

FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER

THE MAID OF ORLEANS

Friedrich Schiller
The Maid of Orleans

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The Maid of Orleans: A Tragedy:

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Friedrich Schiller

The Maid of Orleans: A Tragedy

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

CHARLES THE SEVENTH, King of France.

QUEEN ISABEL, his Mother.

AGNES SOREL.

PHILIP THE GOOD, Duke of Burgundy.

EARL DUNOIS, Bastard of Orleans.

LA HIRE, DUCRATEL, French Officers.

ARCHBISHOP OF RHEIMS.

CRATILLON, A Burgundian Knight.

RAOUL, a Lotharingian Knight.

TALBOT, the English General,

LIONEL, FASTOLFE, English Officers.

MONTGOMERY, a Welshman.

COUNCILLORS OF ORLEANS.

AN ENGLISH HERALD.

THIBAUT D'ARC, a wealthy Countryman.

MARGOT, LOUISON, JOHANNA, his Daughters.

ETIENNE, CLAUDE MARIE, RAIMOND, their Suitors.

BERTRAND, another Countryman.

APPARITION OF A BLACK KNIGHT.

CHARCOAL-BURNER AND HIS WIFE.

Soldiers and People, Officers of the Crown, Bishops, Monks, Marshals, Magistrates, Courtiers, and other mute persons in the Coronation Procession.

PROLOGUE

A rural District. To the right, a Chapel with an Image of the Virgin; to the left, an ancient Oak.

SCENE I

THIBAUT D'ARC. His Three Daughters. Three young Shepherds, their Suitors.

THIBAUT

Ay, my good neighbors! we at least to-day
Are Frenchmen still, free citizens and lords
Of the old soil which our forefathers tilled.
Who knows whom we to-morrow must obey?
For England her triumphal banner waves
From every wall: the blooming fields of France
Are trampled down beneath her chargers' hoofs;
Paris hath yielded to her conquering arms,
And with the ancient crown of Dagobert
Adorns the scion of a foreign race.
Our king's descendant, disinherited,
Must steal in secret through his own domain;
While his first peer and nearest relative
Contentends against him in the hostile ranks;
Ay, his unnatural mother leads them on.
Around us towns and peaceful hamlets burn.
Near and more near the devastating fire
Rolls toward these vales, which yet repose in peace.

Therefore, good neighbors, I have now resolved,
While God still grants us safety, to provide
For my three daughters; for 'midst war's alarms
Women require protection, and true love
Hath power to render lighter every load.

[To the first Shepherd.]

Come, Etienne! You seek my Margot's hand.
Fields lying side by side and loving hearts
Promise a happy union!

[To the second.]

Claude! You're silent,
And my Louison looks upon the ground?
How, shall I separate two loving hearts
Because you have no wealth to offer me?
Who now has wealth? Our barns and homes afford
Spoil to the foe, and fuel to the fires.
In times like these a husband's faithful breast
Affords the only shelter from the storm.

LOUISON

My father!

CLAUDE MARIE

My Louison!

LOUISON (embracing JOHANNA)

My dear sister!

THIBAUT

I give to each a yard, a stall and herd,
And also thirty acres; and as God
Gave me his blessing, so I give you mine!

MARGOT (embracing JOHANNA)

Gladden our father – follow our example!
Let this day see three unions ratified!

THIBAUT

Now go; make all things ready; for the morn
Shall see the wedding. Let our village friends
Be all assembled for the festival.

[The two couples retire arm in arm.]

SCENE II

THIBAUT, RAIMOND, JOHANNA.

THIBAUT

Thy sisters, Joan, will soon be happy brides;
I see them gladly; they rejoice my age;
But thou, my youngest, giv'st me grief and pain.

RAIMOND

What is the matter? Why upbraid thy child?

THIBAUT

Here is this noble youth, the flower and pride
Of all our village; he hath fixed on thee
His fond affections, and for three long years
Has wooed thee with respectful tenderness;

But thou dost thrust him back with cold reserve.
Nor is there one 'mong all our shepherd youths
Who e'er can win a gracious smile from thee.
I see thee blooming in thy youthful prime;
Thy spring it is, the joyous time of hope;
Thy person, like a tender flower, hath now
Disclosed its beauty, but I vainly wait
For love's sweet blossom genially to blow,
And ripen joyously to golden fruit!
Oh, that must ever grieve me, and betrays
Some sad deficiency in nature's work!
The heart I like not which, severe and cold,
Expands not in the genial years of youth.

RAIMOND

Forbear, good father! Cease to urge her thus!
A noble, tender fruit of heavenly growth
Is my Johanna's love, and time alone
Bringeth the costly to maturity!
Still she delights to range among the hills,
And fears descending from the wild, free heath,
To tarry 'neath the lowly roofs of men,
Where dwell the narrow cares of humble life.
From the deep vale, with silent wonder, oft
I mark her, when, upon a lofty hill

Surrounded by her flock, erect she stands,
With noble port, and bends her earnest gaze
Down on the small domains of earth. To me
She looketh then, as if from other times
She came, foreboding things of import high.

THIBAUT

'Tis that precisely which displeases me!
She shuns her sisters' gay companionship;
Seeks out the desert mountains, leaves her couch
Before the crowing of the morning cock,
And in the dreadful hour, when men are wont
Confidingly to seek their fellow-men,
She, like the solitary bird, creeps forth,
And in the fearful spirit-realm of night,
To yon crossway repairs, and there alone
Holds secret commune with the mountain wind.
Wherefore this place precisely doth she choose?
Why hither always doth she drive her flock?
For hours together I have seen her sit
In dreamy musing 'neath the Druid tree,
Which every happy creature shuns with awe.
For 'tis not holy there; an evil spirit
Hath since the fearful pagan days of old
Beneath its branches fixed his dread abode.

The oldest of our villagers relate
Strange tales of horror of the Druid tree;
Mysterious voices of unearthly sound
From its unhallowed shade oft meet the ear.
Myself, when in the gloomy twilight hour
My path once chanced to lead me near this tree,
Beheld a spectral figure sitting there,
Which slowly from its long and ample robe
Stretched forth its withered hand, and beckoned me.
But on I went with speed, nor looked behind,
And to the care of God consigned my soul.

RAIMOND (pointing to the image of the Virgin)

Yon holy image of the Virgin blest,
Whose presence heavenly peace diffuseth round,
Not Satan's work, leadeth thy daughter here.

THIBAUT

No! not in vain hath it in fearful dreams
And apparitions strange revealed itself.
For three successive nights I have beheld
Johanna sitting on the throne at Rheims,

A sparkling diadem of seven stars
Upon her brow, the sceptre in her hand,
From which three lilies sprung, and I, her sire,
With her two sisters, and the noble peers,
The earls, archbishops, and the king himself,
Bowed down before her. In my humble home
How could this splendor enter my poor brain?
Oh, 'tis the prelude to some fearful fall!
This warning dream, in pictured show, reveals
The vain and sinful longing of her heart.
She looks with shame upon her lowly birth.
Because with richer beauty God hath graced
Her form, and dowered her with wondrous gifts
Above the other maidens of this vale,
She in her heart indulges sinful pride,
And pride it is through which the angels fell,
By which the fiend of hell seduces man.

RAIMOND

Who cherishes a purer, humbler mind
Than doth thy pious daughter? Does she not
With cheerful spirit work her sisters' will?
She is more highly gifted far than they,
Yet, like a servant maiden, it is she
Who silently performs the humblest tasks.

Beneath her guiding hands prosperity
Attendeth still thy harvest and thy flocks;
And around all she does there ceaseless flows
A blessing, rare and unaccountable.

THIBAUT

Ah truly! Unaccountable indeed!
Sad horror at this blessing seizes me!
But now no more; henceforth I will be silent.
Shall I accuse my own beloved child?
I can do naught but warn and pray for her.
Yet warn I must. Oh, shun the Druid tree!
Stay not alone, and in the midnight hour
Break not the ground for roots, no drinks prepare,
No characters inscribe upon the sand!
'Tis easy to unlock the realm of spirits;
Listening each sound, beneath a film of earth
They lay in wait, ready to rush aloft.
Stay not alone, for in the wilderness
The prince of darkness tempted e'en the Lord.

SCENE III

THIBAUT, RAIMOND, JOHANNA.

BERTRAND enters, a helmet in his hand.

RAIMOND

Hush! here is Bertrand coming back from town;
What bears he in his hand?

BERTRAND

You look at me
With wondering gaze; no doubt you are surprised
To see this martial helm!

THIBAUT

We are indeed!
Come, tell us how you come by it? Why bring

This fearful omen to our peaceful vale?

[JOHANNA, who has remained indifferent during the two previous scenes, becomes attentive, and steps nearer.]

BERTRAND

I scarce can tell you how I came by it.
I had procured some tools at Vaucouleurs;
A crowd was gathered in the market-place,
For fugitives were just arrived in haste
From Orleans, bringing most disastrous news.
In tumult all the town together flocked,
And as I forced a passage through the crowds,
A brown Bohemian woman, with this helm,
Approached me, eyed me narrowly, and said:
"Fellow, you seek a helm; I know it well.
Take this one! For a trifle it is yours."
"Go with it to the soldiers," I replied,
"I am a husbandman, and want no helm."
She would not cease, however, and went on:
"None knoweth if he may not want a helm.
A roof of metal for the Head just now
Is of more value than a house of stone."
Thus she pursued me closely through the streets,
Still offering the helm, which I refused.
I marked it well, and saw that it was bright,

And fair and worthy of a knightly head;
And when in doubt I weighed it in my hand,
The strangeness of the incident revolving,
The woman disappeared, for suddenly
The rushing crowd had carried her away.
And I was left the helmet in my hand.

JOHANNA (attempting eagerly to seize it)

Give me the helmet!

BERTRAND

Why, what boots it you?
It is not suited to a maiden's head.

JOHANNA (seizing it from him)

Mine is the helmet – it belongs to me!

THIBAUT

What whim is this?

RAIMOND

Nay, let her have her way!
This warlike ornament becomes her well,
For in her bosom beats a manly heart.
Remember how she once subdued the wolf,
The savage monster which destroyed our herds,
And filled the neighb'ring shepherds with dismay.
She all alone – the lion-hearted maid
Fought with the wolf, and from him snatched the lamb
Which he was bearing in his bloody jaws.
How brave soe'er the head this helm adorned,
It cannot grace a worthier one than hers!

THIBAUT (to BERTRAND)

Relate what new disasters have occurred.

What tidings brought the fugitives?

BERTRAND

May God
Have pity on our land, and save the king!
In two great battles we have lost the day;
Our foes are stationed in the heart of France,
Far as the river Loire our lands are theirs —
Now their whole force they have combined, and lay
Close siege to Orleans.

THIBAUT

God protect the king!

BERTRAND

Artillery is brought from every side,
And as the dusky squadrons of the bees
Swarm round the hive upon a summer day,

As clouds of locusts from the sultry air
Descend and shroud the country round for miles,
So doth the cloud of war, o'er Orleans' fields,
Pour forth its many-nationed multitudes,
Whose varied speech, in wild confusion blent,
With strange and hollow murmurs fill the air.
For Burgundy, the mighty potentate,
Conducts his motley host; the Hennegarians,
The men of Liege and of Luxemburg,
The people of Namur, and those who dwell
In fair Brabant; the wealthy men of Ghent,
Who boast their velvets, and their costly silks;
The Zealanders, whose cleanly towns appear
Emerging from the ocean; Hollanders
Who milk the lowing herds; men from Utrecht,
And even from West Friesland's distant realm,
Who look towards the ice-pole – all combine,
Beneath the banner of the powerful duke,
Together to accomplish Orleans' fall.

THIBAUT

Oh, the unblest, the lamentable strife,
Which turns the arms of France against itself!

BERTRAND

E'en she, the mother-queen, proud Isabel
Bavaria's haughty princess – may be seen,
Arrayed in armor, riding through the camp;
With poisonous words of irony she fires
The hostile troops to fury 'gainst her son,
Whom she hath clasped to her maternal breast.

THIBAUT

A curse upon her, and may God prepare
For her a death like haughty Jezebel's!

BERTRAND

The fearful Salisbury conducts the siege,
The town-destroyer; with him Lionel,
The brother of the lion; Talbot, too,
Who, with his murd'rous weapon, moweth down
The people in the battle: they have sworn,

With ruthless insolence to doom to shame
The hapless maidens, and to sacrifice
All who the sword have wielded, with the sword.
Four lofty watch-towers, to o'ertop the town,
They have upreared; Earl Salisbury from on high
Casteth abroad his cruel, murd'rous glance,
And marks the rapid wanderers in the streets.
Thousands of cannon-balls, of pond'rous weight,
Are hurled into the city. Churches lie
In ruined heaps, and Notre Dame's royal tower
Begins at length to bow its lofty head.
They also have formed powder-vaults below,
And thus, above a subterranean hell,
The timid city every hour expects,
'Midst crashing thunder, to break forth in flames.

[JOHANNA listens with close attention, and places the helmet on her head.]

THIBAUT

But where were then our heroes? Where the swords
Of Saintrilles, and La Hire, and brave Dunois,
Of France the bulwark, that the haughty foe
With such impetuous force thus onward rushed?
Where is the king? Can he supinely see
His kingdom's peril and his cities' fall?

BERTRAND

The king at Chinon holds his court; he lacks
Soldiers to keep the field. Of what avail
The leader's courage, and the hero's arm,
When pallid fear doth paralyze the host?
A sudden panic, as if sent from God,
Unnerves the courage of the bravest men.
In vain the summons of the king resounds
As when the howling of the wolf is heard,
The sheep in terror gather side by side,
So Frenchmen, careless of their ancient fame,
Seek only now the shelter of the towns.
One knight alone, I have been told, has brought
A feeble company, and joins the king
With sixteen banners.

JOHANNA (quickly)

What's the hero's name?

BERTRAND

'Tis Baudricour. But much I fear the knight
Will not be able to elude the foe,
Who track him closely with too numerous hosts.

JOHANNA

Where halts the knight? Pray tell me, if you know.

BERTRAND

About a one day's march from Vaucouleurs.

THIBAUT (to JOHANNA)

Why, what is that to thee? Thou dost inquire
Concerning matters which become thee not.

BERTRAND

The foe being now so strong, and from the king
No safety to be hoped, at Vaucouleurs
They have with unanimity resolved
To yield them to the Duke of Burgundy.
Thus we avoid the foreign yoke, and still
Continue by our ancient royal line;
Ay, to the ancient crown we may fall back
Should France and Burgundy be reconciled.

JOHANNA (as if inspired)

Speak not of treaty! Speak not of surrender!
The savior comes, he arms him for the fight.
The fortunes of the foe before the walls
Of Orleans shall be wrecked! His hour is come,
He now is ready for the reaper's hand,
And with her sickle will the maid appear,
And mow to earth the harvest of his pride.
She from the heavens will tear his glory down,
Which he had hung aloft among the stars;
Despair not! Fly not! for ere yonder corn

Assumes its golden hue, or ere the moon
Displays her perfect orb, no English horse
Shall drink the rolling waters of the Loire.

BERTRAND

Alas! no miracle will happen now!

JOHANNA

Yes, there shall yet be one – a snow-white dove
Shall fly, and with the eagle's boldness, tear
The birds of prey which rend her fatherland.
She shall o'erthrow this haughty Burgundy,
Betrayer of the kingdom; Talbot, too,
The hundred-handed, heaven-defying scourge;
This Salisbury, who violates our fanes,
And all these island robbers shall she drive
Before her like a flock of timid lambs.
The Lord will be with her, the God of battle;
A weak and trembling creature he will choose,
And through a tender maid proclaim his power,
For he is the Almighty!

THIBAULT

What strange power
Hath seized the maiden?

RAIMOND

Doubtless 'tis the helmet
Which doth inspire her with such martial thoughts.
Look at your daughter. Mark her flashing eye,
Her glowing cheek, which kindles as with fire.

JOHANNA

This realm shall fall! This ancient land of fame,
The fairest that, in his majestic course,
The eternal sun surveys – this paradise,
Which, as the apple of his eye, God loves —
Endure the fetters of a foreign yoke?
Here were the heathen scattered, and the cross
And holy image first were planted here;

Here rest St. Louis' ashes, and from hence
The troops went forth who set Jerusalem free.

BERTRAND (in astonishment)

Hark how she speaks! Why, whence can she obtain
This glorious revelation? Father Arc!
A wondrous daughter God hath given you!

JOHANNA

We shall no longer serve a native prince!
The king, who never dies, shall pass away —
The guardian of the sacred plough, who fills
The earth with plenty, who protects our herds,
Who frees the bondmen from captivity,
Who gathers all his cities round his throne —
Who aids the helpless, and appals the base,
Who envies no one, for he reigns supreme;
Who is a mortal, yet an angel too,
Dispensing mercy on the hostile earth.
For the king's throne, which glitters o'er with gold,
Affords a shelter for the destitute;
Power and compassion meet together there,

The guilty tremble, but the just draw near,
And with the guardian lion fearless sport!
The stranger king, who cometh from afar,
Whose fathers' sacred ashes do not lie
Interred among us; can he love our land?
Who was not young among our youth, whose heart
Respondeth not to our familiar words,
Can he be as a father to our sons?

THIBAUT

God save the king and France! We're peaceful folk,
Who neither wield the sword, nor rein the steed.
– Let us await the king whom victory crowns;
The fate of battle is the voice of God.
He is our lord who crowns himself at Rheims,
And on his head receives the holy oil.
– Come, now to work! come! and let every one
Think only of the duty of the hour!
Let the earth's great ones for the earth contend,
Untroubled we may view the desolation,
For steadfast stand the acres which we till.
The flames consume our villages, our corn
Is trampled 'neath the tread of warlike steeds;
With the new spring new harvests reappear,
And our light huts are quickly reared again!

[They all retire except the maiden.]

SCENE IV

JOHANNA (alone)

Farewell ye mountains, ye beloved glades,
Ye lone and peaceful valleys, fare ye well!
Through you Johanna never more may stray!
For, ay, Johanna bids you now farewell.
Ye meads which I have watered, and ye trees
Which I have planted, still in beauty bloom!
Farewell ye grottos, and ye crystal springs!
Sweet echo, vocal spirit of the vale.
Who sang'st responsive to my simple strain,
Johanna goes, and ne'er returns again.

Ye scenes where all my tranquil joys
I knew, Forever now I leave you far behind!
Poor foldless lambs, no shepherd now have you!
O'er the wide heath stray henceforth unconfined!
For I to danger's field, of crimson hue,
Am summoned hence another flock to find.
Such is to me the spirit's high behest;
No earthly, vain ambition fires my breast.

For who in glory did on Horeb's height

Descend to Moses in the bush of flame,
And bade him go and stand in Pharaoh's sight —
Who once to Israel's pious shepherd came,
And sent him forth, his champion in the fight, —
Who aye hath loved the lowly shepherd train, —
He, from these leafy boughs, thus spake to me,
"Go forth! Thou shalt on earth my witness be.

"Thou in rude armor must thy limbs invest,
A plate of steel upon thy bosom wear;
Vain earthly love may never stir thy breast,
Nor passion's sinful glow be kindled there.
Ne'er with the bride-wreath shall thy locks be dressed,
Nor on thy bosom bloom an infant fair;
But war's triumphant glory shall be thine;
Thy martial fame all women's shall outshine.

"For when in fight the stoutest hearts despair,
When direful ruin threatens France, forlorn,
Then thou aloft my oriflamme shalt bear,
And swiftly as the reaper mows the corn,
Thou shalt lay low the haughty conqueror;
His fortune's wheel thou rapidly shalt turn,
To Gaul's heroic sons deliverance bring,
Relieve beleaguered Rheims, and crown thy king!"

The heavenly spirit promised me a sign;
He sends the helmet, it hath come from him.
Its iron filleth me with strength divine,

I feel the courage of the cherubim;
As with the rushing of a mighty wind
It drives me forth to join the battles din;
The clanging trumpets sound, the chargers rear,
And the loud war-cry thunders in mine ear.

[She goes out.]

ACT I

SCENE I

The royal residence at Chinon.
DUNOIS and DUCHATEL.

DUNOIS

No longer I'll endure it. I renounce
This recreant monarch who forsakes himself.
My valiant heart doth bleed, and I could rain
Hot tear-drops from mine eyes, that robber-swords
Partition thus the royal realm of France;
That cities, ancient as the monarchy,
Deliver to the foe the rusty keys,
While here in idle and inglorious ease
We lose the precious season of redemption.
Tidings of Orleans' peril reach mine ear,
Hither I sped from distant Normandy,
Thinking, arrayed in panoply of war,
To find the monarch with his marshalled hosts;
And find him – here! begirt with troubadours,

And juggling knaves, engaged in solving riddles,
And planning festivals in Sorel's honor,
As brooded o'er the land profoundest peace!
The Constable hath gone; he will not brook
Longer the spectacle of shame. I, too,
Depart, and leave him to his evil fate.

DUCHATEL

Here comes the king.

SCENE II

KING CHARLES. The same.

CHARLES

The Constable hath sent us back his sword
And doth renounce our service. Now, by heaven!
He thus hath rid us of a churlish man,
Who insolently sought to lord it o'er us.

DUNOIS

A man is precious in such perilous times;
I would not deal thus lightly with his loss.

CHARLES

Thou speakest thus from love of opposition;
While he was here thou never wert his friend.

DUNOIS

He was a tiresome, proud, vexatious fool,
Who never could resolve. For once, however,
He hath resolved. Betimes he goeth hence,
Where honor can no longer be achieved.

CHARLES

Thou'rt in a pleasant humor; undisturbed
I'll leave thee to enjoy it. Hark, Duchatel!
Ambassadors are here from old King Rene,
Of tuneful songs the master, far renowned.
Let them as honored guests be entertained,
And unto each present a chain of gold.

[To the Bastard.]

Why smilest thou, Dunois?

DUNOIS

That from thy mouth
Thou shakest golden chains.

DUCHATEL

Alas! my king!
No gold existeth in thy treasury.

CHARLES

Then gold must be procured. It must not be
That bards unhonored from our court depart.
'Tis they who make our barren sceptre bloom,
'Tis they who wreath around our fruitless crown
Life's joyous branch of never-fading green.
Reigning, they justly rank themselves as kings,
Of gentle wishes they erect their throne,
Their harmless realm existeth not in space;
Hence should the bard accompany the king,

Life's higher sphere the heritage of both!

DUCHATEL

My royal liege! I sought to spare thine ear
So long as aid and counsel could be found;
Now dire necessity doth loose my tongue.
Naught hast thou now in presents to bestow,
Thou hast not wherewithal to live to-morrow!
The spring-tide of thy fortune is run out,
And lowest ebb is in thy treasury!
The soldiers, disappointed of their pay,
With sullen murmurs, threaten to retire.
My counsel faileth, not with royal splendor
But meagerly, to furnish out thy household.

CHARLES

My royal customs pledge, and borrow gold
From the Lombardians.

DUCHATEL

Sire, thy revenues,
Thy royal customs are for three years pledged.

DUNOIS

And pledge meanwhile and kingdom both are lost.

CHARLES

Still many rich and beauteous lands are ours.

DUNOIS

So long as God and Talbot's sword permit!
When Orleans falleth into English hands
Then with King Rene thou may'st tend thy sheep!

CHARLES

Still at this king thou lov'st to point thy jest;
Yet 'tis this lackland monarch who to-day
Hath with a princely crown invested me.

DUNOIS

Not, in the name of heaven, with that of Naples,
Which is for sale, I hear, since he kept sheep.

CHARLES

It is a sportive festival, a jest,
Wherein he giveth to his fancy play,
To found a world all innocent and pure
In this barbaric, rude reality.
Yet noble – ay, right royal is his aim!
He will again restore the golden age,
When gentle manners reigned, when faithful love

The heroic hearts of valiant knights inspired,
And noble women, whose accomplished taste
Diffuseth grace around, in judgment sat.
The old man dwelleth in those bygone times,
And in our workday world would realize
The dreams of ancient bards, who picture life
'Mid bowers celestial, throned on golden clouds.
He hath established hence a court of love
Where valiant knights may dwell, and homage yield
To noble women, who are there enthroned,
And where pure love and true may find a home.
Me he hath chosen as the prince of love.

DUNOIS

I am not such a base, degenerate churl
As love's dominion rudely to assail.
I am her son, from her derive my name,
And in her kingdom lies my heritage.
The Prince of Orleans was my sire, and while
No woman's heart was proof against his love,
No hostile fortress could withstand his shock!
Wilt thou, indeed, with honor name thyself
The prince of love – be bravest of the brave!
As I have read in those old chronicles,
Love aye went coupled with heroic deeds,

And valiant heroes, not inglorious shepherds,
So legends tell us, graced King Arthur's board.
The man whose valor is not beauty's shield
Is all unworthy of her golden prize.
Here the arena! combat for the crown,
Thy royal heritage! With knightly sword
Thy lady's honor and thy realm defend —
And hast thou with hot valor snatched the crown
From streams of hostile blood, – then is the time,
And it would well become thee as a prince,
Love's myrtle chaplet round thy brows to wreath.

CHARLES (to a PAGE, who enters)

What is the matter?

PAGE

Senators from Orleans
Entreat an audience, sire.

CHARLES

Conduct them hither!

[PAGE retires.]

Doubtless they succor need; what can I do,
Myself all-succorless!

SCENE III

The same. Three SENATORS.

CHARLES

Welcome, my trusty citizens of Orleans!
What tidings bring ye from my faithful town?
Doth she continue with her wonted zeal
Still bravely to withstand the leaguering foe?

SENATOR

Ah, sire! the city's peril is extreme;
And giant ruin, waxing hour by hour,
Still onward strides. The bulwarks are destroyed —
The foe at each assault advantage gains;
Bare of defenders are the city walls,
For with rash valor forth our soldiers rush,
While few, alas! return to view their homes,
And famine's scourge impendeth o'er the town.
In this extremity the noble Count
Of Rochepierre, commander of the town,

Hath made a compact with the enemy,
According to old custom, to yield up,
On the twelfth day, the city to the foe,
Unless, meanwhile, before the town appear
A host of magnitude to raise the siege.

[DUNOIS manifests the strongest indignation.]

CHARLES

The interval is brief.

SENATOR

We hither come,
Attended by a hostile retinue,
To implore thee, sire, to pity thy poor town,
And to send succor ere the appointed day,
When, if still unrelieved, she must surrender.

DUNOIS

And could Saintrailles consent to give his voice
To such a shameful compact?

SENATOR

Never, sir!
Long as the hero lived, none dared to breathe
A single word of treaty or surrender.

DUNOIS

He then is dead?

SENATOR

The noble hero fell,

His monarch's cause defending on our walls.

CHARLES

What! Saintrailles dead! Oh, in that single man
A host is foundered!

[A Knight enters and speaks apart with DUNOIS, who starts with surprise.]

DUNOIS

That too!

CHARLES

Well? What is it?

DUNOIS

Count Douglass sendeth here. The Scottish troops
Revolt, and threaten to retire at once.
Unless their full arrears are paid to-day.

CHARLES

Duchatel!

DUCHATEL (shrugs his shoulders)

Sire! I know not what to counsel.

CHARLES

Pledge, promise all, even unto half my realm.

DUCHATTEL

'Tis vain! They have been fed with hope too often.

CHARLES

They are the finest troops of all my hosts!
They must not now, not now abandon me!

SENATOR (throwing himself at the KING'S feet)

Oh, king, assist us! Think of our distress!

CHARLES (in despair)

How! Can I summon armies from the earth?
Or grow a cornfield on my open palm?
Rend me in pieces! Pluck my bleeding heart

Forth from my breast, and coin it 'stead of gold!
I've blood for you, but neither gold nor troops.

*[He sees SOREL approach, and hastens towards her with
outstretched arms.]*

SCENE IV

The same. AGNES SOREL, a casket in her hand.

CHARLES

My Agnes! Oh, my love! My dearest life!
Thou comest here to snatch me from despair!
Refuge I take within thy loving arms!
Possessing thee I feel that nothing is lost.

SOREL

My king, beloved!

[looking round with an anxious, inquiring gaze.]

Dunois! Say, is it true,
Duchatel?

DUCHATEL

'Tis, alas!

SOREL

So great the need?
No treasure left? The soldiers will disband?

DUCHATEL

Alas! It is too true!

SOREL (giving him the casket)

Here-here is gold,
Here too are jewels! Melt my silver down!
Sell, pledge my castles – on my fair domains

In Provence – treasure raise, turn all to gold,
Appease the troops! No time to be lost!

[She urges him to depart.]

CHARLES

Well now, Dunois! Duchatel! Do ye still
Account me poor, when I possess the crown
Of womankind? She's nobly born as I;
The royal blood of Valois not more pure;
The most exalted throne she would adorn —
Yet she rejects it with disdain, and claims
No other title than to be my love.
No gift more costly will she e'er receive
Than early flower in winter, or rare fruit!
No sacrifice on my part she permits,
Yet sacrificeth all she had to me!
With generous spirit she doth venture all
Her wealth and fortune in my sinking bark.

DUNOIS

Ay, she is mad indeed, my king, as thou;

She throws her all into a burning house,
And draweth water in the leaky vessel
Of the Danaides. Thee she will not save,
And in thy ruin but involve herself.

SOREL

Believe him not! Full many a time he hath
Perilled his life for thee, and now, forsooth,
Chafeth because I risk my worthless gold!
How? Have I freely sacrificed to thee
What is esteemed far more than gold and pearls,
And shall I now hold back the gifts of fortune?
Oh, come! Let my example challenge thee
To noble self-denial! Let's at once
Cast off the needless ornaments of life!
Thy courtiers metamorphose into soldiers;
Thy gold transmute to iron; all thou hast,
With resolute daring, venture for thy crown!
Peril and want we will participate!
Let us bestride the war-horse, and expose
Our tender person to the fiery glow
Of the hot sun, take for our canopy
The clouds above, and make the stones our pillow.
The rudest warrior, when he sees his king
Bear hardship and privation like the meanest

Will patiently endure his own hard lot!

CHARLES (laughing)

Ay! now is realized an ancient word
Of prophesy, once uttered by a nun
Of Clairmont, in prophetic mood, who said,
That through a woman's aid I o'er my foes
Should triumph, and achieve my father's crown.
Far off I sought her in the English camp;
I strove to reconcile a mother's heart;
Here stands the heroine – my guide to Rheims!
My Agnes! I shall triumph through thy love!

SOREL

Thou'lt triumph through the valiant swords of friends.

CHARLES

And from my foes' dissensions much I hope

For sure intelligence hath reached mine ear,
That 'twixt these English lords and Burgundy
Things do not stand precisely as they did;
Hence to the duke I have despatched La Hire,
To try if he can lead my angry vassal
Back to his ancient loyalty and faith:
Each moment now I look for his return.

DUCHATEL (at the window)

A knight e'en now dismounteth in the court.

CHARLES

A welcome messenger! We soon shall learn
Whether we're doomed to conquer or to yield.

SCENE V

The same. LA HIRE.

CHARLES (meeting him)

Hope bringest thou, or not? Be brief, La Hire,
Out with thy tidings! What must we expect?

LA HIRE

Expect naught, sire, save from thine own good sword.

CHARLES

The haughty duke will not be reconciled!
Speak! How did he receive my embassy?

LA HIRE

His first and unconditional demand,
Ere he consent to listen to thine errand,
Is that Duchatel be delivered up,
Whom he doth name the murderer of his sire.

CHARLES

This base condition we reject with scorn!

LA HIRE

Then be the league dissolved ere it commence!

CHARLES

Hast thou thereon, as I commanded thee,

Challenged the duke to meet him in fair fight
On Montereau's bridge, whereon his father fell?

LA HIRE

Before him on the ground I flung thy glove,
And said: "Thou wouldst forget thy majesty,
And like a knight do battle for thy realm."
He scornfully rejoined "He needed not
To fight for that which he possessed already,
But if thou wert so eager for the fray,
Before the walls of Orleans thou wouldst find him,
Whither he purposed going on the morrow;"
Thereon he laughing turned his back upon me.

CHARLES

Say, did not justice raise her sacred voice,
Within the precincts of my parliament?

LA HIRE

The rage of party, sire, hath silenced her.
An edict of the parliament declares
Thee and thy race excluded from the throne.

DUNOIS

These upstart burghers' haughty insolence!

CHARLES

Hast thou attempted with my mother aught?

LA HIRE

With her?

CHARLES

Ay! How did she demean herself?

LA HIRE (after a few moments' reflection)

I chanced to step within St. Denis' walls
Precisely at the royal coronation.
The crowds were dressed as for a festival;
Triumphal arches rose in every street
Through which the English monarch was to pass.
The way was strewn with flowers, and with huzzas,
As France some brilliant conquest had achieved,
The people thronged around the royal car.

SOREL

They could huzza – huzza, while trampling thus
Upon a gracious sovereign's loving heart!

LA HIRE

I saw young Harry Lancaster – the boy —
On good St. Lewis' regal chair enthroned;
On either side his haughty uncles stood,
Bedford and Gloucester, and before him kneeled,
To render homage for his lands, Duke Philip.

CHARLES

Oh, peer dishonored! Oh, unworthy cousin!

LA HIRE

The child was timid, and his footing lost
As up the steps he mounted towards the throne.
An evil omen! murmured forth the crowd,
And scornful laughter burst on every side.
Then forward stepped Queen Isabel – thy mother,
And – but it angers me to utter it!

CHARLES

Say on.

LA HIRE

Within her arms she clasped the boy,
And herself placed him on thy father's throne.

CHARLES

Oh, mother! mother!

LA HIRE

E'en the murderous bands
Of the Burgundians, at this spectacle,
Evinced some tokens of indignant shame.

The queen perceived it, and addressed the crowds,
Exclaiming with loud voice: "Be grateful, Frenchmen,
That I engraft upon a sickly stock
A healthy scion, and redeem you from
The misbegotten son of a mad sire!"

[The KING hides his face; AGNES hastens towards him and clasps him in her arms; all the bystanders express aversion and horror.]

DUNOIS

She-wolf of France! Rage-breathing Megara!

CHARLES (after a pause, to the SENATORS)

Yourselves have heard the posture of affairs.
Delay no longer, back return to Orleans,
And bear this message to my faithful town;
I do absolve my subjects from their oath,
Their own best interests let them now consult,
And yield them to the Duke of Burgundy;
'Yclept the Good, he need must prove humane.

DUNOIS

What say'st thou, sire? Thou wilt abandon Orleans!

SENATOR (kneels down)

My king! Abandon not thy faithful town!
Consign her not to England's harsh control.
She is a precious jewel in the crown,
And none hath more inviolate faith maintained
Towards the kings, thy royal ancestors.

DUNOIS

Have we been routed? Is it lawful, sire,
To leave the English masters of the field,
Without a single stroke to save the town?
And thinkest thou, with careless breath, forsooth,
Ere blood hath flowed, rashly to give away
The fairest city from the heart of France?

CHARLES

Blood hath been poured forth freely, and in vain
The hand of heaven is visibly against me;
In every battle is my host o'erthrown,
I am rejected of my parliament,
My capital, my people, hail me foe,
Those of my blood, – my nearest relatives, —
Forsake me and betray – and my own mother
Doth nurture at her breast the hostile brood.
Beyond the Loire we will retire, and yield
To the o'ermastering hand of destiny
Which sideth with the English.

SOREL

God forbid
That we in weak despair should quit this realm!
This utterance came not from thy heart, my king,
Thy noble heart, which hath been sorely riven
By the fell deed of thy unnatural mother,
Thou'lt be thyself again, right valiantly
Thou'lt battle with thine adverse destiny,
Which doth oppose thee with relentless ire.

CHARLES (lost in gloomy thought)

Is it not true? A dark and ominous doom
Impendeth o'er the heaven-abandoned house
Of Valois – there preside the avenging powers,
To whom a mother's crime unbarred the way.
For thirty years my sire in madness raved;
Already have three elder brothers been
Mowed down by death; 'tis the decree of heaven,
The house of the Sixth Charles is doomed to fall.

SOREL

In thee 'twill rise with renovated life!
Oh, in thyself have faith! – believe me, king,
Not vainly hath a gracious destiny
Redeemed thee from the ruin of thy house,
And by thy brethren's death exalted thee,
The youngest born, to an unlooked-for throne
Heaven in thy gentle spirit hath prepared
The leech to remedy the thousand ills
By party rage inflicted on the land.
The flames of civil discord thou wilt quench,

And my heart tells me thou'lt establish peace,
And found anew the monarchy of France.

CHARLES

Not I! The rude and storm-vexed times require
A pilot formed by nature to command.
A peaceful nation I could render happy
A wild, rebellious people not subdue.
I never with the sword could open hearts
Against me closed in hatred's cold reserve.

SOREL

The people's eye is dimmed, an error blinds them,
But this delusion will not long endure;
The day is not far distant when the love
Deep rooted in the bosom of the French,
Towards their native monarch, will revive,
Together with the ancient jealousy,
Which forms a barrier 'twixt the hostile nations.
The haughty foe precipitates his doom.
Hence, with rash haste abandon not the field,
With dauntless front contest each foot of ground,

As thine own heart defend the town of Orleans!
Let every boat be sunk beneath the wave,
Each bridge be burned, sooner than carry thee
Across the Loire, the boundary of thy realm,
The Stygian flood, o'er which there's no return.

CHARLES

What could be done I have done. I have offered,
In single fight, to combat for the crown.
I was refused. In vain my people bleed,
In vain my towns are levelled with the dust.
Shall I, like that unnatural mother, see
My child in pieces severed with the sword?
No; I forego my claim, that it may live.

DUNOIS

How, sire! Is this fit language for a king?
Is a crown thus renounced? Thy meanest subject,
For his opinion's sake, his hate and love,
Sets property and life upon a cast;
When civil war hangs out her bloody flag,
Each private end is drowned in party zeal.

The husbandman forsakes his plough, the wife
Neglects her distaff; children, and old men,
Don the rude garb of war; the citizen
Consigns his town to the devouring flames,
The peasant burns the produce of his fields;
And all to injure or advantage thee,
And to achieve the purpose of his heart.
Men show no mercy, and they wish for none,
When they at honor's call maintain the fight,
Or for their idols or their gods contend.
A truce to such effeminate pity, then,
Which is not suited to a monarch's breast.
Thou didst not heedlessly provoke the war;
As it commenced, so let it spend its fury.
It is the law of destiny that nations
Should for their monarchs immolate themselves.
We Frenchmen recognize this sacred law,
Nor would annul it. Base, indeed, the nation
That for its honor ventures not its all.

CHARLES (to the SENATORS)

You've heard my last resolve; expect no other.
May God protect you! I can do no more.

DUNOIS

As thou dost turn thy back upon thy realm,
So may the God of battle aye avert
His visage from thee. Thou forsak'st thyself,
So I forsake thee. Not the power combined
Of England and rebellious Burgundy,
Thy own mean spirit hurls thee from the throne.
Born heroes ever were the kings of France;
Thou wert a craven, even from thy birth.

[To the SENATORS.]

The king abandons you. But I will throw
Myself into your town – my father's town —
And 'neath its ruins find a soldier's grave.

[He is about to depart. AGNES SOREL detains him.]

SOREL (to the KING)

Oh, let him not depart in anger from thee!
Harsh words his lips have uttered, but his heart

Is true as gold. 'Tis he, himself, my king,
Who loves thee, and hath often bled for thee.
Dunois, confess, the heat of noble wrath
Made thee forget thyself; and oh, do thou
Forgive a faithful friend's o'erhasty speech!
Come, let me quickly reconcile your hearts,
Ere anger bursteth forth in quenchless flame.

[DUNOIS looks fixedly at the KING, and appears to await an answer.]

CHARLES

Our way lies over the Loire. Duchatel,
See all our equipage embarked.

DUNOIS (quickly to SOREL)

Farewell.

[He turns quickly round, and goes out. The SENATORS follow.]

SOREL (wringing her hands in despair)

Oh, if he goes, we are forsaken quite!
Follow, La Hire! Oh, seek to soften him!

[LA HIRE goes out.]

SCENE VI

CHARLES, SOREL, DUCHATEL.

CHARLES

Is, then, the sceptre such a peerless treasure?
Is it so hard to loose it from our grasp?
Believe me, 'tis more galling to endure
The domineering rule of these proud vassals.
To be dependent on their will and pleasure
Is, to a noble heart, more bitter far
Than to submit to fate.

[To DUCHATEL, who still lingers.]

Duchatel, go,
And do what I commanded.

DUCHATEL (throws himself at the KING'S feet)

Oh, my king!

CHARLES

No more! Thou'st heard my absolute resolve!

DUCHATEL

Sire, with the Duke of Burgundy make peace!
'Tis the sole outlet from destruction left!

CHARLES

Thou giv'st this counsel, and thy blood alone
Can ratify this peace.

DUCHATEL

Here is my head.

I oft have risked it for thee in the fight,
And with a joyful spirit I, for thee,
Would lay it down upon the block of death.
Conciliate the duke! Deliver me
To the full measure of his wrath, and let
My flowing blood appease the ancient hate.

**CHARLES (looks at him for some
time in silence, and with deep emotion)**

Can it be true? Am I, then, sunk so low,
That even friends, who read my inmost heart,
Point out for my escape the path of shame?
Yes, now I recognize my abject fall.
My honor is no more confided in.

DUCHATEL

Reflect —

CHARLES

Be silent, and incense me not!
Had I ten realms, on which to turn my back,
With my friend's life I would not purchase them.
Do what I have commanded. Hence, and see
My equipage embarked.

DUCHATEL

'Twill speedily
Be done.

[He stands up and retires. AGNES SOREL weeps passionately.]

SCENE VII

The royal palace at Chinon.

CHARLES, AGNES SOREL.

CHARLES (seizing the hand of AGNES)

My Agnes, be not sorrowful!
Beyond the Loire we still shall find a France;
We are departing to a happier land,
Where laughs a milder, an unclouded sky,
And gales more genial blow; we there shall meet
More gentle manners; song abideth there,
And love and life in richer beauty bloom.

SOREL

Oh, must I contemplate this day of woe!
The king must roam in banishment! the son
Depart, an exile from his father's house,
And turn his back upon his childhood's home!
Oh, pleasant, happy land that we forsake,
Ne'er shall we tread thee joyously again.

SCENE VIII

LA HIRE returns, CHARLES, SOREL.

SOREL

You come alone? You do not bring him back?

[Observing him more closely.]

La Hire! What news? What does that look announce?
Some new calamity?

LA HIRE

Calamity
Hath spent itself; sunshine is now returned.

SOREL

What is it? I implore you.

LA HIRE (to the KING)

Summon back
The delegates from Orleans.

CHARLES

Why? What is it?

LA HIRE

Summon them back! Thy fortune is reversed.
A battle has been fought, and thou hast conquered.

SOREL

Conquered! Oh, heavenly music of that word!

CHARLES

La Hire! A fabulous report deceives thee;
Conquered! In conquest I believe no more.

LA HIRE

Still greater wonders thou wilt soon believe.
Here cometh the archbishop. To thine arms
He leadeth back Dunois.

SOREL

O beauteous flower

Of victory, which doth the heavenly fruits
Of peace and reconciliation bear at once!

SCENE IX

The same, ARCHBISHOP of RHEIMS, DUNOIS, DUCHATEL, with RAOUL, a Knight in armor.

ARCHBISHOP (leading DUNOIS to the KING, and joining their hands).

Princes, embrace! Let rage and discord cease, Since Heaven itself hath for our cause declared.

[DUNOIS embraces the KING.]

CHARLES

Relieve my wonder and perplexity.

What may this solemn earnestness portend?

Whence this unlooked-for change of fortune?

ARCHBISHOP (leads the KNIGHT forward, and presents him to the KING)

Speak!

RAOUL

We had assembled sixteen regiments
Of Lotharingian troops to join your host;
And Baudricourt, a knight of Vaucouleurs,
Was our commander. Having gained the heights
By Vermanton, we wound our downward way
Into the valley watered by the Yonne.
There, in the plain before us, lay the foe,
And when we turned, arms glittered in our rear.
We saw ourselves surrounded by two hosts,
And could not hope for conquest or for flight.
Then sank the bravest heart, and in despair
We all prepared to lay our weapons down.
The leaders with each other anxiously
Sought counsel and found none; when to our eyes
A spectacle of wonder showed itself.
For suddenly from forth the thickets' depths
A maiden, on her head a polished helm,
Like a war-goddess, issued; terrible
Yet lovely was her aspect, and her hair
In dusky ringlets round her shoulders fell.
A heavenly radiance shone around the height;
When she upraised her voice and thus addressed us:
"Why be dismayed, brave Frenchmen? On the foe!

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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