; Armagnacs, debtors, bishops, State and political prisoners, even some of their own party; a slash across the throat was the kindest death they met. Count Bernard of Armagnac was among the first victims: for days his naked body hung on view in the Palace of Justice, while in the streets the Paris children played with the stripped corpses of his followers. Private grudge or public grievance could be revenged by merely raising the cry of "Armagnac." A sword swept, and the score was wiped out. Between midnight of Saturday the twelfth and Monday the fourteenth of June (1418) sixteen hundred persons were massacred in the prisons and streets of Paris.

So fell the Armagnacs: and in their fall dragged their opponents with them.

Paris streets were full of unburied corpses; Paris gutters ran blood; Paris larders were bare of food. The surviving Armagnacs,

assembled at Melun, kept supplies from entering the city on one side, the English on the other. Hunger and Plague, hand in hand, stalked through the dreadful streets. Soon fifty thousand bodies were lying there, with no sword in their vitals. Men said that those who had hand in the recent massacres died first, with cries of despair on their lips. While the city crouched terror-stricken, certain priests arose, proclaiming the need of still more bloodshed; the sacrifice was not complete, they cried. Two prisons still remained, the Grand Châtelet and the Bastille, crammed with prisoners; among them might be, doubtless were, Armagnacs held for ransom by the greedy Burgundians. To arms, once more!

Frenzied Paris responded, as – alas! – she has so often done. The public executioner, mounted on a great white horse, led the shouting mob first to one, then to the other great State Prison. Before the Bastille, John of Burgundy met them, imploring them to spare the prisoners; humbling himself even to take the hangman's bloody hand: in vain. All were slain, and the Duke had only the poor satisfaction of killing the executioner himself a few days later.

Bernard of Armagnac dead, Charles of Orleans safe, since Agincourt, in an English prison (writing, for his consolation and our delight, the rondels and triolets which will keep his name bright and fresh while Poesy endures), John the Fearless was in very truth virtual king of France. Being so, it behooved him to make some head against Henry of England, who was now

besieging Rouen. This was awkward for John, as he had for some time been Henry's secret ally, but Rouen was in extremity, Paris in danger; even his own faithful followers began to look askance and to demand active measures against perfidious and all-conquering Albion. John temporized by sending four thousand horsemen to Rouen, weakening by just so much his hold on the capital. He dared not declare himself openly on the side of England; dared only make a secret treaty with Henry, recognizing his claim to the French crown.

Before setting out from England to besiege Rouen, Henry had paid friendly visits to his prisoner-kinsmen, the Dukes of Orleans and Bourbon, and succeeded in alarming both thoroughly. "Fair cousin," he said to the latter, "I am returning to the war, and this time I shall spare nothing: yes, this time France must pay the piper!" and again, perhaps to Orleans this time, "Fair cousin, soon I am going to Paris. It is a great pity, for they are a brave people; but, *voyez vous*, they are so terribly divided that they can do nothing."

Ominous words for a young gentleman to hear who was just writing, perhaps, that he would no longer be the servant of Melancholy.

> "Serviteur plus de vous, Merencolie,
> Je ne serez car trop fort y travaille!"

Rondel and triolet were laid aside, and the two princes wrote

urgent letters to their cousin Charles, imploring him to make peace on Henry's own conditions: poor Charles, who did not know his own name or the names of his children, who still whispered, "Who is that woman? Save me from her!"

Meantime Henry sent his own messengers, in the shape of some eight thousand famishing Irishmen, whom he carried across the Channel and —*dumped* seems the fitting word – in Normandy, bidding them forage for themselves. Unarmed, but fearing nothing, and very hungry, the Irish roamed the country mounted on ponies or cows, whichever was "handy by," seeking what they might devour. Monstrelêt describes them; may have seen them with his own eyes. "One foot was shod, the other naked, and they had no breeches. They stole little children from the cradle, and rode off on cows, carrying the said children"; to hold them for ransom, be it said.

My little measure will not hold the siege of Rouen. It was one of the terrible sieges of history, and those who love Henry of Monmouth must read of it with heavy hearts. In January, 1419, when fifty thousand people were dead of famine in and around the city, submission was made. Henry entered the town, with no doubt in his own mind and little in those of others, as to who was actually King of France.

He found the kingdom still rent in twain. The Dauphin Louis was dead, and Charles, his younger brother, had succeeded to the title and to the leadership of the Orleans party. The weak, irresolute, hot-headed boy of sixteen was surrounded by reckless

Gascons who lived by their swords and wits, caring little what they did, so money might be got, yet who were Frenchmen and had red blood in their veins. The peace now openly concluded between Henry and Burgundy roused them to frenzy. English rule was not to their mind. They beset the Dauphin with clamors for revenge to which he lent only too willing an ear. The affair was arranged, and as in the case of the murder of Orleans twelve years before, began with a reconciliation. The Dauphin longed to see his dear cousin of Burgundy; begged that they might meet; suggested the Bridge of Montereau as a fitting place for the interview. With some misgivings, the Duke consented, spite of the warnings of his friends. "Remember Louis of Orleans!" they said. "Remember Bernard of Armagnac! Be sure that those others remember them well!"

John the Fearless answered as became his reputation. It was his duty, he said, to obtain peace, even at the risk of his own life. If they killed him, he would die a martyr: if not, peace being secured, he would take the Dauphin's men and go fight the English. Then they should see which was the better man, Hannotin (Jack) of Flanders or Henry of England.

On the tenth of September (1419), he reached Montereau, and the long crooked bridge spanning the broad Seine. Over the bridge the Orleanists had built a roof, transforming it into a long gallery: in the centre, a lodge of rough planks, a narrow door on either side. This was the place of rendezvous, where the Dauphin awaited his visitor. The Burgundian retainers disliked the look of

it, and besought their master not to set foot on the bridge. Let the Dauphin meet him on dry land, they said, not on a crazy bridge over deep water. The Duke, partly of his own bold will, partly through the wiles of a treacherous woman set on by his enemies, laughed at their entreaties; entered the bridge as gayly as he had entered that Paris street, hardly wider than this footway, where he had looked on at the murder of Louis of Orleans, twelve years before.

"Here is the man I trust!" he said, and clapped the shoulder of Tanneguy Duchâtel, who had come to lead him into the trap. Ten minutes later, and he was lying as Orleans had lain, hacked in pieces, while the Orleanists exulted over his body as he had done over that of their leader.

I do not know that there is much to choose between these two murders, or that we need greatly sorrow for either victim. Probably neither gentleman would be at large, had he lived in our time.

And now Henry of Monmouth was king indeed. A few months, and the Treaty of Troyes was signed, and Henry entered Paris in triumph, riding between King Charles (who whispered and muttered and knew little about the matter) and the new Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, son of the murdered man. To that ill-omened Palace of St. Paul they rode, and there lodged together for a while. Henry's banner bore the device of a fox's brush, "in which," says Monstrelêt, the chronicler, "the wise noted many things." Henry had long been a hunter of the fox;

now he came to hunt the French. Paris, still torn and bleeding from the wounds of opposing factions, welcomed anything that looked like peace with power; justice was not looked for in those days. Yet it was in the name of Justice that the two kings, sitting side by side on the same throne, heard the solemn appeal of Philip of Burgundy and his mother for judgment upon the murderers of John the Fearless. They demanded that the *soi-disant* Dauphin, Duchâtel and the other assassins of the Duke, in garb of penance and torch in hand, should be dragged in tumbrils round the city, in token of their shame and their repentance. The Estates of the Realm, summoned in haste, and the University of Paris, supported the demand; the two kings agreed to it. Nothing was needed save the culprits themselves, but they were not forthcoming. Appear before King and Parliament to receive his just doom? The Dauphin thanked them! If the King of England could play the hunter, Charles of Valois could play the fox; *et voilà tout*! "I appeal," said the Dauphin, "to the sharp end of my sword!" Thereupon he was denounced as a treacherous assassin, to be deprived of all rights to the Crown and of all property. The confiscation extended to his followers, and to all the Armagnac party, living or dead; and the good citizens of Paris, fleeced to the bare skin, helped themselves as best they might from the possessions of the outlawed Prince and his recreant nobles.

The Palace of St. Paul saw in those days the soldier-wooing of Henry V. and his wedding to Catherine of Valois, the daughter of Charles VI.: saw, two years later, the death of Charles

himself, who faded out of life some two months after his great conqueror; later still, in one of its obscure chambers, neglected and despairing, the death of Isabel of Bavaria. After that it saw little of note, for people avoided it; it was an unlucky place, haunted forever by those twin shadows of Madness and Terror. Gradually it crumbled, passed finally into the dimness of forgotten things. To-day no stone of it stands upon another.

CHAPTER III
DOMRÉMY

"Quand j'étais chez mon père, petite Jeanneton …"

"I thought this was a life of Joan of Arc!" some bewildered reader may protest. "I don't want to read a History of France!"

Patience, gentle one! the Maid and her France may not be separated.

Now, however, it is time to go back a little to the year 1412, and make our way to the village of Domrémy on the banks of the Meuse, near the border of Lorraine.

Domrémy is not an important place: it has to-day, as it had four hundred years ago, about forty or fifty houses. It lies pleasantly enough by the river side, amid green meadows; a straggling line of stone cottages, with roofs of thatch or tile; behind it rise low hills, now bare, once covered with forests of oak and beech. Its people are, as they have always been, grave and God-fearing; there is a saying about them that they "seldom die and never lie." They have always been farming people, growing corn, planting vineyards, raising cattle. In old times, as to-day, the cattle fed on the rich pastures of the river valley; the village children tended them by day, and at nightfall drove them back to

the little stone-walled farms.

The houses were "small, of one or two or three rooms, and sometimes there was a low garret overhead. The furniture was simple: a few stools and benches, a table or a pair of trestles with a board to cover them, a few pots and pans of copper, and some pewter dishes. The housewife had in her chest two or three sheets for her feather-bed, two or three kerchiefs, a cloak, a piece of cloth ready to be made into whatever garment was most needed, and a few buttons and pins. Often there was a sword in the corner, or a spear or an arblast, but the peasants were peaceful, seldom waged war, and often were unable even to resist attack."[6]

The people of Domrémy were vassals of the lords of Bourlemont, whose castle still overlooks the Meuse valley. The relationship was a friendly one in the main. The dues were heavy, to be sure. "Twice a year a tax must be paid on each animal drawing a cart; the lord's harvest must be gathered, his hay cut and stored, firewood drawn to his house, fowls and beef and bacon furnished to his table. Those who had no carts must carry his letters."[7]

But this was the common lot of French peasants. In return, the lord of Bourlemont recognized certain responsibilities for them in time of trouble. His own castle was four miles distant, but in the village itself he owned a little fortress called the Castle of the Island, which the villagers guarded for him in time of peace and

---

[6] Lowell. "Joan of Arc," p. 15.

[7] Lowell. "Joan of Arc," p. 18.

where they could take refuge in time of danger. Sometimes even, the Seigneur seems to have had pangs of conscience concerning his villagers, as when, in 1399, the then lord provided in his will that "if the people of Domrémy can show that they have been unjustly compelled to give him two dozen goslings, restitution shall be made."[8]

In one of the stone cottages (standing still, though overmuch restored) lived, early in the fifteenth century, Jacques d'Arc and Isabel his wife. Jacques was a responsible man, liked and respected by his neighbors. As dean of the village, he inspected weights and measures, commanded the watch, collected the taxes. Dame Isabel had enough learning to teach her five children their *Credo*, *Pater* and *Ave*, but probably little more; she spun and wove, and was doubtless a good house-mother. With four of the children we have little concern; our affair is with the fifth, a daughter born (probably) in January, 1412, and named Jeanne or Jehane. All her names are beautiful: "Jeanne la Pucelle," "the Maid of Orleans," "the Maid of France"; most familiar of all to our Anglo-Saxon ears, "Joan of Arc."

Joan was three years old when Agincourt was lost and won. It was a far cry from upper Normandy to the province of Bar where Domrémy lay; the Meuse flowed tranquilly by, but no echoes of the English war reached it at this time. Life went peacefully on; the children, as I have said, drove the cattle to the river meadows, frolicked beside the clear stream, gathering flowers,

[8] Luce. "Jeanne d'Arc à Domrémy," p. 19.

singing the immemorial songs of France; and as evening closed, drove them home again to the farm: or they tended their sheep on the Common, or followed their pigs through the oak forest that stretched behind and above it. In the forest lurked romance and adventure, possible danger. There were wolves there; no doubt about that. There were also, most people thought, fairies, both good and bad. Near the village itself stood the great beech tree known as "the Ladies' Tree," or the "Fairies' Tree," with its fountain close by, the Fountain of the Gooseberry Bushes, where people came to be healed of various diseases. Another great tree was called "*Le Beau Mai*," and was even more mystical. Who knows from what far Druid time came the custom of dancing around its huge trunk and hanging garlands on its gnarled boughs? They were pious garlands now, dedicated to Our Lady of Domrémy; but it was whispered that the fairies still held their revels there. The lord of Bourlemont and his lady sometimes joined the dancing; had not his ancestor loved a fairy when time was, and been loved of her? They never failed to join the rustic festival that was held under the Fairy Tree on the "Sunday in Lent called *Laetere*, or *des Fontaines*." One of Joan's godmothers said she had seen the fairies: Joan never did. She hung garlands, with the other little girls; danced with them hand in hand, singing. One would like to know the songs they sang. Was one of them the quaint ditty whose opening lines head this chapter?

"Quand j'étais chez mon père, petite Jeanneton,

La glin glon glon,
M'envôit a la fontaine pour remplir mon cruchon!"

Or was it the story of that *vigneron* who had a daughter whom he would give to neither poor nor rich, *lon la*, and whom he finally saw carried off by a cavalier of Hungary,

"La prit et l'importa,
Sur son cheval d'Hongrie, lon la!"

A warning to selfish Papas. Or did there come to Domrémy, wandering down the Meuse as the wind wanders, some of those wild, melancholy sea-songs that the Corsairs and the fishermen sang, as they sharpened their cutlasses or drew their nets in harbor?

"Il était trois mâtelots de Grois,
Embarqués sur le Saint Francois,
Tra la derida la la la!"

Olivier Basselin, of Val-de-Vire, died when Joan was six years old, but his songs are alive to-day: gay little songs, called from the place of their origin "*Vaux-de-Vire*," whence the modern word *vaudeville*. Perhaps Joan and her playmates sang his songs; I do not know.

In later, sadder years, Joan's enemies made, as we shall see, all that could be made out of these simple woodland frolics. "*Le*

Beau Mai," which in spring was "fair as lily flowers, the leaves and branches sweeping the ground"[9] became a tree of doom, a gathering-place of witches, of worse than witches. Joan herself, hanging her pretty garlands to the Virgin, as sweet a child-figure as lives in history, became a dark sorceress, ringed with flame, summoning to her aid the fiends of the pit. We need not yet turn that page; we may see her as her neighbors saw her, a grave, brown-eyed child, beloved by old and young: industrious, as all her people were; guiding the plough, watching the sheep or cattle, gathering flowers, acorns, fagots: or indoors, spinning, sewing, learning all household work under her mother's guidance. She loved to go to church, and hastened thither when the bell rang for mass; preferring it to dance or play.

"There was not a better girl," the neighbors said, "in the two villages (Domrémy and Greux). For the love of God she gave alms; and if she had money would have given it to the *curé* for masses to be said."

The village beadle being a trifle lax in his ways, she would bribe him with little presents to ring the church bell punctually. The children did not always understand her, would laugh sometimes when she left the games and went to kneel in the little gray church; but the sick and the poor understood her well enough. She loved nursing, and had a light hand with the sick; they never forgot her care of them; it was her way, if any poor homeless body came wandering by (there were many such in

[9] Gerardin.

France then, almost as many as to-day) to give up her bed to the vagrant and sleep on the hearth all night.

Joan was eight years old when the Treaty of Troyes was signed, by which France virtually passed into the hands of England. Not long after, the miseries of war invaded the quiet valley of the Meuse; Burgundian and Armagnac began to burn, harry and slay here as they had long been doing elsewhere. The latter were headed by Stephen de Vignolles, better known as La Hire, a man as brave as he was brutal, and with a spark of humor which lights his name yet on the clouded page of the time. It is told how one day, starting out to relieve Montargis, besieged by the English, he met a priest on the way, and thinking it might be well to add spiritual armor to "helm and hauberk's twisted mail," demanded absolution. The priest demurred; confession must come first. "I have no time for that!" said La Hire, "I'm in a hurry; I have done in the way of sins all that men of war are in the habit of doing." "Whereupon," says the chronicler, "the chaplain gave him absolution for what it was worth, and the knight, putting his hands together, prayed thus, 'God, I pray thee to do for La Hire this day as much as thou wouldest have La Hire do for thee if he were God and thou La Hire!'"

Similar stories are told of many men in many lands; this may be as true as the rest of them.

La Hire's valiant doings by the side of Joan and Dunois at Orleans and elsewhere, are on the credit side of his book of life; but in the years following 1420, he and his like wrought dreadful

havoc in the valley of the Meuse. They pretended to seek redress for hostile acts; in reality, they wanted blood and plunder, and took both without stint. They drove off the cattle and burned the crops; this was the least of it. "These men," wrote Juvenal des Ursins, "under pretence of blackmail and so forth, seized men, women, and little children, regardless of age and sex; violated women and girls; killed husbands and fathers before their wives and daughters; carried off nurses, and left their children to die of hunger; seized priests and monks, put them to the torture, and beat them until they were maimed or driven mad. Some they roasted, dashed out the teeth of others, and others they beat with great clubs. God knows what cruelty they wrought."

Jacques d'Arc and another man of means (as means went in Domrémy!) hired the Castle of the Island from the lady of Bourlemont, at a considerable rent, for the safekeeping of their families and their flocks and herds in case of attack. A year or two later, the men of Domrémy bound themselves to pay a hearth-tax to the lord of Commercy, a highborn ruffian of the neighborhood, so long as he abstained from burning and pillaging their homes. The bond declares itself to be given "with good will, and without any force, constraint, or guile whatsoever." No need for an Artemas Ward to add, "This is rote sarkasticul!" The villagers knew well enough that if the blackmail were not paid, houses, church and all would go up in smoke and flame.

Joan, as she herself says, "helped well to drive the cattle and sheep to the Island," when news came of raiders prowling up

or down the valley. Burgundian or Armagnac, it mattered little which; neither boded any good to the village. The Castle itself was uninhabited: its blank windows looked down on a garden, with great poplar trees here and there, and neglected flower-beds, once the delight of the Lady and her children. Bees hummed in the lilies, birds flitted from branch to branch, caring nothing for Burgundian or Armagnac; all was peace and tranquillity. Here the dreamy child wandered, looking up at the silent walls, seeing in thought, it may be, shadowy figures of knight and lady gazing down on her, the child of France who was to be her country's saviour.

Doubtless she watched the boys playing at siege and battle in and around the little fortress: for aught we know, she may have joined their play, and so learned her first lessons in arms. In any case, tales of blood and rapine must have been daily in her ears; emphasized about this time by news of the death of a cousin, "struck by a ball or stone from a gun."

Other tales were doubtless in her ears. Among the wanderers who sat by the kindly fireside of Jacques d'Arc would be mendicant friars, Franciscan or Cordelier, making their way from door to door, from village to village, giving in return for food and shelter what they had to give: a blessing for the hospitable house, a prayer for its inmates, and news of the countryside. The last raid discussed, the next prognosticated, the general state of country and world deplored, there might be talk of things spiritual. The d'Arc family would naturally tell of their

patron St. Rémy, who, watching over the holy city of Rheims, was so kind as to extend his protection over Domrémy. What a learned, what a wonderful man! how bold in his admonition to King Clovis at the latter's baptism! "Bow thy head meekly, O Sicambrian! adore what thou hast burnt, and burn what thou hast adored!" Yes! yes! brave words!

Then the guest might ask, was not this the country of the Oak Wood, "*le Bois Chesnu*?" Had they heard the prophecy that a Maid should be born in the neighborhood, who should do great deeds? Yes, truly, there was such a prophecy. It was made by Merlin the Wise. In Latin he made it; *Nemus Canutum*, the place; surely an oak wood, on the borders of Lorraine. That was long and long ago, and had been well-nigh forgotten; but a generation ago only – surely they had heard this? – a holy woman, Marie of Avignon, had made her way to his sacred Majesty, then suffering cruelly under the dispensations of God and also under that wicked Queen Isabeau, on whom might his sufferings be avenged, amen! made her way to him, and told of a dream she had dreamed, a terrible dream, full of clashing of swords. She saw shining armor, and cried out, alas! she could not use it! but a voice said that it was for a Maid who should restore France. Yes, indeed, that would be a fine thing, if our fair country, ruined by a woman, should be restored by a woman from the marches of Lorraine. *Pax vobiscum!*

These things, and others like them, no doubt Joan heard, sitting quietly by with her sewing or knitting while the elders

talked. These things by and by were to be a sword in her hand, and – later still – a torch in the hands of her enemies.

CHAPTER IV
GRAPES OF WRATH

> "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning. Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." —*Jeremiah.*

When the conqueror of Agincourt lay dying at Meaux, word was brought to him that his queen, Catherine of France, had borne him a son at Windsor Castle. "Alas!" he said; "Henry of Monmouth has reigned a short time and conquered much. Henry of Windsor will reign long and lose all." Few prophecies, perhaps, have been so literally fulfilled.

At the accession of Henry VI., the "meek usurper,"[10] France was as near her death-agony as she had ever been. Since the first invasion of Henry V., war, famine and pestilence had never ceased their ravages. Whole districts, once peopled, had become solitary wastes. The peasants, tired of sowing that others might reap, threw down pick and hoe, left wife and children, in a despair that was near to madness, and took to the woods, there to worship Satan in very truth. God and his saints having forsaken them,

---

[10] "Ye towers of Julius, London's lasting shame,With many a foul and midnight murder fed,Revere his Consort's faith, his Father's fame,And spare the meek usurper's holy head!"– Gray, the Bard.

they would see what Satan and his demons could do for them. Things could not be worse, and at least in this service they would stand where their masters and tyrants stood. In Paris, things were no better. In the year 1418 there died in the city of the plague alone, 80,000 persons. "They are buried in layers of thirty and forty corpses together, packed as bacon is."[11]

Two years later, when the English entered Paris, it was hoped that they would bring with them not only peace and order, but food. The hope was vain. "All through Paris you could hear the pitiable lamentation of the little children. One saw upon one dungheap twenty, thirty children dying of hunger and cold. No heart was so hard but had great pity upon hearing their piteous cry throughout the night, 'I die of starvation!'"[12]

By day, when the dog-killer passed through the streets, he was followed by a throng of famished people, who fell upon each stray dog as it was killed, and devoured it, leaving the bare bones: by night the wolves, also hungry, the country being stripped, made their way into the city, where they found ample provender in the scarcely-covered corpses.

A kind of death-madness sprang up and seized upon the people; a hideous carnival of corruption began. People danced, as in the fairy-tales, whether they would or no, sick and well, young and old, and their dancing-green was the graveyard. A grinning skeleton was enthroned as King Death, and round him

---

[11] "Journal of a citizen of Paris."

[12] "Journal of a Citizen of Paris."

the frantic people danced hand in hand, shouting and singing, over the graves that held their friends and kinsfolk. Soon there was no more room in the burial places; but still the people died. Charnel houses were built, where corpses were stored, being taken up a short time after burial to make room for fresh ones. The soil of the Cemetery of the Innocents was piled eight feet high above the surrounding streets.

Such was life – and death – for the common people, whom no man regarded. We have already seen how it was with the noble in war; in private life they were no less fanatic. That strange and hideous phenomenon known as the blood-madness of tyrants, broke out like some frightful growth upon the unhappy country. The chronicles of the time read like records of nightmare. Great princes, noble knights, robbed, tortured, slew their wives, fathers, brothers, no man saying them nay. The Sieur de Giac gave his wife poison, and made her gallop on horseback behind him till she dropped dead from the saddle. Adolf de Gueldres, "under the excuse that parricide was the rule in the family," dragged his father from his bed, compelled him to walk naked five miles, and then threw him down into a horrible dungeon to die.[13] The time was past when the "*prudhommes*," the honest men of a village, might come before their lord and rebuke him with "Messire, such and such a thing is not the custom of the good people of these parts!" In the fourteenth century, they were listened to; in the fifteenth, they would probably have their throats cut and be

[13] Lt. – Col. A. C. P. Haggard, D. S. O. "The France of Joan of Arc."

thrown on the dungheap.

> "Of the same lump (as it is said)
> For honor and dishonor made,
> Two sister vessels."

Say rather, of the same earth two flowers. From the same dreadful soil of carnage that gave birth to the Lily of France springs up to enduring infamy a supreme Flower of Evil, the figure of Gilles de Rais, Marshal of France. His story reads like a fairy tale gone bad.

Born in 1404, grandnephew of Bertrand du Guesclin, neighbor and relative of Olivier de Clisson; comrade-in-arms of Joan of Arc. Orphaned in his boyhood, he was left to the over-tender mercies of an adoring grandfather who refused him nothing. In after years, when horror closed round his once-shining name and men shrank from him as from a leper, he cried out in his agony: "Fathers and mothers who hear me, beware, I implore you, of rearing your children in softness. For me, if I have committed such and such crimes, the cause of it is that in my youth I was always allowed to do as I pleased." ("*L'on m'a toujours laissé aller au gré de ma volonté.*")

From a child, he showed distinction in the arts of war; appeared for a time clad in all the warlike virtues. Enormously rich, in his own right as well as by marriage, he was eagerly welcomed to the standard of Charles the Dauphin, who was correspondingly poor. We shall see him at Orleans, riding beside

the Maid, one of her devoted admirers; through all the period of his youth, his public acts shone bright and gallant as his own sword.

The second period of his life shows the artist, the seeker, the man of boundless ambitions. He aspired to be "*litterateur savant et artiste*."[14] He had a passion for the beautiful, a passion for knowledge; for manuscripts, music, drama, science, especially that so-called science of the occult. When he traveled, he carried with him his valuable library, from which he would not be separated: carried also his two splendid organs, his chapel, his military household. He kept his own court of over two hundred mounted men, knights, squires, pages, all magnificently equipped and maintained at his expense. At two of his cities, Machecoul and Tiffanges, he maintained all the clergy of a cathedral and a collegiate church: dean, archdeacon, etc., etc., twenty-five to thirty persons, who (like the library) accompanied him on his travels, no less splendidly dressed than the knights and squires.

Many pages of a bulky memoir are devoted to the various ways in which Gilles squandered his princely fortune. Our concern is with his efforts to restore it, or rather to make another when it was gone.

In the course of his studies, he had not neglected the then-still-popular one of alchemy, and to this he turned when no more money was to be had. Gold, it appeared, could be made; if so,

[14] Gilles de Rais.

he was the man to make it. Workshops were set up at Tiffanges, perhaps in that gloomy donjon tower which alone remains today of all that Arabian Nights castle of splendor and luxury. Alchemists were summoned and wrought night and day, spurred on by promises and threats. Night and day they wrought; but no gold appeared. Fearing for their lives, they hinted at other and darker things that might be necessary; at other agencies which might produce the desired result. If my lord would call in, for example, those who dealt in magic – ?

Frantic in his quest, Gilles stopped at nothing. Necromancers were sent for, and came; they in turn summoned "spirits from the vasty deep" or elsewhere, who obediently appeared. Trembling, yet exultant, Gilles de Rais spoke to the demons, asking for knowledge, power and riches ("*science, puissance, et richesse*"), promising in return anything and everything except his life and his soul. The demons, naturally enough, made no reply to this one-sided offer. It is curious to read of the midnight scenes in that summer of 1439 when Gilles and his magician-friend Prelati, with their three attendants, tried to strike this bargain with the infernal powers. Torches, incense, pentacles, crucibles, etc., etc.; nothing was omitted. They adjured Satan, Belial, and Beelzebub to appear and "speak up"; adjured them, singularly enough, in the name of the Holy Trinity, of the Blessed Virgin and all the saints. The demons remained mute; nor were they moved by sacrifices of dove, pigeon or kid. Finally, a demon called "Barron" made response: it appeared that what the fiends desired was human

sacrifice: that without it no favors might be expected of them.

About this time the western provinces of France became afflicted with a terrible scourge. A monster, it was whispered, a murderous beast, *bête d'extermination*, was hiding in the woods, none knew where. Children began to disappear; youths and maidens too, all young and tender human creatures. They vanished, leaving no trace behind. At first the bereaved parents lamented as over some natural accident. The little one had strayed from home, had fallen into the river, had lost its way in the forest. The friends mourned with them, but were hardly surprised: it was not too strange for those wild days. But the thing spread. In the next village, two children had disappeared; in the next again, four. The creature, whatever it was, grew bolder, more ravenous. Terror seized the people; the whole countryside was in an agony of fear and suspense. Rumor spread far and wide; the beast took shape as a human monster; the *ogre* was evolved, *Croquemitaine*, who devoured children as we eat bread. A little while, and the monster was localized. It was within such a circle that the children were vanishing; near Tiffanges, near Machecoul, the two fairy castles of the great Seigneur Gilles de Rais. Slowly but surely the net of suspicion was drawn, closer, closer yet. The whispers spread, grew bolder, finally broke into open speech. "The beast of extermination" was none other than the Marshal of France, the companion of Dunois and La Hire, and of the Maid herself, the great lord and mighty prince, Gilles de Rais. Search was made in the chambers of Machecoul, in the

gloomy vaults of Tiffanges. The bones of the murdered children were found, here lying in heaps on the floor, there hidden in the depths of well or oubliette. It is not a tale to dwell upon; it is enough to know that in a few years over three hundred children and young people had been foully and cruelly done to death.

In 1440 the matter reached the drowsy ear of Public Justice. Gilles was formally arrested (making no resistance, secure in his own power), was tried, tortured, and after making full confession and expressing repentance for his crimes, was condemned to be burned; but, meeting more tender executioners than did the Maid of France, was strangled instead, and his body piously buried by "certain noble ladies."

Every French child of education knows something of the "*jeune et beau Dunois*"; every French child, educated or not, knows the story of Joan of Arc; Anglo-Saxon children may not invariably attain this knowledge, but they all know Gilles de Rais, though they never heard his name. Soon after his death, he passed into the realm of Legend, and under the title of Bluebeard he lives, and will live as long as there are children. Legend, that enchanting but inaccurate dame, gave him his seven wives; he had but one, and she survived him. His own name soon passed out of use. Even in the town of Nantes, where he met his death, the expiatory monument raised by Marie de Rais on the place of her father's torture was called "*le monument de Barbe-Bleue*."

So, strangely enough, it is the children who keep alive the memory of their slayer.

CHAPTER V
THE VOICES

Et eussiez-vous, Dangier, cent yeulx
Assis et derrerière et devant,
Ja n'yrez si près regardant
Que vostre propos en soit mieulx.

– Charles d'Orléans.

In 1425, when Joan was in her fourteenth year, Domrémy had its first taste of actual war. Henry of Orly, a robber captain of the neighborhood, pounced upon the village with his band, so suddenly and swiftly that the people could not reach their island refuge. The robbers, more greedy than bloodthirsty, did not wait to slay, merely stripped the houses of everything worth carrying off, and "lifted" the cattle, as the Scots say, driving them some fifty miles to Orly's castle of Doulevant. The distressed villagers appealed to the lady of Bourlemont, who in turn called upon her kinsman Anthony of Vaudemont, a powerful noble of Lorraine. Cousin Anthony promptly sent men to recover the stolen cattle. Orly, resisting, was beaten off, and the beasts were brought back in safety to Domrémy, where the happy villagers received them with shouts of joy.

The English were not directly responsible for this raid. Orly

was a free-lance, robbing and harrying on his own account; Vaudemont was Anglo-Burgundian at heart. None the less, people, here as everywhere, were beginning to feel that war and trouble had come with the English, and that there could be no lasting peace or quiet while they trod the soil of France.

Not long after this raid, about noon of a summer day, Joan of Arc was in her father's garden, which lay between the house and the little gray church. We do not know just what the girl was doing, whether gathering flowers for her pleasure, or herbs for household use, or simply dreaming away a leisure hour, as girls love to do. Suddenly "on her left hand, toward the church, she saw a great light, and had a vision of the archangel Michael, surrounded by other angels."[15]

Thus, briefly and simply, the marvelous story begins. Indeed, the beginning must needs be brief, since only Joan herself could tell of the vision, and she was always reticent about it. She would not, press her as they might, describe the appearance of the archangel. We must picture him for ourselves, and this, thanks to Guido Reni, we may easily do. The splendid young figure in the sky-blue corslet, his fair hair afloat about his lightning countenance as he raises his sword above the prostrate Dragon, is familiar to us all. We may, if you please, fancy him similarly attired in the little garden at Domrémy, but the lightning would be softened to a kindlier glow as he addressed the frightened child.

---

[15] Lowell. "Joan of Arc," p. 28. N. B. – Other authorities place the light on her *right* hand.

Michael, chief of the seven (some say eight) archangels, is mentioned five times in the Scriptures, always as fighting: his festival (September 29th) should be kept, one might think, with clash of swords instead of chime of bells. We read that he was the special protector of the Chosen People; that he was the messenger of peace and plenty, the leader of the heavenly host in war, the representative of the Church triumphant; that his name means "God's power," or "who is like God." As late as 1607, the red-velvet-covered buckler said to have been carried by him in his war with Lucifer was shown in a church in Normandy, till its exhibition was forbidden by the Bishop of Avranches. On the promontory of Malea is a chapel built to him; when the wind blows from that quarter, the sailors call it the beating of St. Michael's wings, and in sailing past they pray the saint to keep the great wings folded till they have rounded the cape. Of St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall, it is told that whatever woman sits in the rocky seat known as Michael's Chair, will rule her husband ever after. For further light on St. Michael, see *Paradise Lost*. It remained for a poet of our own day, more lively than Miltonic, to fix him in our minds with a new epithet:

> "When Michael, the Irish archangel, stands,
> The angel with the sword."[16]

Little Joan, trembling among her rose-bushes, knew, we may

[16] W. B. Clarke. "The Fighting Race."

imagine, none of these things. She saw "Messire Saint Michel" as a heavenly prince with his attending angels: "there was much light from every side," she said, "as was fitting." He spoke to her; bade her be a good girl, and go often to church. Then the vision faded.

Seven years later, answering her judges, she speaks thus of the matter: "When I was thirteen years old (or about thirteen) I had a Voice from God, to help me in my conduct. And the first time, I was in great fear."

We may well believe it. We can fancy the child, her eyes still dazzled with the heavenly light, the heavenly voice still in her ears, stealing back into the house, pale and trembling. She said no word to mother Isabel or sister Catherine of what had come to her; for many a day the matter was locked in her own faithful heart.

The vision came again. The archangel promised that St. Catherine and St. Margaret should come to give her further help and comfort, and soon after these heavenly visitants appeared. "Their heads were crowned with fair crowns," says Joan, "richly and preciously. To speak of this I have leave from the Lord… Their voices were beautiful, gentle and sweet."

We are not told which of the six St. Catherines it was who came to Joan; whether the Alexandrian maiden martyred in 307, she of the wheel and the ring; or St. Catherine of Siena, who at Joan's birth had been dead but thirty years, who had herself seen visions and heard voices, and who by her own voice swayed kings

and popes and won the hearts of all men to her; or whether it was one of the lesser lights of that starry name.

As to St. Margaret, there can be no doubt; she was the royal Atheling, queen and saint of Scotland, one of the gracious and noble figures of history. We may read to-day how, sailing across the narrow sea, bound on a visit to her mother's father, the King of Hungary (through whom she could claim kinship with St. Ursula and with St. Elizabeth of Hungary) her vessel was storm-driven up the Firth of Forth, to find shelter in the little bay still known as St. Margaret's Hope. (Close by was the Queen's Ferry, known to readers of Scott and Stevenson; to-day the monstrous Forth Bridge has buried both spots under tons of stone and iron.) Visitors were rare on that coast in the time of Malcolm III., especially ladies "of incomparable beauty." Word was hastily sent to the King hard by in his palace of Dunfermline, and he as hastily came down to see for himself; saw, loved, wooed and won, all in short space. History makes strange bedfellows; it is curious to think that Joan's saintly visitor was so early Queen of Scotland only by grace of Macbeth's dagger, which slew the gentle Duncan, her husband's father.

Joan knew St. Margaret well; there was a statue of her in the church of Domrémy. The gracious ladies spoke kindly to her: permitted her to embrace them; bade her, as St. Michael had bidden her, to be good, to pray, to attend church punctually.

The visions became more or less regular, appearing twice or thrice a week; Joan was obedient to them, did all they asked,

partly no doubt through awe and reverence, but also because she felt from the first that a great thing had come to her. "The first time that I heard the Voice, I vowed to keep my maidenhood so long as God pleased."

If a great thing had come to her, one was demanded of her in return. The heavenly ladies, when they had told her their names, bade her "help the king of France." This was a strange thing. She, a poor peasant maiden, humble and obscure, with no knowledge save of household matters and of tending sheep and cattle; what had she to do with kings? Joan might well have asked herself this, but she did not ask the saints. She listened reverently and waited for further light upon her path. The light came very gradually; it was as if the ladies were gentling a wild bird, coming a little and still a little nearer, till they could touch, could caress it, could still the frightened panting of the tiny breast. Soon the girl came to love them dearly, so that when they left her she wept and longed to go with them. This went on for three years, Joan still keeping the matter wholly to herself. She did her work punctually and faithfully; drove the cattle, sewed, spun and wove. No one knew or guessed that anything strange had come into her life. It was seen that she grew graver, more inclined to religious exercises and to solitary musing, less and less ready to join the village frolics; but this was nothing specially remarkable in a pious French maiden of those days. It was a more serious matter that she should refuse an offer of marriage, a suitable offer from a responsible young man: her parents protested, but in vain. It

was as if the suitor did not exist for her. In after years, when the folk of Domrémy were besieged with questions about Joan's childhood and girlhood, they racked their brains for significant memories, but found few or none. Thereupon my Lady Legend came kindly to their aid, and in an astonishingly short space of time a host of supernatural matters transpired. Some of the stories were very pretty; as that of the race in the river-meadows, the prize a nosegay, won by Joan, who ran so lightly that her feet seemed hardly to touch the ground. "Joan," cried one of the girls, "I see you flying close to the earth!" Presently, the race over, and Joan at the end of the meadow, "as it were rapt and distraught," she saw a youth beside her who said, "Joan, go home; your mother needs you!" Joan hastened home, only to be reproved by Dame Isabel for leaving her sheep.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.