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PERSONAL
RECOLLECTIONS OF
JOAN OF ARC —
VOLUME 2

Марк Твен

**Personal Recollections of
Joan of Arc — Volume 2**

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Содержание

BOOK II — IN COURT AND CAMP (Continued)	5
28 Joan Foretells Her Doom	5
29 Fierce Talbot Reconsiders	7
30 The Red Field of Patay	11
31 France Begins to Live Again	13
32 The Joyous News Flies Fast	15
33 Joan's Five Great Deeds	16
34 The Jests of the Burgundians	19
35 The Heir of France is Crowned	22
36 Joan Hears News from Home	27
37 Again to Arms	31
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	32

Mark Twain

Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc — Volume 2

BOOK II — IN COURT AND CAMP (Continued)

28 Joan Foretells Her Doom

THE TROOPS must have a rest. Two days would be allowed for this. The morning of the 14th I was writing from Joan's dictation in a small room which she sometimes used as a private office when she wanted to get away from officials and their interruptions. Catherine Boucher came in and sat down and said:

"Joan, dear, I want you to talk to me."

"Indeed, I am not sorry for that, but glad. What is in your mind?"

"This. I scarcely slept last night, for thinking of the dangers you are running. The Paladin told me how you made the duke stand out of the way when the cannon-balls were flying all about, and so saved his life."

"Well, that was right, wasn't it?"

"Right? Yes; but you stayed there yourself. Why will you do like that? It seems such a wanton risk."

"Oh, no, it was not so. I was not in any danger."

"How can you say that, Joan, with those deadly things flying all about you?"

Joan laughed, and tried to turn the subject, but Catherine persisted. She said:

"It was horribly dangerous, and it could not be necessary to stay in such a place. And you led an assault again. Joan, it is tempting Providence. I want you to make me a promise. I want you to promise me that you will let others lead the assaults, if there must be assaults, and that you will take better care of yourself in those dreadful battles. Will you?"

But Joan fought away from the promise and did not give it. Catherine sat troubled and discontented awhile, then she said:

"Joan, are you going to be a soldier always? These wars are so long — so long. They last forever and ever and ever."

There was a glad flash in Joan's eye as she cried:

"This campaign will do all the really hard work that is in front of it in the next four days. The rest of it will be gentler — oh, far less bloody. Yes, in four days France will gather another trophy like the redemption of Orleans and make her second long step toward freedom!"

Catherine started (and so did I); then she gazed long at Joan like one in a trance, murmuring "four days — four days," as if to herself and unconsciously. Finally she asked, in a low voice that had something of awe in it:

"Joan, tell me — how is it that you know that? For you do know it, I think."

"Yes," said Joan, dreamily, "I know — I know. I shall strike — and strike again. And before the fourth day is finished I shall strike yet again." She became silent. We sat wondering and still. This was for a whole minute, she looking at the floor and her lips moving but uttering nothing. Then came these words, but hardly audible: "And in a thousand years the English power in France will not rise up from that blow."

It made my flesh creep. It was uncanny. She was in a trance again — I could see it — just as she was that day in the pastures of Domremy when she prophesied about us boys in the war and afterward did not know that she had done it. She was not conscious now; but Catherine did not know that, and so she said, in a happy voice:

“Oh, I believe it, I believe it, and I am so glad! Then you will come back and bide with us all your life long, and we will love you so, and honor you!”

A scarcely perceptible spasm flitted across Joan’s face, and the dreamy voice muttered:

“Before two years are sped I shall die a cruel death!”

I sprang forward with a warning hand up. That is why Catherine did not scream. She was going to do that — I saw it plainly. Then I whispered her to slip out of the place, and say nothing of what had happened. I said Joan was asleep — asleep and dreaming. Catherine whispered back, and said:

“Oh, I am so grateful that it is only a dream! It sounded like prophecy.” And she was gone.

Like prophecy! I knew it was prophecy; and I sat down crying, as knowing we should lose her. Soon she started, shivering slightly, and came to herself, and looked around and saw me crying there, and jumped out of her chair and ran to me all in a whirl of sympathy and compassion, and put her hand on my head, and said:

“My poor boy! What is it? Look up and tell me.”

I had to tell her a lie; I grieved to do it, but there was no other way. I picked up an old letter from my table, written by Heaven knows who, about some matter Heaven knows what, and told her I had just gotten it from Pere Fronte, and that in it it said the children’s Fairy Tree had been chopped down by some miscreant or other, and — I got no further. She snatched the letter from my hand and searched it up and down and all over, turning it this way and that, and sobbing great sobs, and the tears flowing down her cheeks, and ejaculating all the time, “Oh, cruel, cruel! how could any be so heartless? Ah, poor Arbre Fee de Bourlemont gone — and we children loved it so! Show me the place where it says it!”

And I, still lying, showed her the pretended fatal words on the pretended fatal page, and she gazed at them through her tears, and said she could see herself that they were hateful, ugly words — they “had the very look of it.”

Then we heard a strong voice down the corridor announcing:

“His majesty’s messenger — with despatches for her Excellency the Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of France!”

29 Fierce Talbot Reconsiders

I KNEW she had seen the wisdom of the Tree. But when? I could not know. Doubtless before she had lately told the King to use her, for that she had but one year left to work in. It had not occurred to me at the time, but the conviction came upon me now that at that time she had already seen the Tree. It had brought her a welcome message; that was plain, otherwise she could not have been so joyous and light-hearted as she had been these latter days. The death-warning had nothing dismal about it for her; no, it was remission of exile, it was leave to come home.

Yes, she had seen the Tree. No one had taken the prophecy to heart which she made to the King; and for a good reason, no doubt; no one wanted to take it to heart; all wanted to banish it away and forget it. And all had succeeded, and would go on to the end placid and comfortable. All but me alone. I must carry my awful secret without any to help me. A heavy load, a bitter burden; and would cost me a daily heartbreak. She was to die; and so soon. I had never dreamed of that. How could I, and she so strong and fresh and young, and every day earning a new right to a peaceful and honored old age? For at that time I thought old age valuable. I do not know why, but I thought so. All young people think it, I believe, they being ignorant and full of superstitions. She had seen the Tree. All that miserable night those ancient verses went floating back and forth through my brain:

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

But at dawn the bugles and the drums burst through the dreamy hush of the morning, and it was turn out all! mount and ride. For there was red work to be done.

We marched to Meung without halting. There we carried the bridge by assault, and left a force to hold it, the rest of the army marching away next morning toward Beaugency, where the lion Talbot, the terror of the French, was in command. When we arrived at that place, the English retired into the castle and we sat down in the abandoned town.

Talbot was not at the moment present in person, for he had gone away to watch for and welcome Fastolfe and his reinforcement of five thousand men.

Joan placed her batteries and bombarded the castle till night. Then some news came: Richemont, Constable of France, this long time in disgrace with the King, largely because of the evil machinations of La Tremouille and his party, was approaching with a large body of men to offer his services to Joan — and very much she needed them, now that Fastolfe was so close by. Richemont had wanted to join us before, when we first marched on Orleans; but the foolish King, slave of those paltry advisers of his, warned him to keep his distance and refused all reconciliation with him.

I go into these details because they are important. Important because they lead up to the exhibition of a new gift in Joan's extraordinary mental make-up — statesmanship. It is a sufficiently strange thing to find that great quality in an ignorant country-girl of seventeen and a half, but she had it.

Joan was for receiving Richemont cordially, and so was La Hire and the two young Laval and other chiefs, but the Lieutenant-General, d'Alencon, strenuously and stubbornly opposed it. He said he had absolute orders from the King to deny and defy Richemont, and that if they were overridden he would leave the army. This would have been a heavy disaster, indeed. But Joan set herself the task of persuading him that the salvation of France took precedence of all minor things — even the commands of a sceptered ass; and she accomplished it. She persuaded him to disobey the King in the interest of the nation, and to be reconciled to Count Richemont and welcome him. That was

statesmanship; and of the highest and soundest sort. Whatever thing men call great, look for it in Joan of Arc, and there you will find it.

In the early morning, June 17th, the scouts reported the approach of Talbot and Fastolfe with Fastolfe's succoring force. Then the drums beat to arms; and we set forth to meet the English, leaving Richemont and his troops behind to watch the castle of Beaugency and keep its garrison at home. By and by we came in sight of the enemy. Fastolfe had tried to convince Talbot that it would be wisest to retreat and not risk a battle with Joan at this time, but distribute the new levies among the English strongholds of the Loire, thus securing them against capture; then be patient and wait — wait for more levies from Paris; let Joan exhaust her army with fruitless daily skirmishing; then at the right time fall upon her in resistless mass and annihilate her. He was a wise old experienced general, was Fastolfe. But that fierce Talbot would hear of no delay. He was in a rage over the punishment which the Maid had inflicted upon him at Orleans and since, and he swore by God and Saint George that he would have it out with her if he had to fight her all alone. So Fastolfe yielded, though he said they were now risking the loss of everything which the English had gained by so many years' work and so many hard knocks.

The enemy had taken up a strong position, and were waiting, in order of battle, with their archers to the front and a stockade before them.

Night was coming on. A messenger came from the English with a rude defiance and an offer of battle. But Joan's dignity was not ruffled, her bearing was not discomposed. She said to the herald:

"Go back and say it is too late to meet to-night; but to-morrow, please God and our Lady, we will come to close quarters."

The night fell dark and rainy. It was that sort of light steady rain which falls so softly and brings to one's spirit such serenity and peace. About ten o'clock D'Alencon, the Bastard of Orleans, La Hire, Pothon of Saintrailles, and two or three other generals came to our headquarters tent, and sat down to discuss matters with Joan. Some thought it was a pity that Joan had declined battle, some thought not. Then Pothon asked her why she had declined it. She said:

"There was more than one reason. These English are ours — they cannot get away from us. Wherefore there is no need to take risks, as at other times. The day was far spent. It is good to have much time and the fair light of day when one's force is in a weakened state — nine hundred of us yonder keeping the bridge of Meung under the Marshal de Rais, fifteen hundred with the Constable of France keeping the bridge and watching the castle of Beaugency."

Dunois said:

"I grieve for this decision, Excellency, but it cannot be helped. And the case will be the same the morrow, as to that."

Joan was walking up and down just then. She laughed her affectionate, comradely laugh, and stopping before that old war-tiger she put her small hand above his head and touched one of his plumes, saying:

"Now tell me, wise man, which feather is it that I touch?"

"In sooth, Excellency, that I cannot."

"Name of God, Bastard, Bastard! you cannot tell me this small thing, yet are bold to name a large one — telling us what is in the stomach of the unborn morrow: that we shall not have those men. Now it is my thought that they will be with us."

That made a stir. All wanted to know why she thought that. But La Hire took the word and said:

"Let be. If she thinks it, that is enough. It will happen."

Then Pothon of Saintrailles said:

"There were other reasons for declining battle, according to the saying of your Excellency?"

"Yes. One was that we being weak and the day far gone, the battle might not be decisive. When it is fought it must be decisive. And it shall be."

"God grant it, and amen. There were still other reasons?"

“One other — yes.” She hesitated a moment, then said: “This was not the day. To-morrow is the day. It is so written.”

They were going to assail her with eager questionings, but she put up her hand and prevented them. Then she said:

“It will be the most noble and beneficent victory that God has vouchsafed for France at any time. I pray you question me not as to whence or how I know this thing, but be content that it is so.”

There was pleasure in every face, and conviction and high confidence. A murmur of conversation broke out, but that was interrupted by a messenger from the outposts who brought news — namely, that for an hour there had been stir and movement in the English camp of a sort unusual at such a time and with a resting army, he said. Spies had been sent under cover of the rain and darkness to inquire into it. They had just come back and reported that large bodies of men had been dimly made out who were slipping stealthily away in the direction of Meung.

The generals were very much surprised, as any might tell from their faces.

“It is a retreat,” said Joan.

“It has that look,” said D’Alencon.

“It certainly has,” observed the Bastard and La Hire.

“It was not to be expected,” said Louis de Bourbon, “but one can divine the purpose of it.”

“Yes,” responded Joan. “Talbot has reflected. His rash brain has cooled. He thinks to take the bridge of Meung and escape to the other side of the river. He knows that this leaves his garrison of Beaugency at the mercy of fortune, to escape our hands if it can; but there is no other course if he would avoid this battle, and that he also knows. But he shall not get the bridge. We will see to that.”

“Yes,” said D’Alencon, “we must follow him, and take care of that matter. What of Beaugency?”

“Leave Beaugency to me, gentle duke; I will have it in two hours, and at no cost of blood.”

“It is true, Excellency. You will but need to deliver this news there and receive the surrender.”

“Yes. And I will be with you at Meung with the dawn, fetching the Constable and his fifteen hundred; and when Talbot knows that Beaugency has fallen it will have an effect upon him.”

“By the mass, yes!” cried La Hire. “He will join his Meung garrison to his army and break for Paris. Then we shall have our bridge force with us again, along with our Beaugency watchers, and be stronger for our great day’s work by four-and-twenty hundred able soldiers, as was here promised within the hour. Verily this Englishman is doing our errands for us and saving us much blood and trouble. Orders, Excellency — give us orders!”

“They are simple. Let the men rest three hours longer. At one o’clock the advance-guard will march, under our command, with Pothon of Saintrilles as second; the second division will follow at two under the Lieutenant-General. Keep well in the rear of the enemy, and see to it that you avoid an engagement. I will ride under guard to Beaugency and make so quick work there that I and the Constable of France will join you before dawn with his men.”

She kept her word. Her guard mounted and we rode off through the pattering rain, taking with us a captured English officer to confirm Joan’s news. We soon covered the journey and summoned the castle. Richard Guetin, Talbot’s lieutenant, being convinced that he and his five hundred men were left helpless, conceded that it would be useless to try to hold out. He could not expect easy terms, yet Joan granted them nevertheless. His garrison could keep their horses and arms, and carry away property to the value of a silver mark per man. They could go whither they pleased, but must not take arms against France again under ten days.

Before dawn we were with our army again, and with us the Constable and nearly all his men, for we left only a small garrison in Beaugency castle. We heard the dull booming of cannon to the front, and knew that Talbot was beginning his attack on the bridge. But some time before it was yet light the sound ceased and we heard it no more.

Guetin had sent a messenger through our lines under a safe-conduct given by Joan, to tell Talbot of the surrender. Of course this poursuivant had arrived ahead of us. Talbot had held it wisdom to

turn now and retreat upon Paris. When daylight came he had disappeared; and with him Lord Scales and the garrison of Meung.

What a harvest of English strongholds we had reaped in those three days! — strongholds which had defied France with quite cool confidence and plenty of it until we came.

30 The Red Field of Patay

WHEN THE morning broke at last on that forever memorable 18th of June, there was no enemy discoverable anywhere, as I have said. But that did not trouble me. I knew we should find him, and that we should strike him; strike him the promised blow — the one from which the English power in France would not rise up in a thousand years, as Joan had said in her trance.

The enemy had plunged into the wide plains of La Beauce — a roadless waste covered with bushes, with here and there bodies of forest trees — a region where an army would be hidden from view in a very little while. We found the trail in the soft wet earth and followed it. It indicated an orderly march; no confusion, no panic.

But we had to be cautious. In such a piece of country we could walk into an ambush without any trouble. Therefore Joan sent bodies of cavalry ahead under La Hire, Pothon, and other captains, to feel the way. Some of the other officers began to show uneasiness; this sort of hide-and-go-seek business troubled them and made their confidence a little shaky. Joan divined their state of mind and cried out impetuously:

“Name of God, what would you? We must smite these English, and we will. They shall not escape us. Though they were hung to the clouds we would get them!”

By and by we were nearing Patay; it was about a league away. Now at this time our reconnoissance, feeling its way in the bush, frightened a deer, and it went bounding away and was out of sight in a moment. Then hardly a minute later a dull great shout went up in the distance toward Patay. It was the English soldiery. They had been shut up in a garrison so long on moldy food that they could not keep their delight to themselves when this fine fresh meat came springing into their midst. Poor creature, it had wrought damage to a nation which loved it well. For the French knew where the English were now, whereas the English had no suspicion of where the French were.

La Hire halted where he was, and sent back the tidings. Joan was radiant with joy. The Duke d’Alencon said to her:

“Very well, we have found them; shall we fight them?”

“Have you good spurs, prince?”

“Why? Will they make us run away?”

“Nenni, en nom de Dieu! These English are ours — they are lost. They will fly. Who overtakes them will need good spurs. Forward — close up!”

By the time we had come up with La Hire the English had discovered our presence. Talbot’s force was marching in three bodies. First his advance-guard; then his artillery; then his battle-corps a good way in the rear. He was now out of the bush and in a fair open country. He at once posted his artillery, his advance-guard, and five hundred picked archers along some hedges where the French would be obliged to pass, and hoped to hold this position till his battle-corps could come up. Sir John Fastolfe urged the battle-corps into a gallop. Joan saw her opportunity and ordered La Hire to advance — which La Hire promptly did, launching his wild riders like a storm-wind, his customary fashion.

The duke and the Bastard wanted to follow, but Joan said:

“Not yet — wait.”

So they waited — impatiently, and fidgeting in their saddles. But she was ready — gazing straight before her, measuring, weighing, calculating — by shades, minutes, fractions of minutes, seconds — with all her great soul present, in eye, and set of head, and noble pose of body — but patient, steady, master of herself — master of herself and of the situation.

And yonder, receding, receding, plumes lifting and falling, lifting and falling, streamed the thundering charge of La Hire’s godless crew, La Hire’s great figure dominating it and his sword stretched aloft like a flagstaff.

“Oh, Satan and his Hellions, see them go!” Somebody muttered it in deep admiration.

And now he was closing up — closing up on Fastolfe's rushing corps.

And now he struck it — struck it hard, and broke its order. It lifted the duke and the Bastard in their saddles to see it; and they turned, trembling with excitement, to Joan, saying:

“Now!”

But she put up her hand, still gazing, weighing, calculating, and said again:

“Wait — not yet.”

Fastolfe's hard-driven battle-corps raged on like an avalanche toward the waiting advance-guard. Suddenly these conceived the idea that it was flying in panic before Joan; and so in that instant it broke and swarmed away in a mad panic itself, with Talbot storming and cursing after it.

Now was the golden time. Joan drove her spurs home and waved the advance with her sword. “Follow me!” she cried, and bent her head to her horse's neck and sped away like the wind!

We went down into the confusion of that flying rout, and for three long hours we cut and hacked and stabbed. At last the bugles sang “Halt!”

The Battle of Patay was won.

Joan of Arc dismounted, and stood surveying that awful field, lost in thought. Presently she said:

“The praise is to God. He has smitten with a heavy hand this day.” After a little she lifted her face, and looking afar off, said, with the manner of one who is thinking aloud, “In a thousand years — a thousand years — the English power in France will not rise up from this blow.” She stood again a time thinking, then she turned toward her grouped generals, and there was a glory in her face and a noble light in her eye; and she said:

“Oh, friends, friends, do you know? — do you comprehend? France is on the way to be free!”

“And had never been, but for Joan of Arc!” said La Hire, passing before her and bowing low, the other following and doing likewise; he muttering as he went, “I will say it though I be damned for it.” Then battalion after battalion of our victorious army swung by, wildly cheering. And they shouted, “Live forever, Maid of Orleans, live forever!” while Joan, smiling, stood at the salute with her sword.

This was not the last time I saw the Maid of Orleans on the red field of Patay. Toward the end of the day I came upon her where the dead and dying lay stretched all about in heaps and winrows; our men had mortally wounded an English prisoner who was too poor to pay a ransom, and from a distance she had seen that cruel thing done; and had galloped to the place and sent for a priest, and now she was holding the head of her dying enemy in her lap, and easing him to his death with comforting soft words, just as his sister might have done; and the womanly tears running down her face all the time. (1)

(1) Lord Ronald Gower (Joan of Arc, p. 82) says: “Michelet discovered this story in the deposition of Joan of Arc's page, Louis de Conte, who was probably an eye-witness of the scene.” This is true. It was a part of the testimony of the author of these “Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc,” given by him in the Rehabilitation proceedings of 1456. — TRANSLATOR.

31 France Begins to Live Again

JOAN HAD said true: France was on the way to be free

The war called the Hundred Years' War was very sick to-day. Sick on its English side — for the very first time since its birth, ninety-one years gone by.

Shall we judge battles by the numbers killed and the ruin wrought? Or shall we not rather judge them by the results which flowed from them? Any one will say that a battle is only truly great or small according to its results. Yes, any one will grant that, for it is the truth.

Judged by results, Patay's place is with the few supremely great and imposing battles that have been fought since the peoples of the world first resorted to arms for the settlement of their quarrels. So judged, it is even possible that Patay has no peer among that few just mentioned, but stand alone, as the supremest of historic conflicts. For when it began France lay gasping out the remnant of an exhausted life, her case wholly hopeless in the view of all political physicians; when it ended, three hours later, she was convalescent. Convalescent, and nothing requisite but time and ordinary nursing to bring her back to perfect health. The dullest physician of them all could see this, and there was none to deny it.

Many death-sick nations have reached convalescence through a series of battles, a procession of battles, a weary tale of wasting conflicts stretching over years, but only one has reached it in a single day and by a single battle. That nation is France, and that battle Patay.

Remember it and be proud of it; for you are French, and it is the stateliest fact in the long annals of your country. There it stands, with its head in the clouds! And when you grow up you will go on pilgrimage to the field of Patay, and stand uncovered in the presence of — what? A monument with its head in the clouds? Yes. For all nations in all times have built monuments on their battle-fields to keep green the memory of the perishable deed that was wrought there and of the perishable name of him who wrought it; and will France neglect Patay and Joan of Arc? Not for long. And will she build a monument scaled to their rank as compared with the world's other fields and heroes? Perhaps — if there be room for it under the arch of the sky.

But let us look back a little, and consider certain strange and impressive facts. The Hundred Years' War began in 1337. It raged on and on, year after year and year after year; and at last England stretched France prone with that fearful blow at Crecy. But she rose and struggled on, year after year, and at last again she went down under another devastating blow — Poitiers. She gathered her crippled strength once more, and the war raged on, and on, and still on, year after year, decade after decade. Children were born, grew up, married, died — the war raged on; their children in turn grew up, married, died — the war raged on; their children, growing, saw France struck down again; this time under the incredible disaster of Agincourt — and still the war raged on, year after year, and in time these children married in their turn.

France was a wreck, a ruin, a desolation. The half of it belonged to England, with none to dispute or deny the truth; the other half belonged to nobody — in three months would be flying the English flag; the French King was making ready to throw away his crown and flee beyond the seas.

Now came the ignorant country-maid out of her remote village and confronted this hoary war, this all-consuming conflagration that had swept the land for three generations. Then began the briefest and most amazing campaign that is recorded in history. In seven weeks it was finished. In seven weeks she hopelessly crippled that gigantic war that was ninety-one years old. At Orleans she struck it a staggering blow; on the field of Patay she broke its back.

Think of it. Yes, one can do that; but understand it? Ah, that is another matter; none will ever be able to comprehend that stupefying marvel.

Seven weeks — with her and there a little bloodshed. Perhaps the most of it, in any single fight, at Patay, where the English began six thousand strong and left two thousand dead upon the field. It is said and believed that in three battles alone — Crecy, Poitiers, and Agincourt — near a hundred thousand Frenchmen fell, without counting the thousand other fights of that long war. The dead of that war make a mournful long list — an interminable list. Of men slain in the field the count goes by tens of thousands; of innocent women and children slain by bitter hardship and hunger it goes by that appalling term, millions.

It was an ogre, that war; an ogre that went about for near a hundred years, crunching men and dripping blood from its jaws. And with her little hand that child of seventeen struck him down; and yonder he lies stretched on the field of Patay, and will not get up any more while this old world lasts.

32 The Joyous News Flies Fast

THE GREAT news of Patay was carried over the whole of France in twenty hours, people said. I do not know as to that; but one thing is sure, anyway: the moment a man got it he flew shouting and glorifying God and told his neighbor; and that neighbor flew with it to the next homestead; and so on and so on without resting the word traveled; and when a man got it in the night, at what hour soever, he jumped out of his bed and bore the blessed message along. And the joy that went with it was like the light that flows across the land when an eclipse is receding from the face of the sun; and, indeed, you may say that France had lain in an eclipse this long time; yes, buried in a black gloom which these beneficent tidings were sweeping away now before the onrush of their white splendor.

The news beat the flying enemy to Yeuville, and the town rose against its English masters and shut the gates against their brethren. It flew to Mont Pipeau, to Saint Simon, and to this, that, and the other English fortress; and straightway the garrison applied the torch and took to the fields and the woods. A detachment of our army occupied Meung and pillaged it.

When we reached Orleans that tow was as much as fifty times insaner with joy than we had ever seen it before — which is saying much. Night had just fallen, and the illuminations were on so wonderful a scale that we seemed to plow through seas of fire; and as to the noise — the hoarse cheering of the multitude, the thundering of cannon, the clash of bells — indeed, there was never anything like it. And everywhere rose a new cry that burst upon us like a storm when the column entered the gates, and nevermore ceased: “Welcome to Joan of Arc — way for the SAVIOR OF FRANCE!” And there was another cry: “Crecy is avenged! Poitiers is avenged! Agincourt is avenged! — Patay shall live forever!”

Mad? Why, you never could imagine it in the world. The prisoners were in the center of the column. When that came along and the people caught sight of their masterful old enemy Talbot, that had made them dance so long to his grim war-music, you may imagine what the uproar was like if you can, for I can not describe it. They were so glad to see him that presently they wanted to have him out and hang him; so Joan had him brought up to the front to ride in her protection. They made a striking pair.

33 Joan's Five Great Deeds

YES, ORLEANS was in a delirium of felicity. She invited the King, and made sumptuous preparations to receive him, but — he didn't come. He was simply a serf at that time, and La Tremouille was his master. Master and serf were visiting together at the master's castle of Sully-sur-Loire.

At Beaugency Joan had engaged to bring about a reconciliation between the Constable Richemont and the King. She took Richemont to Sully-sur-Loire and made her promise good.

The great deeds of Joan of Arc are five:

1. The Raising of the Siege.
2. The Victory of Patay.
3. The Reconciliation at Sully-sur-Loire.
4. The Coronation of the King.
5. The Bloodless March.

We shall come to the Bloodless March presently (and the Coronation). It was the victorious long march which Joan made through the enemy's country from Gien to Rheims, and thence to the gates of Paris, capturing every English town and fortress that barred the road, from the beginning of the journey to the end of it; and this by the mere force of her name, and without shedding a drop of blood — perhaps the most extraordinary campaign in this regard in history — this is the most glorious of her military exploits.

The Reconciliation was one of Joan's most important achievements. No one else could have accomplished it; and, in fact, no one else of high consequence had any disposition to try. In brains, in scientific warfare, and in statesmanship the Constable Richemont was the ablest man in France. His loyalty was sincere; his probity was above suspicion — (and it made him sufficiently conspicuous in that trivial and conscienceless Court).

In restoring Richemont to France, Joan made thoroughly secure the successful completion of the great work which she had begun. She had never seen Richemont until he came to her with his little army. Was it not wonderful that at a glance she should know him for the one man who could finish and perfect her work and establish it in perpetuity? How was it that that child was able to do this? It was because she had the "seeing eye," as one of our knights had once said. Yes, she had that great gift — almost the highest and rarest that has been granted to man. Nothing of an extraordinary sort was still to be done, yet the remaining work could not safely be left to the King's idiots; for it would require wise statesmanship and long and patient though desultory hammering of the enemy. Now and then, for a quarter of a century yet, there would be a little fighting to do, and a handy man could carry that on with small disturbance to the rest of the country; and little by little, and with progressive certainty, the English would disappear from France.

And that happened. Under the influence of Richemont the King became at a later time a man — a man, a king, a brave and capable and determined soldier. Within six years after Patay he was leading storming parties himself; fighting in fortress ditches up to his waist in water, and climbing scaling-ladders under a furious fire with a pluck that would have satisfied even Joan of Arc. In time he and Richemont cleared away all the English; even from regions where the people had been under their mastership for three hundred years. In such regions wise and careful work was necessary, for the English rule had been fair and kindly; and men who have been ruled in that way are not always anxious for a change.

Which of Joan's five chief deeds shall we call the chiefest? It is my thought that each in its turn was that. This is saying that, taken as a whole, they equalized each other, and neither was then greater than its mate.

Do you perceive? Each was a stage in an ascent. To leave out one of them would defeat the journey; to achieve one of them at the wrong time and in the wrong place would have the same effect.

Consider the Coronation. As a masterpiece of diplomacy, where can you find its superior in our history? Did the King suspect its vast importance? No. Did his ministers? No. Did the astute Bedford, representative of the English crown? No. An advantage of incalculable importance was here under the eyes of the King and of Bedford; the King could get it by a bold stroke, Bedford could get it without an effort; but, being ignorant of its value, neither of them put forth his hand. Of all the wise people in high office in France, only one knew the priceless worth of this neglected prize — the untaught child of seventeen, Joan of Arc — and she had known it from the beginning as an essential detail of her mission.

How did she know it? It was simple: she was a peasant. That tells the whole story. She was of the people and knew the people; those others moved in a loftier sphere and knew nothing much about them. We make little account of that vague, formless, inert mass, that mighty underlying force which we call “the people” — an epithet which carries contempt with it. It is a strange attitude; for at bottom we know that the throne which the people support stands, and that when that support is removed nothing in this world can save it.

Now, then, consider this fact, and observe its importance. Whatever the parish priest believes his flock believes; they love him, they revere him; he is their unfailing friend, their dauntless protector, their comforter in sorrow, their helper in their day of need; he has their whole confidence; what he tells them to do, that they will do, with a blind and affectionate obedience, let it cost what it may. Add these facts thoughtfully together, and what is the sum? This: The parish priest governs the nation. What is the King, then, if the parish priest withdraws his support and deny his authority? Merely a shadow and no King; let him resign.

Do you get that idea? Then let us proceed. A priest is consecrated to his office by the awful hand of God, laid upon him by his appointed representative on earth. That consecration is final; nothing can undo it, nothing can remove it. Neither the Pope nor any other power can strip the priest of his office; God gave it, and it is forever sacred and secure. The dull parish knows all this. To priest and parish, whatsoever is anointed of God bears an office whose authority can no longer be disputed or assailed. To the parish priest, and to his subjects the nation, an uncrowned king is a similitude of a person who has been named for holy orders but has not been consecrated; he has no office, he has not been ordained, another may be appointed to his place. In a word, an uncrowned king is a doubtful king; but if God appoint him and His servant the Bishop anoint him, the doubt is annihilated; the priest and the parish are his loyal subjects straightway, and while he lives they will recognize no king but him.

To Joan of Arc, the peasant-girl, Charles VII. was no King until he was crowned; to her he was only the Dauphin; that is to say, the heir. If I have ever made her call him King, it was a mistake; she called him the Dauphin, and nothing else until after the Coronation. It shows you as in a mirror — for Joan was a mirror in which the lowly hosts of France were clearly reflected — that to all that vast underlying force called “the people,” he was no King but only Dauphin before his crowning, and was indisputably and irrevocably King after it.

Now you understand what a colossal move on the political chess-board the Coronation was. Bedford realized this by and by, and tried to patch up his mistake by crowning his King; but what good could that do? None in the world.

Speaking of chess, Joan’s great acts may be likened to that game. Each move was made in its proper order, and it was great and effective because it was made in its proper order and not out of it. Each, at the time made, seemed the greatest move; but the final result made them all recognizable as equally essential and equally important. This is the game, as played:

1. Joan moves to Orleans and Patay — check.
2. Then moves the Reconciliation — but does not proclaim check, it being a move for position, and to take effect later.

3. Next she moves the Coronation — check.
4. Next, the Bloodless March — check.
5. Final move (after her death), the reconciled Constable Richemont to the French King's elbow — checkmate.

34 The Jests of the Burgundians

THE CAMPAIGN of the Loire had as good as opened the road to Rheims. There was no sufficient reason now why the Coronation should not take place. The Coronation would complete the mission which Joan had received from heaven, and then she would be forever done with war, and would fly home to her mother and her sheep, and never stir from the hearthstone and happiness any more. That was her dream; and she could not rest, she was so impatient to see it fulfilled. She became so possessed with this matter that I began to lose faith in her two prophecies of her early death — and, of course, when I found that faith wavering I encouraged it to waver all the more.

The King was afraid to start to Rheims, because the road was mile-posted with English fortresses, so to speak. Joan held them in light esteem and not things to be afraid of in the existing modified condition of English confidence.

And she was right. As it turned out, the march to Rheims was nothing but a holiday excursion: Joan did not even take any artillery along, she was so sure it would not be necessary. We marched from Gien twelve thousand strong. This was the 29th of June. The Maid rode by the side of the King; on his other side was the Duke d'Alencon. After the duke followed three other princes of the blood. After these followed the Bastard of Orleans, the Marshal de Boussac, and the Admiral of France. After these came La Hire, Saintrailles, Tremouille, and a long procession of knights and nobles.

We rested three days before Auxerre. The city provisioned the army, and a deputation waited upon the King, but we did not enter the place.

Saint-Florentin opened its gates to the King.

On the 4th of July we reached Saint-Fal, and yonder lay Troyes before us — a town which had a burning interest for us boys; for we remembered how seven years before, in the pastures of Domremy, the Sunflower came with his black flag and brought us the shameful news of the Treaty of Troyes — that treaty which gave France to England, and a daughter of our royal line in marriage to the Butcher of Agincourt. That poor town was not to blame, of course; yet we flushed hot with that old memory, and hoped there would be a misunderstanding here, for we dearly wanted to storm the place and burn it. It was powerfully garrisoned by English and Burgundian soldiery, and was expecting reinforcements from Paris. Before night we camped before its gates and made rough work with a sortie which marched out against us.

Joan summoned Troyes to surrender. Its commandant, seeing that she had no artillery, scoffed at the idea, and sent her a grossly insulting reply. Five days we consulted and negotiated. No result. The King was about to turn back now and give up. He was afraid to go on, leaving this strong place in his rear. Then La Hire put in a word, with a slap in it for some of his Majesty's advisers:

"The Maid of Orleans undertook this expedition of her own motion; and it is my mind that it is her judgment that should be followed here, and not that of any other, let him be of whatsoever breed and standing he may."

There was wisdom and righteousness in that. So the King sent for the Maid, and asked her how she thought the prospect looked. She said, without any tone of doubt or question in her voice:

"In three days' time the place is ours."

The smug Chancellor put in a word now:

"If we were sure of it we would wait her six days."

"Six days, forsooth! Name of God, man, we will enter the gates to-morrow!"

Then she mounted, and rode her lines, crying out:

"Make preparation — to your work, friends, to your work! We assault at dawn!"

She worked hard that night, slaving away with her own hands like a common soldier. She ordered fascines and fagots to be prepared and thrown into the fosse, thereby to bridge it; and in this rough labor she took a man's share.

At dawn she took her place at the head of the storming force and the bugles blew the assault. At that moment a flag of truce was flung to the breeze from the walls, and Troyes surrendered without firing a shot.

The next day the King with Joan at his side and the Paladin bearing her banner entered the town in state at the head of the army. And a goodly army it was now, for it had been growing ever bigger and bigger from the first.

And now a curious thing happened. By the terms of the treaty made with the town the garrison of English and Burgundian soldiery were to be allowed to carry away their “goods” with them. This was well, for otherwise how would they buy the wherewithal to live? Very well; these people were all to go out by the one gate, and at the time set for them to depart we young fellows went to that gate, along with the Dwarf, to see the march-out. Presently here they came in an interminable file, the foot-soldiers in the lead. As they approached one could see that each bore a burden of a bulk and weight to sorely tax his strength; and we said among ourselves, truly these folk are well off for poor common soldiers. When they were come nearer, what do you think? Every rascal of them had a French prisoner on his back! They were carrying away their “goods,” you see — their property — strictly according to the permission granted by the treaty.

Now think how clever that was, how ingenious. What could a body say? what could a body do? For certainly these people were within their right. These prisoners were property; nobody could deny that. My dears, if those had been English captives, conceive of the richness of that booty! For English prisoners had been scarce and precious for a hundred years; whereas it was a different matter with French prisoners. They had been over-abundant for a century. The possessor of a French prisoner did not hold him long for ransom, as a rule, but presently killed him to save the cost of his keep. This shows you how small was the value of such a possession in those times. When we took Troyes a calf was worth thirty francs, a sheep sixteen, a French prisoner eight. It was an enormous price for those other animals — a price which naturally seems incredible to you. It was the war, you see. It worked two ways: it made meat dear and prisoners cheap.

Well, here were these poor Frenchmen being carried off. What could we do? Very little of a permanent sort, but we did what we could. We sent a messenger flying to Joan, and we and the French guards halted the procession for a parley — to gain time, you see. A big Burgundian lost his temper and swore a great oath that none should stop him; he would go, and would take his prisoner with him. But we blocked him off, and he saw that he was mistaken about going — he couldn't do it. He exploded into the maddest cursings and revilings, then, and, unlashng his prisoner from his back, stood him up, all bound and helpless; then drew his knife, and said to us with a light of sarcastring triumph in his eye:

“I may not carry him away, you say — yet he is mine, none will dispute it. Since I may not convey him hence, this property of mine, there is another way. Yes, I can kill him; not even the dullest among you will question that right. Ah, you had not thought of that — vermin!”

That poor starved fellow begged us with his piteous eyes to save him; then spoke, and said he had a wife and little children at home. Think how it wrung our heartstrings. But what could we do? The Burgundian was within his right. We could only beg and plead for the prisoner. Which we did. And the Burgundian enjoyed it. He stayed his hand to hear more of it, and laugh at it. That stung. Then the Dwarf said:

“Prithee, young sirs, let me beguile him; for when a matter requiring permission is to the fore, I have indeed a gift in that sort, as any will tell you that know me well. You smile; and that is punishment for my vanity; and fairly earned, I grant you. Still, if I may toy a little, just a little — ” saying which he stepped to the Burgundian and began a fair soft speech, all of goodly and gentle tenor; and in the midst he mentioned the Maid; and was going on to say how she out of her good heart would prize and praise this compassionate deed which he was about to — It was as far as he got. The Burgundian

burst into his smooth oration with an insult leveled at Joan of Arc. We sprang forward, but the Dwarf, his face all livid, brushed us aside and said, in a most grave and earnest way:

“I crave your patience. Am not I her guard of honor? This is my affair.”

And saying this he suddenly shot his right hand out and gripped the great Burgundian by the throat, and so held him upright on his feet. “You have insulted the Maid,” he said; “and the Maid is France. The tongue that does that earns a long furlough.”

One heard the muffled cracking of bones. The Burgundian’s eyes began to protrude from their sockets and stare with a leaden dullness at vacancy. The color deepened in his face and became an opaque purple. His hands hung down limp, his body collapsed with a shiver, every muscle relaxed its tension and ceased from its function. The Dwarf took away his hand and the column of inert mortality sank mushily to the ground.

We struck the bonds from the prisoner and told him he was free. His crawling humbleness changed to frantic joy in a moment, and his ghastly fear to a childish rage. He flew at that dead corpse and kicked it, spat in its face, danced upon it, crammed mud into its mouth, laughing, jeering, cursing, and volleying forth indecencies and bestialities like a drunken fiend. It was a thing to be expected; soldiering makes few saints. Many of the onlookers laughed, others were indifferent, none was surprised. But presently in his mad caperings the freed man capered within reach of the waiting file, and another Burgundian promptly slipped a knife through his neck, and down he went with a death-shriek, his brilliant artery blood spurting ten feet as straight and bright as a ray of light. There was a great burst of jolly laughter all around from friend and foe alike; and thus closed one of the pleasantest incidents of my checkered military life.

And now came Joan hurrying, and deeply troubled. She considered the claim of the garrison, then said:

“You have right upon your side. It is plain. It was a careless word to put in the treaty, and covers too much. But ye may not take these poor men away. They are French, and I will not have it. The King shall ransom them, every one. Wait till I send you word from him; and hurt no hair of their heads; for I tell you, I who speak, that that would cost you very dear.”

That settled it. The prisoners were safe for one while, anyway. Then she rode back eagerly and required that thing of the King, and would listen to no paltering and no excuses. So the King told her to have her way, and she rode straight back and bought the captives free in his name and let them go.

35 The Heir of France is Crowned

IT WAS here that we saw again the Grand Master of the King's Household, in whose castle Joan was guest when she tarried at Chinon in those first days of her coming out of her own country. She made him Bailiff of Troyes now by the King's permission.

And now we marched again; Chalons surrendered to us; and there by Chalons in a talk, Joan, being asked if she had no fears for the future, said yes, one — treachery. Who would believe it? who could dream it? And yet in a sense it was prophecy. Truly, man is a pitiful animal.

We marched, marched, kept on marching; and at last, on the 16th of July, we came in sight of our goal, and saw the great cathedraled towers of Rheims rise out of the distance! Huzza after huzza swept the army from van to rear; and as for Joan of Arc, there where she sat her horse gazing, clothed all in white armor, dreamy, beautiful, and in her face a deep, deep joy, a joy not of earth, oh, she was not flesh, she was a spirit! Her sublime mission was closing — closing in flawless triumph. Tomorrow she could say, "It is finished — let me go free."

We camped, and the hurry and rush and turmoil of the grand preparations began. The Archbishop and a great deputation arrived; and after these came flock after flock, crowd after crowd, of citizens and country-folk, hurrahing, in, with banners and music, and flowed over the camp, one rejoicing inundation after another, everybody drunk with happiness. And all night long Rheims was hard at work, hammering away, decorating the town, building triumphal arches and clothing the ancient cathedral within and without in a glory of opulent splendors.

We moved betimes in the morning; the coronation ceremonies would begin at nine and last five hours. We were aware that the garrison of English and Burgundian soldiers had given up all thought of resisting the Maid, and that we should find the gates standing hospitably open and the whole city ready to welcome us with enthusiasm.

It was a delicious morning, brilliant with sunshine, but cool and fresh and inspiring. The army was in great form, and fine to see, as it uncoiled from its lair fold by fold, and stretched away on the final march of the peaceful Coronation Campaign.

Joan, on her black horse, with the Lieutenant-General and the personal staff grouped about her, took post for a final review and a good-by; for she was not expecting to ever be a soldier again, or ever serve with these or any other soldiers any more after this day. The army knew this, and believed it was looking for the last time upon the girlish face of its invincible little Chief, its pet, its pride, its darling, whom it had ennobled in its private heart with nobilities of its own creation, call her "Daughter of God," "Savior of France," "Victory's Sweetheart," "The Page of Christ," together with still softer titles which were simply naive and frank endearments such as men are used to confer upon children whom they love. And so one saw a new thing now; a thing bred of the emotion that was present there on both sides. Always before, in the march-past, the battalions had gone swinging by in a storm of cheers, heads up and eyes flashing, the drums rolling, the bands braying paens of victory; but now there was nothing of that. But for one impressive sound, one could have closed his eyes and imagined himself in a world of the dead. That one sound was all that visited the ear in the summer stillness — just that one sound — the muffled tread of the marching host. As the serried masses drifted by, the men put their right hands up to their temples, palms to the front, in military salute, turning their eyes upon Joan's face in mute God-bless-you and farewell, and keeping them there while they could. They still kept their hands up in reverent salute many steps after they had passed by. Every time Joan put her handkerchief to her eyes you could see a little quiver of emotion crinkle along the faces of the files.

The march-past after a victory is a thing to drive the heart mad with jubilation; but this one was a thing to break it.

We rode now to the King's lodgings, which was the Archbishop's country palace; and he was presently ready, and we galloped off and took position at the head of the army. By this time the

country-people were arriving in multitudes from every direction and massing themselves on both sides of the road to get sight of Joan — just as had been done every day since our first day's march began. Our march now lay through the grassy plain, and those peasants made a dividing double border for that plain. They stretched right down through it, a broad belt of bright colors on each side of the road; for every peasant girl and woman in it had a white jacket on her body and a crimson skirt on the rest of her. Endless borders made of poppies and lilies stretching away in front of us — that is what it looked like. And that is the kind of lane we had been marching through all these days. Not a lane between multitudinous flowers standing upright on their stems — no, these flowers were always kneeling; kneeling, these human flowers, with their hands and faces lifted toward Joan of Arc, and the grateful tears streaming down. And all along, those closest to the road hugged her feet and kissed them and laid their wet cheeks fondly against them. I never, during all those days, saw any of either sex stand while she passed, nor any man keep his head covered. Afterward in the Great Trial these touching scenes were used as a weapon against her. She had been made an object of adoration by the people, and this was proof that she was a heretic — so claimed that unjust court.

As we drew near the city the curving long sweep of ramparts and towers was gay with fluttering flags and black with masses of people; and all the air was vibrant with the crash of artillery and gloomed with drifting clouds of smoke. We entered the gates in state and moved in procession through the city, with all the guilds and industries in holiday costume marching in our rear with their banners; and all the route was hedged with a huzzaing crush of people, and all the windows were full and all the roofs; and from the balconies hung costly stuffs of rich colors; and the waving of handkerchiefs, seen in perspective through a long vista, was like a snowstorm.

Joan's name had been introduced into the prayers of the Church — an honor theretofore restricted to royalty. But she had a dearer honor and an honor more to be proud of, from a humbler source: the common people had had leaden medals struck which bore her effigy and her escutcheon, and these they wore as charms. One saw them everywhere.

From the Archbishop's Palace, where we halted, and where the King and Joan were to lodge, the King sent to the Abbey Church of St. Remi, which was over toward the gate by which we had entered the city, for the Sainte Ampoule, or flask of holy oil. This oil was not earthly oil; it was made in heaven; the flask also. The flask, with the oil in it, was brought down from heaven by a dove. It was sent down to St. Remi just as he was going to baptize King Clovis, who had become a Christian. I know this to be true. I had known it long before; for Pere Fronte told me in Domremy. I cannot tell you how strange and awful it made me feel when I saw that flask and knew I was looking with my own eyes upon a thing which had actually been in heaven, a thing which had been seen by angels, perhaps; and by God Himself of a certainty, for He sent it. And I was looking upon it — I. At one time I could have touched it. But I was afraid; for I could not know but that God had touched it. It is most probable that He had.

From this flask Clovis had been anointed; and from it all the kings of France had been anointed since. Yes, ever since the time of Clovis, and that was nine hundred years. And so, as I have said, that flask of holy oil was sent for, while we waited. A coronation without that would not have been a coronation at all, in my belief.

Now in order to get the flask, a most ancient ceremonial had to be gone through with; otherwise the Abby of St. Remi hereditary guardian in perpetuity of the oil, would not deliver it. So, in accordance with custom, the King deputed five great nobles to ride in solemn state and richly armed and accoutered, they and their steeds, to the Abbey Church as a guard of honor to the Archbishop of Rheims and his canons, who were to bear the King's demand for the oil. When the five great lords were ready to start, they knelt in a row and put up their mailed hands before their faces, palm joined to palm, and swore upon their lives to conduct the sacred vessel safely, and safely restore it again to the Church of St. Remi after the anointing of the King. The Archbishop and his subordinates, thus nobly escorted, took their way to St. Remi. The Archbishop was in grand costume, with his miter on

his head and his cross in his hand. At the door of St. Remi they halted and formed, to receive the holy vial. Soon one heard the deep tones of the organ and of chanting men; then one saw a long file of lights approaching through the dim church. And so came the Abbot, in his sacerdotal panoply, bearing the vial, with his people following after. He delivered it, with solemn ceremonies, to the Archbishop; then the march back began, and it was most impressive; for it moved, the whole way, between two multitudes of men and women who lay flat upon their faces and prayed in dumb silence and in dread while that awful thing went by that had been in heaven.

This August company arrived at the great west door of the cathedral; and as the Archbishop entered a noble anthem rose and filled the vast building. The cathedral was packed with people — people in thousands. Only a wide space down the center had been kept free. Down this space walked the Archbishop and his canons, and after them followed those five stately figures in splendid harness, each bearing his feudal banner — and riding!

Oh, that was a magnificent thing to see. Riding down the cavernous vastness of the building through the rich lights streaming in long rays from the pictured windows — oh, there was never anything so grand!

They rode clear to the choir — as much as four hundred feet from the door, it was said. Then the Archbishop dismissed them, and they made deep obeisance till their plumes touched their horses' necks, then made those proud prancing and mincing and dancing creatures go backward all the way to the door — which was pretty to see, and graceful; then they stood them on their hind-feet and spun them around and plunged away and disappeared.

For some minutes there was a deep hush, a waiting pause; a silence so profound that it was as if all those packed thousands there were steeped in dreamless slumber — why, you could even notice the faintest sounds, like the drowsy buzzing of insects; then came a mighty flood of rich strains from four hundred silver trumpets, and then, framed in the pointed archway of the great west door, appeared Joan and the King. They advanced slowly, side by side, through a tempest of welcome — explosion after explosion of cheers and cries, mingled with the deep thunders of the organ and rolling tides of triumphant song from chanting choirs. Behind Joan and the King came the Paladin and the Banner displayed; and a majestic figure he was, and most proud and lofty in his bearing, for he knew that the people were marking him and taking note of the gorgeous state dress which covered his armor.

At his side was the Sire d'Albret, proxy for the Constable of France, bearing the Sword of State.

After these, in order of rank, came a body royally attired representing the lay peers of France; it consisted of three princes of the blood, and La Tremouille and the young De Laval brothers.

These were followed by the representatives of the ecclesiastical peers — the Archbishop of Rheims, and the Bishops of Laon, Chalons, Orleans, and one other.

Behind these came the Grand Staff, all our great generals and famous names, and everybody was eager to get a sight of them. Through all the din one could hear shouts all along that told you where two of them were: "Live the Bastard of Orleans!" "Satan La Hire forever!"

The August procession reached its appointed place in time, and the solemnities of the Coronation began. They were long and imposing — with prayers, and anthems, and sermons, and everything that is right for such occasions; and Joan was at the King's side all these hours, with her Standard in her hand. But at last came the grand act: the King took the oath, he was anointed with the sacred oil; a splendid personage, followed by train-bearers and other attendants, approached, bearing the Crown of France upon a cushion, and kneeling offered it. The King seemed to hesitate — in fact, did hesitate; for he put out his hand and then stopped with it there in the air over the crown, the fingers in the attitude of taking hold of it. But that was for only a moment — though a moment is a notable something when it stops the heartbeat of twenty thousand people and makes them catch their breath. Yes, only a moment; then he caught Joan's eye, and she gave him a look with all the joy of her thankful great soul in it; then he smiled, and took the Crown of France in his hand, and right finely and right royally lifted it up and set it upon his head.

Then what a crash there was! All about us cries and cheers, and the chanting of the choirs and groaning of the organ; and outside the clamoring of the bells and the booming of the cannon. The fantastic dream, the incredible dream, the impossible dream of the peasant-child stood fulfilled; the English power was broken, the Heir of France was crowned.

She was like one transfigured, so divine was the joy that shone in her face as she sank to her knees at the King's feet and looked up at him through her tears. Her lips were quivering, and her words came soft and low and broken:

"Now, O gentle King, is the pleasure of God accomplished according to His command that you should come to Rheims and receive the crown that belongeth of right to you, and unto none other. My work which was given me to do is finished; give me your peace, and let me go back to my mother, who is poor and old, and has need of me."

The King raised her up, and there before all that host he praised her great deeds in most noble terms; and there he confirmed her nobility and titles, making her the equal of a count in rank, and also appointed a household and officers for her according to her dignity; and then he said:

"You have saved the crown. Speak — require — demand; and whatsoever grace you ask it shall be granted, though it make the kingdom poor to meet it."

Now that was fine, that was royal. Joan was on her knees again straightway, and said:

"Then, O gentle King, if out of your compassion you will speak the word, I pray you give commandment that my village, poor and hard pressed by reason of war, may have its taxes remitted."

"It is so commanded. Say on."

"That is all."

"All? Nothing but that?"

"It is all. I have no other desire."

"But that is nothing — less than nothing. Ask — do not be afraid."

"Indeed, I cannot, gentle King. Do not press me. I will not have aught else, but only this alone."

The King seemed nonplussed, and stood still a moment, as if trying to comprehend and realize the full stature of this strange unselfishness. Then he raised his head and said:

"Who has won a kingdom and crowned its King; and all she asks and all she will take is this poor grace — and even this is for others, not for herself. And it is well; her act being proportioned to the dignity of one who carries in her head and heart riches which outvalue any that any King could add, though he gave his all. She shall have her way. Now, therefore, it is decreed that from this day forth Domremy, natal village of Joan of Arc, Deliverer of France, called the Maid of Orleans, is freed from all taxation forever." Whereat the silver horns blew a jubilant blast.

There, you see, she had had a vision of this very scene the time she was in a trance in the pastures of Domremy and we asked her to name to boon she would demand of the King if he should ever chance to tell her she might claim one. But whether she had the vision or not, this act showed that after all the dizzy grandeurs that had come upon her, she was still the same simple, unselfish creature that she was that day.

Yes, Charles VII. remitted those taxes "forever." Often the gratitude of kings and nations fades and their promises are forgotten or deliberately violated; but you, who are children of France, should remember with pride that France has kept this one faithfully. Sixty-three years have gone by since that day. The taxes of the region wherein Domremy lies have been collected sixty-three times since then, and all the villages of that region have paid except that one — Domremy. The tax-gatherer never visits Domremy. Domremy has long ago forgotten what that dread sorrow-sowing apparition is like. Sixty-three tax-books have been filed meantime, and they lie yonder with the other public records, and any may see them that desire it. At the top of every page in the sixty-three books stands the name of a village, and below that name its weary burden of taxation is figured out and displayed; in the case of all save one. It is true, just as I tell you. In each of the sixty-three books there is a page headed "Domremi," but under that name not a figure appears. Where the figures should be, there are three

words written; and the same words have been written every year for all these years; yes, it is a blank page, with always those grateful words lettered across the face of it — a touching memorial. Thus:

DOMREMI RIEN — LA PUCELLE

“NOTHING — THE MAID OF ORLEANS.”

How brief it is; yet how much it says! It is the nation speaking. You have the spectacle of that unsentimental thing, a Government, making reverence to that name and saying to its agent, “Uncover, and pass on; it is France that commands.” Yes, the promise has been kept; it will be kept always; “forever” was the King’s word. (1) At two o’clock in the afternoon the ceremonies of the Coronation came at last to an end; then the procession formed once more, with Joan and the King at its head, and took up its solemn march through the midst of the church, all instruments and all people making such clamor of rejoicing noises as was, indeed, a marvel to hear. And so ended the third of the great days of Joan’s life. And how close together they stand — May 8th, June 18th, July 17th!

(1) IT was faithfully kept during three hundred and sixty years and more; then the over-confident octogenarian’s prophecy failed. During the tumult of the French Revolution the promise was forgotten and the grace withdrawn. It has remained in disuse ever since. Joan never asked to be remembered, but France has remembered her with an inextinguishable love and reverence; Joan never asked for a statue, but France has lavished them upon her; Joan never asked for a church for Domremy, but France is building one; Joan never asked for saintship, but even that is impending. Everything which Joan of Arc did not ask for has been given her, and with a noble profusion; but the one humble little thing which she did ask for and get has been taken away from her. There is something infinitely pathetic about this. France owes Domremy a hundred years of taxes, and could hardly find a citizen within her borders who would vote against the payment of the debt. — NOTE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

36 Joan Hears News from Home

WE MOUNTED and rode, a spectacle to remember, a most noble display of rich vestments and nodding plumes, and as we moved between the banked multitudes they sank down all along abreast of us as we advanced, like grain before the reaper, and kneeling hailed with a rousing welcome the consecrated King and his companion the Deliverer of France. But by and by when we had paraded about the chief parts of the city and were come near to the end of our course, we being now approaching the Archbishop's palace, one saw on the right, hard by the inn that is called the Zebra, a strange thing — two men not kneeling but standing! Standing in the front rank of the kneelers; unconscious, transfixed, staring. Yes, and clothed in the coarse garb of the peasantry, these two. Two halberdiers sprang at them in a fury to teach them better manners; but just as they seized them Joan cried out "Forbear!" and slid from her saddle and flung her arms about one of those peasants, calling him by all manner of endearing names, and sobbing. For it was her father; and the other was her uncle, Laxart.

The news flew everywhere, and shouts of welcome were raised, and in just one little moment those two despised and unknown plebeians were become famous and popular and envied, and everybody was in a fever to get sight of them and be able to say, all their lives long, that they had seen the father of Joan of Arc and the brother of her mother. How easy it was for her to do miracles like to this! She was like the sun; on whatsoever dim and humble object her rays fell, that thing was straightway drowned in glory.

All graciously the King said:

"Bring them to me."

And she brought them; she radiant with happiness and affection, they trembling and scared, with their caps in their shaking hands; and there before all the world the King gave them his hand to kiss, while the people gazed in envy and admiration; and he said to old D'Arc:

"Give God thanks for that you are father to this child, this dispenser of immortalities. You who bear a name that will still live in the mouths of men when all the race of kings has been forgotten, it is not meet that you bare your head before the fleeting fames and dignities of a day — cover yourself!" And truly he looked right fine and princely when he said that. Then he gave order that the Bailly of Rheims be brought; and when he was come, and stood bent low and bare, the King said to him, "These two are guests of France;" and bade him use them hospitably.

I may as well say now as later, that Papa D'Arc and Laxart were stopping in that little Zebra inn, and that there they remained. Finer quarters were offered them by the Bailly, also public distinctions and brave entertainment; but they were frightened at these projects, they being only humble and ignorant peasants; so they begged off, and had peace. They could not have enjoyed such things. Poor souls, they did not even know what to do with their hands, and it took all their attention to keep from treading on them. The Bailly did the best he could in the circumstances. He made the innkeeper place a whole floor at their disposal, and told him to provide everything they might desire, and charge all to the city. Also the Bailly gave them a horse apiece and furnishings; which so overwhelmed them with pride and delight and astonishment that they couldn't speak a word; for in their lives they had never dreamed of wealth like this, and could not believe, at first, that the horses were real and would not dissolve to a mist and blow away. They could not unglue their minds from those grandeurs, and were always wrenching the conversation out of its groove and dragging the matter of animals into it, so that they could say "my horse" here, and "my horse" there and yonder and all around, and taste the words and lick their chops over them, and spread their legs and hitch their thumbs in their armpits, and feel as the good God feels when He looks out on His fleets of constellations plowing the awful deeps of space and reflects with satisfaction that they are His — all His. Well, they were the happiest old children one ever saw, and the simplest.

The city gave a grand banquet to the King and Joan in mid-afternoon, and to the Court and the Grand Staff; and about the middle of it Pere D’Arc and Laxart were sent for, but would not venture until it was promised that they might sit in a gallery and be all by themselves and see all that was to be seen and yet be unmolested. And so they sat there and looked down upon the splendid spectacle, and were moved till the tears ran down their cheeks to see the unbelievable honors that were paid to their small darling, and how naively serene and unafraid she sat there with those consuming glories beating upon her.

But at last her serenity was broken up. Yes, it stood the strain of the King’s gracious speech; and of D’Alencon’s praiseful words, and the Bastard’s; and even La Hire’s thunder-blast, which took the place by storm; but at last, as I have said, they brought a force to bear which was too strong for her. For at the close the King put up his hand to command silence, and so waited, with his hand up, till every sound was dead and it was as if one could almost the stillness, so profound it was. Then out of some remote corner of that vast place there rose a plaintive voice, and in tones most tender and sweet and rich came floating through that enchanted hush our poor old simple song “L’Arbre Fee Bourlemont!” and then Joan broke down and put her face in her hands and cried. Yes, you see, all in a moment the pomps and grandeurs dissolved away and she was a little child again herding her sheep with the tranquil pastures stretched about her, and war and wounds and blood and death and the mad frenzy and turmoil of battle a dream. Ah, that shows you the power of music, that magician of magicians, who lifts his wand and says his mysterious word and all things real pass away and the phantoms of your mind walk before you clothed in flesh.

That was the King’s invention, that sweet and dear surprise. Indeed, he had fine things hidden away in his nature, though one seldom got a glimpse of them, with that scheming Tremouille and those others always standing in the light, and he so indolently content to save himself fuss and argument and let them have their way.

At the fall of night we the Domremy contingent of the personal staff were with the father and uncle at the inn, in their private parlor, brewing generous drinks and breaking ground for a homely talk about Domremy and the neighbors, when a large parcel arrived from Joan to be kept till she came; and soon she came herself and sent her guard away, saying she would take one of her father’s rooms and sleep under his roof, and so be at home again. We of the staff rose and stood, as was meet, until she made us sit. Then she turned and saw that the two old men had gotten up too, and were standing in an embarrassed and unmilitary way; which made her want to laugh, but she kept it in, as not wishing to hurt them; and got them to their seats and snuggled down between them, and took a hand of each of them upon her knees and nestled her own hands in them, and said:

“Now we will have no more ceremony, but be kin and playmates as in other times; for I am done with the great wars now, and you two will take me home with you, and I shall see — ” She stopped, and for a moment her happy face sobered, as if a doubt or a presentiment had flitted through her mind; then it cleared again, and she said, with a passionate yearning, “Oh, if the day were but come and we could start!”

The old father was surprised, and said:

“Why, child, are you in earnest? Would you leave doing these wonders that make you to be praised by everybody while there is still so much glory to be won; and would you go out from this grand comradeship with princes and generals to be a drudging villager again and a nobody? It is not rational.”

“No,” said the uncle, Laxart, “it is amazing to hear, and indeed not understandable. It is a stranger thing to hear her say she will stop the soldiering that it was to hear her say she would begin it; and I who speak to you can say in all truth that that was the strangest word that ever I had heard till this day and hour. I would it could be explained.”

“It is not difficult,” said Joan. “I was not ever fond of wounds and suffering, nor fitted by my nature to inflict them; and quarrelings did always distress me, and noise and tumult were against my

liking, my disposition being toward peace and quietness, and love for all things that have life; and being made like this, how could I bear to think of wars and blood, and the pain that goes with them, and the sorrow and mourning that follow after? But by his angels God laid His great commands upon me, and could I disobey? I did as I was bid. Did He command me to do many things? No; only two: to raise the siege of Orleans, and crown the King at Rheims. The task is finished, and I am free. Has ever a poor soldier fallen in my sight, whether friend or foe, and I not felt the pain in my own body, and the grief of his home-mates in my own heart? No, not one; and, oh, it is such bliss to know that my release is won, and that I shall not any more see these cruel things or suffer these tortures of the mind again! Then why should I not go to my village and be as I was before? It is heaven! and ye wonder that I desire it. Ah, ye are men — just men! My mother would understand.”

They didn't quite know what to say; so they sat still awhile, looking pretty vacant. Then old D'Arc said:

“Yes, your mother — that is true. I never saw such a woman. She worries, and worries, and worries; and wakes nights, and lies so, thinking — that is, worrying; worrying about you. And when the night storms go raging along, she moans and says, ‘Ah, God pity her, she is out in this with her poor wet soldiers.’ And when the lightning glares and the thunder crashes she wrings her hands and trembles, saying, ‘It is like the awful cannon and the flash, and yonder somewhere she is riding down upon the spouting guns and I not there to protect her.’”

“Ah, poor mother, it is pity, it is pity!”

“Yes, a most strange woman, as I have noticed a many times. When there is news of a victory and all the village goes mad with pride and joy, she rushes here and there in a maniacal frenzy till she finds out the one only thing she cares to know — that you are safe; then down she goes on her knees in the dirt and praises God as long as there is any breath left in her body; and all on your account, for she never mentions the battle once. And always she says, ‘Now it is over — now France is saved — now she will come home’ — and always is disappointed and goes about mourning.”

“Don't, father! it breaks my heart. I will be so good to her when I get home. I will do her work for her, and be her comfort, and she shall not suffer any more through me.”

There was some more talk of this sort, then Uncle Laxart said:

“You have done the will of God, dear, and are quits; it is true, and none may deny it; but what of the King? You are his best soldier; what if he command you to stay?”

That was a crusher — and sudden! It took Joan a moment or two to recover from the shock of it; then she said, quite simply and resignedly:

“The King is my Lord; I am his servant.” She was silent and thoughtful a little while, then she brightened up and said, cheerily, “But let us drive such thoughts away — this is no time for them. Tell me about home.”

So the two old gossips talked and talked; talked about everything and everybody in the village; and it was good to hear. Joan out of her kindness tried to get us into the conversation, but that failed, of course. She was the Commander-in-Chief, we were nobodies; her name was the mightiest in France, we were invisible atoms; she was the comrade of princes and heroes, we of the humble and obscure; she held rank above all Personages and all Puissances whatsoever in the whole earth, by right of baring her commission direct from God. To put it in one word, she was JOAN OF ARC — and when that is said, all is said. To us she was divine. Between her and us lay the bridgeless abyss which that word implies. We could not be familiar with her. No, you can see yourselves that that would have been impossible.

And yet she was so human, too, and so good and kind and dear and loving and cheery and charming and unspoiled and unaffected! Those are all the words I think of now, but they are not enough; no, they are too few and colorless and meager to tell it all, or tell the half. Those simple old men didn't realize her; they couldn't; they had never known any people but human beings, and so they had no other standard to measure her by. To them, after their first little shyness had worn off,

she was just a girl — that was all. It was amazing. It made one shiver, sometimes, to see how calm and easy and comfortable they were in her presence, and hear them talk to her exactly as they would have talked to any other girl in France.

Why, that simple old Laxart sat up there and droned out the most tedious and empty tale one ever heard, and neither he nor Papa D'Arc ever gave a thought to the badness of the etiquette of it, or ever suspected that that foolish tale was anything but dignified and valuable history. There was not an atom of value in it; and whilst they thought it distressing and pathetic, it was in fact not pathetic at all, but actually ridiculous. At least it seemed so to me, and it seems so yet. Indeed, I know it was, because it made Joan laugh; and the more sorrowful it got the more it made her laugh; and the Paladin said that he could have laughed himself if she had not been there, and Noel Rainguesson said the same. It was about old Laxart going to a funeral there at Domremy two or three weeks back. He had spots all over his face and hands, and he got Joan to rub some healing ointment on them, and while she was doing it, and comforting him, and trying to say pitying things to him, he told her how it happened. And first he asked her if she remembered that black bull calf that she left behind when she came away, and she said indeed she did, and he was a dear, and she loved him so, and was he well? — and just drowned him in questions about that creature. And he said it was a young bull now, and very frisky; and he was to bear a principal hand at a funeral; and she said, "The bull?" and he said, "No, myself"; but said the bull did take a hand, but not because of his being invited, for he wasn't; but anyway he was away over beyond the Fairy Tree, and fell asleep on the grass with his Sunday funeral clothes on, and a long black rag on his hat and hanging down his back; and when he woke he saw by the sun how late it was, and not a moment to lose; and jumped up terribly worried, and saw the young bull grazing there, and thought maybe he could ride part way on him and gain time; so he tied a rope around the bull's body to hold on by, and put a halter on him to steer with, and jumped on and started; but it was all new to the bull, and he was discontented with it, and scurried around and bellowed and reared and pranced, and Uncle Laxart was satisfied, and wanted to get off and go by the next bull or some other way that was quieter, but he didn't dare try; and it was getting very warm for him, too, and disturbing and wearisome, and not proper for Sunday; but by and by the bull lost all his temper, and went tearing down the slope with his tail in the air and blowing in the most awful way; and just in the edge of the village he knocked down some beehives, and the bees turned out and joined the excursion, and soared along in a black cloud that nearly hid those other two from sight, and prodded them both, and jabbed them and speared them and spiked them, and made them bellow and shriek, and shriek and bellow; and here they came roaring through the village like a hurricane, and took the funeral procession right in the center, and sent that section of it sprawling, and galloped over it, and the rest scattered apart and fled screeching in every direction, every person with a layer of bees on him, and not a rag of that funeral left but the corpse; and finally the bull broke for the river and jumped in, and when they fished Uncle Laxart out he was nearly drowned, and his face looked like a pudding with raisins in it. And then he turned around, this old simpleton, and looked a long time in a dazed way at Joan where she had her face in a cushion, dying, apparently, and says:

"What do you reckon she is laughing at?"

And old D'Arc stood looking at her the same way, sort of absently scratching his head; but had to give it up, and said he didn't know — "must have been something that happened when we weren't noticing."

Yes, both of those old people thought that that tale was pathetic; whereas to my mind it was purely ridiculous, and not in any way valuable to any one. It seemed so to me then, and it seems so to me yet. And as for history, it does not resemble history; for the office of history is to furnish serious and important facts that teach; whereas this strange and useless event teaches nothing; nothing that I can see, except not to ride a bull to a funeral; and surely no reflecting person needs to be taught that.

37 Again to Arms

NOW THESE were nobles, you know, by decree of the King! — these precious old infants. But they did not realize it; they could not be called conscious of it; it was an abstraction, a phantom; to them it had no substance; their minds could not take hold of it. No, they did not bother about their nobility; they lived in their horses. The horses were solid; they were visible facts, and would make a mighty stir in Domremy. Presently something was said about the Coronation, and old D'Arc said it was going to be a grand thing to be able to say, when they got home, that they were present in the very town itself when it happened. Joan looked troubled, and said:

“Ah, that reminds me. You were here and you didn't send me word. In the town, indeed! Why, you could have sat with the other nobles, and been welcome; and could have looked upon the crowning itself, and carried that home to tell. Ah, why did you use me so, and send me no word?”

The old father was embarrassed, now, quite visibly embarrassed, and had the air of one who does not quite know what to say. But Joan was looking up in his face, her hands upon his shoulders — waiting. He had to speak; so presently he drew her to his breast, which was heaving with emotion; and he said, getting out his words with difficulty:

“There, hide your face, child, and let your old father humble himself and make his confession. I — I — don't you see, don't you understand? — I could not know that these grandeurs would not turn your young head — it would be only natural. I might shame you before these great per — ”

“Father!”

“And then I was afraid, as remembering that cruel thing I said once in my sinful anger. Oh, appointed of God to be a soldier, and the greatest in the land! and in my ignorant anger I said I would drown you with my own hands if you unsexed yourself and brought shame to your name and family. Ah, how could I ever have said it, and you so good and dear and innocent! I was afraid; for I was guilty. You understand it now, my child, and you forgive?”

Do you see? Even that poor groping old land-crab, with his skull full of pulp, had pride. Isn't it wonderful? And more — he had conscience; he had a sense of right and wrong, such as it was; he was able to find remorse. It looks impossible, it looks incredible, but it is not. I believe that some day it will be found out that peasants are people. Yes, beings in a great many respects like ourselves. And I believe that some day they will find this out, too — and then! Well, then I think they will rise up and demand to be regarded as part of the race, and that by consequence there will be trouble. Whenever one sees in a book or in a king's proclamation those words “the nation,” they bring before us the upper classes; only those; we know no other “nation”; for us and the kings no other “nation” exists. But from the day that I saw old D'Arc the peasant acting and feeling just as I should have acted and felt myself, I have carried the conviction in my heart that our peasants are not merely animals, beasts of burden put here by the good God to produce food and comfort for the “nation,” but something more and better. You look incredulous. Well, that is your training; it is the training of everybody; but as for me, I thank that incident for giving me a better light, and I have never forgotten it.

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