

JOHN LORD

BEACON LIGHTS OF
HISTORY, VOLUME 07:
GREAT WOMEN

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Volume 07: Great Women**

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Beacon Lights of History, Volume 07: Great Women

HÉLOÏSE

A.D. 1101-1164

LOVE

When Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise, they yet found one flower, wherever they wandered, blooming in perpetual beauty. This flower represents a great certitude, without which few would be happy,—subtile, mysterious, inexplicable,—a great boon recognized alike by poets and moralists, Pagan and Christian; yea, identified not only with happiness, but human existence, and pertaining to the soul in its highest aspirations. Allied with the transient and the mortal, even with the weak and corrupt, it is yet immortal in its nature and lofty in its aims,—at once a passion, a sentiment, and an inspiration.

To attempt to describe woman without this element of our complex nature, which constitutes her peculiar fascination, is like trying to act the tragedy of Hamlet without Hamlet himself,—an absurdity; a picture without a central figure, a novel without a heroine, a religion without a sacrifice. My subject is not without its difficulties. The passion or sentiment I describe is degrading when perverted, as it is exalting when pure. Yet it is not vice I would paint, but virtue; not weakness, but strength; not the transient, but the permanent; not the mortal, but the immortal,—all that is ennobling in the aspiring soul.

"Socrates," says Legouvé, "who caught glimpses of everything that he did not clearly define, uttered one day to his disciples these beautiful words: 'There are two Venuses: one celestial, called Urania, the heavenly, who presides over all pure and spiritual affections; and the other Polyhymnia, the terrestrial, who excites sensual and gross desires.'" The history of love is the eternal struggle between these two divinities,—the one seeking to elevate and the other to degrade. Plato, for the first time, in his beautiful hymn to the Venus Urania, displayed to men the unknown image of love,—the educator and the moralist,—so that grateful ages have consecrated it by his name. Centuries rolled away, and among the descendants of Teutonic barbarians a still lovelier and more ideal sentiment burst out from the lips of the Christian Dante, kindled by the adoration of his departed Beatrice. And as she courses from star to star, explaining to him the mysteries, the transported poet exclaims:—

"Ah, all the tongues which the Muses have inspired could not tell the thousandth part of the beauty of the smile of Beatrice as she presented me to the celestial group, exclaiming, 'Thou art redeemed!' O woman, in whom lives all my hope, who hast deigned to leave for my salvation thy footsteps on the throne of the Eternal, thou hast redeemed me from slavery to liberty; now earth has no more dangers for me. I cherish the image of thy purity in my bosom, that in my last hour, acceptable in thine eyes, my soul may leave my body."

Thus did Dante impersonate the worship of Venus Urania,—spiritual tenderness overcoming sensual desire. Thus faithful to the traditions of this great poet did the austere Michael Angelo do reverence to the virtues of Vittoria Colonna. Thus did the lofty Corneille present in his Pauline a divine

model of the love which inspires great deeds and accompanies great virtues. Thus did Shakspeare, in his portrait of Portia, show the blended generosity and simplicity of a woman's soul:—

"For you [my Lord Bassanio]
I would be trebled twenty times myself;
A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times more rich;"

or, in his still more beautiful delineation of Juliet, paint an absorbing devotion:—

"My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,
The more I have, for both are infinite."

Thus did Milton, in his transcendent epic, show how a Paradise was regained when woman gave her generous sympathy to man, and reproduced for all coming ages the image of Spiritual Love,—the innamorata of Dante and Petrarch, the inspired and consoling guide.

But the muse of the poets, even when sanctified by Christianity, never sang such an immortal love as the Middle Ages in sober prose have handed down in the history of Héloïse,—the struggle between the two Venuses of Socrates, and the final victory of Urania, though not till after the temporary triumph of Polyhymnia,—the innamorata of earth clad in the vestments of a sanctified recluse, and purified by the chastisements of Heaven. "Saint Theresa dies longing to join her divine spouse; but Saint Theresa is only a Héloïse looking towards heaven." Héloïse has an earthly idol; but her devotion has in it all the elements of a supernatural fervor,—the crucifixion of self in the glory of him she adored. He was not worthy of her idolatry; but she thought that he was. Admiration for genius exalted sentiment into adoration, and imagination invested the object of love with qualities superhuman.

Nations do not spontaneously keep alive the memory of those who have disgraced them. It is their heroes and heroines whose praises they sing,—those only who have shone in the radiance of genius and virtue. They forget defects, if these are counterbalanced by grand services or great deeds,—if their sons and daughters have shed lustre on the land which gave them birth. But no lustre survives egotism or vice; it only lasts when it gilds a noble life. There is no glory in the name of Jezebel, or Cleopatra, or Catherine de' Medici, brilliant and fascinating as were those queens; but there is glory in the memory of Héloïse. There is no woman in French history of whom the nation is prouder; revered, in spite of early follies, by the most austere and venerated saints of her beclouded age, and hallowed by the tributes of succeeding centuries for those sentiments which the fires of passion were scarcely able to tarnish, for an exalted soul which eclipsed the brightness of uncommon intellectual faculties, for a depth of sympathy and affection which have become embalmed in the heart of the world, and for a living piety which blazes all the more conspicuously from the sins which she expiated by such bitter combats. She was human in her impulses, but divine in her graces; one of those characters for whom we cannot help feeling the deepest sympathy and the profoundest admiration,—a character that has its contradictions, like that warrior-bard who was after God's own heart, in spite of his crimes, because his soul thirsted for the beatitudes of heaven, and was bound in loving loyalty to his Maker, against whom he occasionally sinned by force of mortal passions, but whom he never ignored or forgot, and against whom he never persistently rebelled.

As a semi-warlike but religious age produced a David, with his strikingly double nature perpetually at war with itself and looking for aid to God,—his "sun," his "shield," his hope, and joy,—so an equally unenlightened but devout age produced a Héloïse, the impersonation of sympathy, disinterestedness, suffering, forgiveness, and resignation. I have already described this dark, sad, turbulent, superstitious, ignorant period of strife and suffering, yet not without its poetic charms and

religious aspirations; when the convent and the castle were its chief external features, and when a life of meditation was as marked as a life of bodily activity, as if old age and youth were battling for supremacy,—a very peculiar state of society, in which we see the loftiest speculations of the intellect and the highest triumphs of faith blended with puerile enterprises and misdirected physical forces.

In this semi-barbaric age Héloïse was born, about the year 1101. Nobody knew who was her father, although it was surmised that he belonged to the illustrious family of the Montmorencies, which traced an unbroken lineage to Pharimond, before the time of Clovis. She lived with her uncle Fulbert, an ignorant, worldly-wise old canon of the Cathedral Church of Notre Dame in Paris. He called her his niece; but whether niece, or daughter, or adopted child, was a mystery. She was of extraordinary beauty, though remarkable for expression rather than for regularity of feature. In intellect she was precocious and brilliant; but the qualities of a great soul shone above the radiance of her wit. She was bright, amiable, affectionate, and sympathetic,—the type of an interesting woman. The ecclesiastic was justly proud of her, and gave to her all the education the age afforded. Although not meaning to be a nun, she was educated in a neighboring convent,—for convents, even in those times, were female seminaries, containing many inmates who never intended to take the veil. But the convent then, as since, was a living grave to all who took its vows, and was hated by brilliant women who were not religious. The convent necessarily and logically, according to the theology of the Middle Ages, was a retreat from the world,—a cell of expiation; and yet it was the only place where a woman could be educated.

Héloïse, it would seem, made extraordinary attainments, and spoke Latin as well as her native tongue. She won universal admiration, and in due time, at the age of eighteen, returned to her uncle's house, on the banks of the Seine, on the island called the Cité, where the majestic cathedral and the castle of the king towered above the rude houses of the people. Adjoining the church were the cloisters of the monks and the Episcopal School, the infant university of Paris, over which the Archdeacon of Paris, William of Champeaux, presided in scholastic dignity and pride,—next to the bishop the most influential man in Paris. The teachers of this school, or masters and doctors as they were called, and the priests of the cathedral formed the intellectual aristocracy of the city, and they were frequent visitors at the house of Fulbert the canon. His niece, as she was presumed to be, was the great object of attraction. There never was a time when intellectual Frenchmen have not bowed down to cultivated women. Héloïse, though only a girl, was a queen of such society as existed in the city, albeit more admired by men than women,—poetical, imaginative, witty, ready, frank, with a singular appreciation of intellectual excellence, dazzled by literary fame, and looking up to those brilliant men who worshipped her.

In truth, Héloïse was a prodigy. She was vastly superior to the men who surrounded her, most of whom were pedants, or sophists, or bigots; dignitaries indeed, but men who exalted the accidental and the external over the real and the permanent; men who were fond of quibbles and sophistries, jealous of each other and of their own reputation, dogmatic and positive as priests are apt to be, and most positive on points which either are of no consequence or cannot be solved. The soul of Héloïse panted for a greater intellectual freedom and a deeper sympathy than these priests could give. She pined in society. She was isolated by her own superiority,—superior not merely in the radiance of the soul, but in the treasures of the mind. Nor could her companions comprehend her greatness, even while they were fascinated by her presence. She dazzled them by her personal beauty perhaps more than by her wit; for even mediaeval priests could admire an expansive brow, a deep blue eye, *doux et pénétrant*, a mouth varying with unconscious sarcasms, teeth strong and regular, a neck long and flexible, and shoulders sloping and gracefully moulded, over which fell ample and golden locks; while the attitude, the complexion, the blush, the thrilling accent, and the gracious smile, languor, and passion depicted on a face both pale and animated, seduced the imagination and commanded homage. Venus Polyhymnia stood confessed in all her charms, for the time triumphant over that

Venus Urania who made the convent of the Paraclete in after times a blessed comforter to all who sought its consolations.

Among the distinguished visitors at the house of her uncle the canon, attracted by her beauty and accomplishments, was a man thirty-eight years of age, of noble birth, but by profession an ecclesiastic; whose large forehead, fiery eye, proud air, plain, negligent dress, and aristocratic manners, by turns affable and haughty, stamped him as an extraordinary man. The people in the streets stopped to gaze at him as he passed, or rushed to the doors and windows for a glimpse; for he was as famous for genius and learning as he was distinguished by manners and aspect. He was the eldest son of a Breton nobleman, who had abandoned his inheritance and birthright for the fascinations of literature and philosophy. His name was Peter Abélard, on the whole the most brilliant and interesting man whom the Middle Ages produced,—not so profound as Anselm, or learned as Peter Lombard, or logical as Thomas Aquinas, or acute as Albertus Magnus, but the most eloquent expounder of philosophy of whom I have read. He made the dullest subjects interesting; he clothed the dry bones of metaphysics with flesh and blood; he invested the most abstruse speculations with life and charm; he filled the minds of old men with envy, and of young men with admiration; he thrilled admirers with his wit, sarcasm, and ridicule,—a sort of Galileo, mocking yet amusing, with a superlative contempt of dulness and pretension. He early devoted himself to dialectics, to all the arts of intellectual gladiatorship, to all the sports of logical tournaments which were held in such value by the awakened spirits of the new civilization.

Such was Abélard's precocious ability, even as a youth, that no champion could be found to refute him in the whole of Brittany. He went from castle to castle, and convent to convent, a philosophical knight-errant, seeking intellectual adventures; more intent, however, on *éclat* and conquest than on the establishment of the dogmas which had ruled the Church since Saint Augustine. He was a born logician, as Bossuet was a born priest, loving to dispute as much as the Bishop of Meaux loved to preach; not a serious man, but a bright man, ready, keen, acute, turning fools into ridicule, and pushing acknowledged doctrines into absurdity; not to bring out the truth as Socrates did, or furnish a sure foundation of knowledge, but to revolutionize and overturn. His spirit was like that of Lucien,—desiring to demolish, without substituting anything for the dogmas he had made ridiculous. Consequently he was mistrusted by the old oracles of the schools, and detested by conservative churchmen who had intellect enough to see the tendency of his speculations. In proportion to the hatred of orthodox ecclesiastics like Anselme of Laon and Saint Bernard, was the admiration of young men and of the infant universities. Nothing embarrassed him. He sought a reason for all things. He appealed to reason rather than authority, yet made the common mistake of the scholastics in supposing that metaphysics could explain everything. He doubtless kindled a spirit of inquiry, while he sapped the foundation of Christianity and undermined faith. He was a nominalist; that is, he denied the existence of all eternal ideas, such as Plato and the early Fathers advocated. He is said to have even adduced the opinions of Pagan philosophers to prove the mysteries of revelation. He did not deny revelation, nor authority, nor the prevailing doctrines which the Church indorsed and defended; but the tendency of his teachings was to undermine what had previously been received by faith. He exalted reason, therefore, as higher than faith. His spirit was offensive to conservative teachers. Had he lived in our times, he would have belonged to the most progressive schools of thought and inquiry,—probably a rationalist, denying what he could not prove by reason, and scorning all supernaturalism; a philosopher of the school of Hume, or Strauss, or Renan. And yet, after assailing everything venerable, and turning his old teachers into ridicule, and creating a spirit of rationalistic inquiry among the young students of divinity, who adored him, Abélard settled back on authority in his old age, perhaps alarmed and shocked at the mischief he had done in his more brilliant years.

This exceedingly interesting man, with all his vanity, conceit, and arrogance, had turned his steps to Paris, the centre of all intellectual life in France, after he had achieved a great provincial reputation. He was then only twenty, a bright and daring youth, conscious of his powers, and

burning with ambition. He was not ambitious of ecclesiastical preferment, for aristocratic dunces occupied the great sees and ruled the great monasteries. He was simply ambitious of influence over students in philosophy and religion,—fond of *éclat* and fame as a teacher. The universities were not then established; there were no chairs for professors, nor even were there scholastic titles, like those of doctor and master; but Paris was full of students, disgusted with the provincial schools. The Cathedral School of Paris was the great attraction to these young men, then presided over by William of Champeaux, a very respectable theologian, but not a remarkable genius like Aquinas and Bonaventura, who did not arise until the Dominican and Franciscan orders were established to combat heresy. Abélard, being still a youth, attended the lectures of this old theologian, who was a Realist, not an original thinker, but enjoying a great reputation, which he was most anxious to preserve. The youthful prodigy at first was greatly admired by the veteran teacher; but Abélard soon began to question him and argue with him. Admiration was then succeeded by jealousy. Some sided with the venerable teacher, but more with the flippant yet brilliant youth who turned his master's teachings into ridicule, and aspired to be a teacher himself. But as teaching was under the supervision of the school of Notre Dame, Paris was interdicted to him; he was not allowed to combat the received doctrines which were taught in the Cathedral School. So he retired to Melun, about thirty miles from Paris, and set up for a teacher and lecturer on philosophy. All the influence of William of Champeaux and his friends was exerted to prevent Abélard from teaching, but in vain. His lecture-room was crowded. The most astonishing success attended his lectures. Not contented with the *éclat* he received, he now meditated the discomfiture of his old master. He removed still nearer to Paris. And so great was his success and fame, that it is said he compelled William to renounce his Realism and also his chair, and accept a distant bishopric. William was conquered by a mere stripling; but that stripling could have overthrown a Goliath of controversy, not with a sling, but with a giant's sword.

Abélard having won a great dialectical victory, which brought as much fame as military laurels on the battlefield, established himself at St. Geneviève, just outside the walls of Paris, where the Pantheon now stands, which is still the centre of the Latin quarter, and the residence of students. He now applied himself to the study of divinity, and attended the lectures of Anselm of Laon. This celebrated ecclesiastic, though not so famous or able as Anselm of Canterbury, was treated by Abélard with the same arrogance and flippancy as he had bestowed on William of Champeaux. "I frequented," said the young mocker, "the old man's school, but soon discovered that all his power was in length of practice. You would have thought he was kindling a fire, when instantly the whole house was filled with smoke, in which not a single spark was visible. He was a tree covered with thick foliage, which to the distant eye had charms, but on near inspection there was no fruit to be found; a fig-tree such as our Lord did curse; an oak such as Lucan compared Pompey to,—*Stat magni nominis umbra*."

What a comment on the very philosophy which Abélard himself taught! What better description of the scholasticism of the Middle Ages! But original and brilliant as was the genius of Abélard, he no more could have anticipated the new method which Bacon taught than could Thomas Aquinas. All the various schools of the mediaeval dialecticians, Realists and Nominalists alike, sought to establish old theories, not to discover new truth. They could not go beyond their assumptions. So far as their assumptions were true, they rendered great service by their inexorable logic in defending them. They did not establish premises; that was not their concern or mission. Assuming that the sun revolved around the earth, all their astronomical speculations were worthless, even as the assumption of the old doctrine of atoms in our times has led scientists to the wildest conclusions. The metaphysics of the Schoolmen, whether they were sceptical or reverential, simply sharpened the intellectual faculties without advancing knowledge.

Abélard belonged by nature to the sceptical school. He delighted in negations, and in the work of demolition. So far as he demolished or ridiculed error he rendered the same service as Voltaire did: he prepared the way for a more inquiring spirit. He was also more liberal than his opponents. His spirit was progressive, but his method was faulty. Like all those who have sought to undermine the

old systems of thought, he was naturally vain and conceited. He supposed he had accomplished more than he really had. He became bold in his speculations, and undertook to explain subjects beyond his grasp. Thus he professed to unfold the meaning of the prophecies of Ezekiel. He was arrogant in his claims to genius. "It is not by long study," said he, "that I have mastered the heights of science, but by the force of my mind." This flippancy, accompanied by wit and eloquence, fascinated young men. His auditors were charmed. "The first philosopher," they said, "had become the first divine." New pupils crowded his lecture-room, and he united lectures on philosophy with lectures on divinity. "Theology and philosophy encircled his brow with a double garland." So popular was he, that students came from Germany and Italy and England to hear his lectures. The number of his pupils, it is said, was more than five thousand; and these included the brightest intellects of the age, among whom one was destined to be a pope (the great Innocent III.), nineteen to be cardinals, and one hundred to be bishops. What a proud position for a young man! What an astonishing success for that age! And his pupils were as generous as they were enthusiastic. They filled his pockets with gold; they hung upon his lips with rapture; they extolled his genius wherever they went; they carried his picture from court to court, from castle to castle, and convent to convent; they begged for a lock of his hair, for a shred of his garment. Never was seen before such idolatry of genius, such unbounded admiration for eloquence; for he stood apart and different from all other lights,—pre-eminent as a teacher of philosophy. "He reigned," says Lamartine, "by eloquence over the spirit of youth, by beauty over the regard of women, by love-songs which penetrated all hearts, by musical melodies repeated by every mouth. Let us imagine in a single man the first orator, the first philosopher, the first poet, the first musician of the age,—Cicero, Plato, Petrarch, Schubert,—all united in one living celebrity, and we can form some idea of his attractions and fame at this period of his life."

Such was that brilliant but unsound man, with learning, fame, personal beauty, fascinating eloquence, dialectical acumen, aristocratic manners, and transcendent wit, who encountered at thirty-eight the most beautiful, gracious, accomplished, generous, and ardent woman that adorned that time,—only eighteen, thirsting for knowledge, craving for sympathy, and intensely idolatrous of intellectual excellence. But one result could be anticipated from such a meeting: they became passionately enamored of each other. In order to secure a more uninterrupted intercourse, Abélard sought and obtained a residence in the house of Fulbert, under pretence of desiring to superintend the education of his niece. The ambitious, vain, unsuspecting priest was delighted to receive so great a man, whose fame filled the world. He intrusted Héloïse to his care, with permission to use blows if they were necessary to make her diligent and obedient!

And what young woman with such a nature and under such circumstances could resist the influence of such a teacher? I need not dwell on the familiar story, how mutual admiration was followed by mutual friendship, and friendship was succeeded by mutual infatuation, and the gradual abandonment of both to a mad passion, forgetful alike of fame and duty.

"It became tedious," said Abélard, "to go to my lessons. I gave my lectures with negligence. I spoke only from habit and memory. I was only a reciter of ancient inventions; and if I chanced to compose verses, they were songs of love, not secrets of philosophy." The absence of his mind evinced how powerfully his new passion moved his fiery and impatient soul. "He consumed his time in writing verses to the canon's niece; and even as Hercules in the gay court of Omphale threw down his club in order to hold the distaff, so Abélard laid aside his sceptre as a monarch of the schools to sing sonnets at the feet of Héloïse." And she also, still more unwisely, in the mighty potency of an absorbing love, yielded up her honor and her pride. This mutual infatuation was, it would seem, a gradual transition from the innocent pleasure of delightful companionship to the guilt of unrestrained desire. It was not premeditated design,—not calculation, but insidious dalliance:—

"Thou know'st how guiltless first I met thy flame,
When love approached me under friendship's name.

Guiltless I gazed; heaven listened when you sung,
And truths divine came mended from your tongue.
From lips like those, what precept failed to move?
Too soon they taught me 't was no sin to love."

In a healthy state of society this mutual passion would have been followed by the marriage ties. The parties were equal in culture and social position. And Abélard probably enjoyed a large income from the fees of students, and could well support the expenses of a family. All that was needed was the consecration of emotions, which are natural and irresistible,—a mystery perhaps but ordained, and without which marriage would be mere calculation and negotiation. Passion, doubtless, is blind; but in this very blindness we see the hand of the Creator,—to baffle selfishness and pride. What would become of our world if men and women were left to choose their partners with the eye of unclouded reason? Expediency would soon make a desert of earth, and there would be no paradise found for those who are unattractive or in adverse circumstances. Friendship might possibly bring people together; but friendship exists only between equals and people of congenial tastes. Love brings together also those who are unequal. It joins the rich to the poor, the strong to the weak, the fortunate to the unfortunate, and thus defeats the calculations which otherwise would enter into matrimonial life. Without the blindness of passionate love the darts of Cupid would be sent in vain; and the helpless and neglected—as so many are—would stand but little chance for that happiness which is associated with the institution of marriage. The world would be filled with old bachelors and old maids, and population would hopelessly decline among virtuous people.

No scandal would have resulted from the ardent loves of Abélard and Héloïse had they been united by that sacred relation which was ordained in the garden of Eden. "If any woman," says Legouv  , "may stand as the model of a wife in all her glory, it is H  lo  se. Passion without bounds and without alloy, enthusiasm for the genius of Ab  lard, jealous care for his reputation, a vigorous intellect, learning sufficient to join in his labors, and an unsullied name."

But those false, sophistical ideas which early entered into monastic life, and which perverted the Christianity of the Middle Ages, presented a powerful barrier against the instincts of nature and the ordinances of God. Celibacy was accounted as a supernal virtue, and the marriage of a priest was deemed a lasting disgrace. It obscured his fame, his prospects, his position, and his influence; it consigned him to ridicule and reproach. He was supposed to be married only to the Church, and would be unfaithful to Heaven if he bound himself by connubial ties. Says Saint Jerome, "Take axe in hand and hew up by the roots the sterile tree of marriage. God permits it, I grant; but Christ and Mary consecrated virginity." Alas, what could be hoped when the Church endorsed such absurd doctrines! Hildebrand, when he denounced the marriage of priests, made war on the most sacred instincts of human nature. He may have strengthened the papal domination, but he weakened the restraints of home. Only a dark and beclouded age could have upheld such a policy. Upon the Church of the Middle Ages we lay the blame of these false ideas. She is in a measure responsible for the follies of Ab  lard and H  lo  se. They were not greater than the ideas of their age. Had Ab  lard been as bold in denouncing the stupid custom of the Church in this respect as he was in fighting the monks of St. Denis or the intellectual intolerance of Bernard, he would not have fallen in the respect of good people. But he was a slave to interest and conventionality. He could not brave the sneers of priests or the opinions of society; he dared not lose caste with those who ruled the Church; he would not give up his chances of preferment. He was unwilling either to renounce his love, or to avow it by an honorable, open union.

At last his intimacy created scandal. In the eyes of the schools and of the Church he had sacrificed philosophy and fame to a second Delilah. And H  lo  se was even more affected by his humiliation than himself. She more than he was opposed to marriage, knowing that this would doom him to neglect and reproach. Ab  lard would perhaps have consented to an open marriage had H  lo  se

been willing; but with a strange perversity she refused. His reputation and interests were dearer to her than was her own fair name. She sacrificed herself to his fame; she blinded herself to the greatest mistake a woman could make. The excess of her love made her insensible to the principles of an immutable morality. Circumstances palliated her course, but did not excuse it. The fatal consequences of her folly pursued her into the immensity of subsequent grief; and though afterwards she was assured of peace and forgiveness in the depths of her repentance, the demon of infatuated love was not easily exorcised. She may have been unconscious of degradation in the boundless spirit of self-sacrifice which she was willing to make for the object of her devotion, but she lost both dignity and fame. She entreated him who was now quoted as a reproach to human weakness, since the languor of passion had weakened his power and his eloquence, to sacrifice her to his fame; "to permit her no longer to adore him as a divinity who accepts the homage of his worshippers; to love her no longer, if this love diminished his reputation; to reduce her even, if necessary, to the condition of a woman despised by the world, since the glory of his love would more than compensate for the contempt of the universe."

"What reproaches," said she, "should I merit from the Church and the schools of philosophy, were I to draw from them their brightest star! And shall a woman dare to take to herself that man whom Nature meant to be the ornament and benefactor of the human race? Then reflect on the nature of matrimony, with its littleness and cares. How inconsistent it is with the dignity of a wise man! Saint Paul earnestly dissuades from it. So do the saints. So do the philosophers of ancient times. Think a while. What a ridiculous association,—the philosopher and the chambermaids, writing-desks and cradles, books and distaffs, pens and spindles! Intent on speculation when the truths of nature and revelation are breaking on your eye, will you hear the sudden cry of children, the lullaby of nurses, the turbulent bustling of disorderly servants? In the serious pursuits of wisdom there is no time to be lost. Believe me, as well withdraw totally from literature as attempt to proceed in the midst of worldly avocations. Science admits no participation in the cares of life. Remember the feats of Xanthippe. Take counsel from the example of Socrates, who has been set up as a beacon for all coming time to warn philosophers from the fatal rock of matrimony."

Such was the blended truth, irony, and wit with which Héloïse dissuaded Abélard from open marriage. He compromised the affair, and contented himself with a secret marriage. "After a night spent in prayer," said he, "in one of the churches of Paris, on the following morning we received the nuptial blessing in the presence of the uncle of Héloïse and of a few mutual friends. We then retired without observation, that this union, known only to God and a few intimates, should bring neither shame nor prejudice to my renown." A cold and selfish act, such as we might expect in Louis XIV. and Madame de Maintenon,—yet, nevertheless, the feeble concession which pride and policy make to virtue, the triumph of expediency over all heroic and manly qualities. Like Maintenon, Héloïse was willing to seem what she was not,—only to be explained on the ground that concubinage was a less evil, in the eyes of the Church, than marriage in a priest.

But even a secret marriage was attended with great embarrassment. The news of it leaks out through the servants. The envious detractors of Abélard rejoice in his weakness and his humiliation. His pride now takes offence, and he denies the ties; and so does Héloïse. The old uncle is enraged and indignant. Abélard, justly fearing his resentment,—yea, being cruelly maltreated at his instigation,—removes his wife to the convent where she was educated, and induces her to take the veil. She obeys him; she obeys him in all things; she has no will but his. She thinks of nothing but his reputation and interest; she forgets herself entirely, yet not without bitter anguish. She accepts the sacrifice, but it costs her infinite pangs. She is separated from her husband forever. Nor was the convent agreeable to her. It was dull, monotonous, dismal; imprisonment in a tomb, a living death, where none could know her agonies but God; where she could not even hear from him who was her life.

Yet immolation in the dreary convent, where for nearly forty years she combated the recollection of her folly, was perhaps the best thing for her. It was a cruel necessity. In the convent she was at least safe from molestation; she had every opportunity for study and meditation; she was

free from the temptations of the world, and removed from its scandals and reproach. The world was crucified to her; Christ was now her spouse.

To a convent also Abélard retired, overwhelmed with shame and penitence. At St. Denis he assumed the strictest habits, mortified his body with severe austerities, and renewed with ardor his studies in philosophy and theology. He was not without mental sufferings, but he could bury his grief in his ambition. It would seem that a marked change now took place in the character of Abélard. He was less vain and conceited, and sought more eagerly the consolations of religion. His life became too austere for his brother monks, and they compelled him to leave this aristocratic abbey. He then resumed his lectures in the wilderness. He retreated to a desert place in Champagne, where he constructed a small oratory with his own hands. But still students gathered around him. They, too, constructed cells, like ancient anchorites, and cultivated the fields for bread. Then, as their numbers increased, they erected a vast edifice of stone and timber, which Abélard dedicated to the Holy Comforter, and called the Paraclete. It was here that his best days were spent. His renewed labors and his intellectual boldness increased the admiration of his pupils. It became almost idolatry. It is said that three thousand students assembled at the Paraclete to hear him lecture. What admiration for genius, when three thousand young men could give up the delights of Paris for a wilderness with Abélard! What marvellous powers of fascination he must have had!

This renewed success, in the midst of disgrace, created immeasurable envy. Moreover, the sarcasms, boldness, and new views of the philosopher raised a storm of hatred. Galileo was not more offensive to the pedants and priests of his generation than Abélard was to the Schoolmen and monks of his day. They impeached both his piety and theology. He was stigmatized as unsound and superficial. Yet he continued his attacks, his ridicule, and his sarcasms. In proportion to the animosities of his foes was the zeal of his followers, who admired his boldness and arrogance. At last a great clamor was raised against the daring theologian. Saint Bernard, the most influential and profound ecclesiastic of the day, headed the opposition. He maintained that the foundations of Christianity were assailed. Even Abélard could not stand before the indignation and hostility of such a saint,—a man who kindled crusades, who made popes, who controlled the opinions of the age. Abélard was obliged to fly, and sought an asylum amid the rocks and sands of Brittany. The Duke of this wild province gave him the abbey of St. Gildas; but its inmates were ignorant and disorderly, and added insubordination to dissoluteness. They ornamented their convent with the trophies of the chase. They thought more of bears and wild boars and stags than they did of hymns and meditations. The new abbot, now a grave and religious man, in spite of his opposition to the leaders of the orthodox party, endeavored to reform the monks,—a hopeless task,—and they turned against him with more ferocity than the theologians. They even poisoned, it is said, the sacramental wine. He was obliged to hide among the rocks to save his life. Nothing but aid from the neighboring barons saved him from assassination.

Thus fifteen years were passed in alternate study, glory, suffering, and shame. In his misery Abélard called on God for help,—his first great advance in that piety which detractors depreciated. He wrote also to a friend a history of his misfortunes. By accident this history fell into the hands of Héloïse, then abbess of the Paraclete, which Abélard had given her, and where she was greatly revered for all those virtues most esteemed in her age. It opened her wound afresh, and she wrote a letter to her husband such as has seldom been equalled for pathos and depth of sentiment. It is an immortal record of her grief, her unsubdued passion, her boundless love, not without gentle reproaches for what seemed a cold neglect and silence for fifteen long and bitter years, yet breathing forgiveness, admiration, affection. The salutation of that letter is remarkable: "Héloïse to her lord, to her father, to her husband, to her brother: his servant,—yes, his daughter; his wife,—yes, his sister." Thus does she begin that tender and long letter, in which she describes her sufferings, her unchanged affections, her ardent wishes for his welfare, revealing in every line not merely genius and sensibility, but a lofty and magnanimous soul. She glories in what constitutes the real superiority of her old lover; she describes with simplicity what had originally charmed her,—his songs and conversation. She professes still an

unbounded obedience to his will, and begs for a reply, if for nothing else that she may be stimulated to a higher life amid the asperities of her gloomy convent.

Yet write, oh, write all, that I may join
Grief to thy griefs, and echo sighs to thine!
Years still are mine, and these I need not spare,
Love but demands what else were shed in prayer;
No happier task these faded eyes pursue,—
To read and weep is all I now can do.

Abélard replies to this touching letter coldly, but religiously, calling her his "sister in Christ," but not attempting to draw out the earthly love which both had sought to crush. He implores her prayers in his behalf. The only sign of his former love is a request to be buried in her abbey, in anticipation of a speedy and violent death. Most critics condemn this letter as heartless; yet it is but charitable to suppose that he did not wish to trifle with a love so great, and reopen a wound so deep and sacred. All his efforts now seem to have been directed to raise her soul to heaven. But his letter does not satisfy her, and she again gives vent to her passionate grief in view of the separation:—

"O inclement Clemency! O unfortunate Fortune! She has so far consumed her weakness upon me that she has nothing left for others against whom she rages. I am the most miserable of the miserable, the most unhappy of the unhappy!"

This letter seems to have touched Abélard, and he replied to it more at length, and with great sympathy, giving her encouragement and consolation. He speaks of their mutual sufferings as providential; and his letter is couched in a more Christian spirit than one would naturally impute to him in view of his contests with the orthodox leaders of the Church; and it also expresses more tenderness than can be reconciled with the selfish man he is usually represented. He writes:—

"See, dearest, how with the strong nets of his mercy God has taken us from the depths of a perilous sea. Observe how he has tempered mercy with justice; compare our danger with the deliverance, our disease with the remedy. I merit death, and God gives me life. Come, and join me in proclaiming how much the Lord has done for us. Be my inseparable companion in an act of grace, since you have participated with me in the fault and the pardon. Take courage, my dear sister; whom the Lord loveth he chastiseth. Sympathize with Him who suffered for your redemption. Approach in spirit His sepulchre. Be thou His spouse."

Then he closes with this prayer:—

"When it pleased Thee, O Lord, and as it pleased Thee, Thou didst join us, and Thou didst separate us. Now, what Thou hast so mercifully begun, mercifully complete; and after separating us in this world, join us together eternally in heaven."

No one can read this letter without acknowledging its delicacy and its loftiness. All his desires centred in the spiritual good of her whom the Church would not allow him to call any longer his wife, yet to whom he hoped to be reunited in heaven. As a professed nun she could no longer, with propriety, think of him as an earthly husband. For a priest to acknowledge a nun for his wife would have been a great scandal. By all the laws of the Church and the age they were now only brother and sister in Christ. Nothing escaped from his pen which derogates from the austere dignity of the priest.

But Héloïse was more human and less conventional. She had not conquered her love; once given, it could not be taken back. She accepted her dreary immolation in the convent, since she obeyed Abélard both as husband and as a spiritual father; but she would have left the convent and rejoined him had he demanded it, for marriage was to her more sacred than the veil. She was more emancipated from the ideas of her superstitious age than even the bold and rationalistic philosopher. With all her moral and spiritual elevation, Héloïse could not conquer her love. And, as a wedded wife, why should she conquer it? She was both nun and wife. If fault there was, it was as wife, in immuring herself in

a convent and denying the marriage. It should have been openly avowed; the denial of it placed her in a false position, as a fallen woman. Yet, as a fallen woman, she regained her position in the eyes of the world. She was a lady abbess. It was impossible for a woman to enjoy a higher position than the control of a convent. As abbess, she enjoyed the friendship and respect of some of the saintliest and greatest characters of the age, even of such a man as Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny. And it is impossible that she should have won the friendship of such a man, if she herself had not been irreproachable in her own character. The error in judging Héloïse is, that she, as nun, had no right to love. But the love existed long before she took the veil, and was consecrated by marriage, even though private. By the mediaeval and conventional stand point, it is true, the wife was lost in the nun. That is the view that Abélard took,—that it was a sin to love his wife any longer. But Héloïse felt that it was no sin to love him who was her life. She continued to live in him who ruled over her, and to whose desire her will was subject and obedient, according to that eternal law declared in the garden of Eden.

Nor could this have been otherwise so long as Abélard retained the admiration of Héloïse, and was worthy of her devotion. We cannot tell what changes may have taken place in her soul had he been grovelling, or tyrannical, a slave of degrading habits, or had he treated her with cruel harshness, or ceased to sympathize with her sorrows, or transferred his affections to another object. But whatever love he had to give, he gave to her to the end, so far as the ideas of his age would permit. His fault was in making a nun of his wife, which was in the eyes of the world a virtual repudiation; even though, from a principle of sublime obedience and self-sacrifice, she consented to the separation. Was Josephine to blame because she loved a selfish man after she was repudiated? Héloïse was simply unable to conquer a powerful love. It was not converted into hatred, because Abélard, in her eyes, seemed still to be worthy of it. She regarded him as a saint, forced by the ideas of his age to crush a mortal love,—which she herself could not do, because it was a sentiment, and sentiment is eternal. She was greater than Abélard, because her love was more permanent; in other words, because her soul was greater. In intellect he may have been superior to her, but not in the higher qualities which imply generosity, self-abnegation, and sympathy,—qualities which are usually stronger in women than in men. In Abélard the lower faculties—ambition, desire of knowledge, vanity—consumed the greater. *He* could be contented with the gratification of these, even as men of a still lower type can renounce intellectual pleasures for the sensual. It does not follow that Héloïse was weaker than he because she could not live outside the world of sentiment, but rather loftier and nobler. These higher faculties constituted her superiority to Abélard. It was sentiment which made her so pre-eminently great, and it was this which really endeared her to Abélard. By reason and will he ruled over her; but by the force of superior sentiment she ruled over him.

Sentiment, indeed, underlies everything that is great or lovely or enduring on this earth. It is the joy of festivals, the animating soul of patriotism, the bond of families, the beauty of religious, political, and social institutions. It has consecrated Thermopylae, the Parthenon, the Capitol, the laurel crown, the conqueror's triumphal procession, the epics of Homer, the eloquence of Demosthenes, the muse of Virgil, the mediaeval cathedral, the town-halls of Flanders, the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, the struggles of the Puritans, the deeds of Gustavus Adolphus, the Marseilles hymn, the farewell address of Washington. There is no poetry without it, nor heroism, nor social banqueting. What is Christmas without the sentiments which hallow the evergreen, the anthem, the mistletoe, the family reunion? What is even tangible roast-beef and plum-pudding without a party to enjoy them; and what is the life of the party but the interchange of sentiments? Why is a cold sleigh-ride, or the ascent of a mountain, or a voyage across the Atlantic, or a rough journey under torrid suns to the consecrated places,—why are these endurable, and even pleasant? It is because the sentiments which prompt them are full of sweet and noble inspiration. The Last Supper, and Bethany, and the Sepulchre are immortal, because they testify eternal love. Leonidas lives in the heart of the world because he sacrificed himself to patriotism. The martyrs are objects of unfading veneration, because they died for Christianity.

In the same way Héloïse is embalmed in the affections of all nations because she gave up everything for an exalted sentiment which so possessed her soul that neither scorn, nor pity, nor ascetic severities, nor gloomy isolation, nor ingratitude, nor a living death could eradicate or weaken it,—an unbounded charity which covered with its veil the evils she could not remove. That all-pervading and all-conquering sentiment was the admiration of ideal virtues and beauties which her rapt and excited soul saw in her adored lover; such as Dante saw in his departed Beatrice. It was unbounded admiration for Abélard which first called out the love of Héloïse; and his undoubted brilliancy and greatness were exaggerated in her loving eyes by her imagination, even as mothers see in children traits that are hidden from all other mortal eyes. So lofty and godlike did he seem, amidst the plaudits of the schools, and his triumph over all the dignitaries that sought to humble him; so interesting was he to her by his wit, sarcasm, and eloquence,—that she worshipped him, and deemed it the most exalted honor to possess exclusively his love in return, which he gave certainly to no one else. Satisfied that he, the greatest man of the world,—as he seemed and as she was told he was,—should give to her what she gave to him, she exulted in it as her highest glory. It was all in all to her; but not to him. See, then, how superior Héloïse was to Abélard in humility as well as self-abnegation. She was his equal, and yet she ever gloried in his superiority. See how much greater, too, she was in lofty sentiments, since it was the majesty of his mind and soul which she adored. He was comparatively indifferent to her when she became no longer an object of desire; but not so with her, since she was attracted by his real or supposed greatness of intellect, which gave permanence to her love, and loftiness also. He was her idol, since he possessed those qualities which most powerfully excited her admiration.

This then is love, when judged by a lofty standard,—worship of what is most glorious in mind and soul. And this exalted love is most common among the female sex, since their passions are weaker and their sentiments are stronger than those of most men. What a fool a man is to weaken this sympathy, or destroy this homage, or outrage this indulgence; or withhold that tenderness, that delicate attention, that toleration of foibles, that sweet appreciation, by which the soul of woman is kept alive and the lamp of her incense burning! And woe be to him who drives this confiding idolater back upon her technical obligations! The form that holds these certitudes of the soul may lose all its beauty by rudeness or neglect. And even if the form remains, what is a mortal body without the immortal soul which animates it? The glory of a man or of a woman is the real presence of spiritual love, which brings peace to homes, alleviation to burdens, consolation to sufferings, rest to labors, hope to anxieties, and a sublime repose amid the changes of the world,—that blessed flower of perennial sweetness and beauty which Adam in his despair bore away from Eden, and which alone almost compensated him for the loss of Paradise.

It is not my object to present Abélard except in his connection with the immortal love with which he inspired the greatest woman of the age. And yet I cannot conclude this sketch without taking a parting glance of this brilliant but unfortunate man. And I confess that his closing days strongly touch my sympathies, and make me feel that historians have been too harsh in their verdicts. Historians have based their opinions on the hostilities which theological controversies produced, and on the neglect which Abélard seemed to show for the noble woman who obeyed and adored him. But he appears to have employed his leisure and tranquil days in writing hymns to the abbess of the Paraclete, in preparing homilies, and in giving her such advice as her circumstances required. All his later letters show the utmost tenderness and zeal for the spiritual good of the woman to whom he hoped to be reunited in heaven, and doing for Héloïse what Jerome did for Paula, and Fénelon for Madame Guyon. If no longer her lover, he was at least her friend. And, moreover, at this time he evinced a loftier religious life than he has the credit of possessing. He lived a life of study and meditation.

But his enemies would not allow him to rest, even in generous labors. They wished to punish him and destroy his influence. So they summoned him to an ecclesiastical council to answer for his heresies. At first he resolved to defend himself, and Bernard, his greatest enemy, even professed a

reluctance to contend with his superior in dialectical contests. But Abélard, seeing how inflamed were the passions of the theologians against him, and how vain would be his defence, appealed at once to the Pope; and Rome, of course, sided with his enemies. He was condemned to perpetual silence, and his books were ordered to be burned.

To this sentence it would appear that Abélard prepared to submit with more humility than was to be expected from so bold and arrogant a man. But he knew he could not resist an authority based on generally accepted ideas any easier than Henry IV. could have resisted Hildebrand. He made up his mind to obey the supreme authority of the Church, but bitterly felt the humiliation and the wrong.

Broken in spirit and in reputation, Abélard, now an old man, set out on foot for Rome to plead his cause before the Pope. He stopped on his way at Cluny in Burgundy, that famous monastery where Hildebrand himself had ruled, now, however, presided over by Peter the Venerable,—the most benignant and charitable ecclesiastical dignitary of that age. And as Abélard approached the gates of the venerable abbey, which was the pride of the age, worn out with fatigue and misfortune, he threw himself at the feet of the lordly abbot and invoked shelter and protection. How touching is the pride of greatness, when brought low by penitence or grief, like that of Theodosius at the feet of Ambrose, or Henry II. at the tomb of Becket! But Peter raises him up, receives him in his arms, opens to him his heart and the hospitalities of his convent, not as a repentant prodigal, but as the greatest genius of his age, brought low by religious persecution. Peter did all in his power to console his visitor, and even privately interceded with the Pope, remembering only Abélard's greatness and his misfortunes. And the persecuted philosopher, through the kind offices of the abbot, was left in peace, and was even reconciled with Bernard,—an impossibility without altered opinions in Abélard, or a submission to the Church which bore all the marks of piety.

The few remaining days of this extraordinary man, it seems, were spent in study, penitence, and holy meditation. So beloved and revered was he by the community among whom he dwelt, that for six centuries his name was handed down from father to son among the people of the valley and town of Cluny. "At the extremity of a retired valley," says Lamartine, "flanked by the walls of the convent, on the margin of extensive meadows, closed by woods, and near to a neighboring stream, there exists an enormous lime-tree, under the shade of which Abélard in his closing days was accustomed to sit and meditate, with his face turned towards the Paraclete which he had built, and where Héloïse still discharged the duties of abbess."

But even this pensive pleasure was not long permitted him. He was worn out with sorrows and misfortunes; and in a few months after he had crossed the hospitable threshold of Cluny he died in the arms of his admiring friend. "Under the instinct of a sentiment as sacred as religion itself, Peter felt that Abélard above and Héloïse on earth demanded of him the last consolation of a reunion in the grave. So, quietly, in the dead of night, dreading scandal, yet true to his impulses, without a hand to assist or an eye to witness, he exhumed the coffin which had been buried in the abbey cemetery, and conveyed it himself to the Paraclete, and intrusted it to Héloïse."

She received it with tears, shut herself up in the cold vault with the mortal remains of him she had loved so well; while Peter, that aged saint of consolation, pronounced the burial service with mingled tears and sobs. And after having performed this last sad office, and given his affectionate benediction to the great woman to whom he was drawn by ties of admiration and sympathy, this venerable dignitary wended his way silently back to Cluny, and, for the greater consolation of Héloïse, penned the following remarkable letter, which may perhaps modify our judgment of Abélard:—

"It is no easy task, my sister, to describe in a few lines the holiness, the humility, and the self-denial which our departed brother exhibited to us, and of which our whole collected brotherhood alike bear witness. Never have I beheld a life and deportment so thoroughly submissive. I placed him in an elevated rank in the community, but he appeared the lowest of all by the simplicity of his dress and his abstinence from all the enjoyments of the senses. I speak not of luxury, for that was a stranger to him; he refused everything but what was indispensable for the sustenance of life. He

read continually, prayed often, and never spoke except when literary conversation or holy discussion compelled him to break silence. His mind and tongue seemed concentrated on philosophical and divine instructions. Simple, straightforward, reflecting on eternal judgments, shunning all evil, he consecrated the closing hours of an illustrious life. And when a mortal sickness seized him, with what fervent piety, what ardent inspiration did he make his last confession of his sins; with what fervor did he receive the promise of eternal life; with what confidence did he recommend his body and soul to the tender mercies of the Saviour!"

Such was the death of Abélard, as attested by the most venerated man of that generation. And when we bear in mind the friendship and respect of such a man as Peter, and the exalted love of such a woman as Héloïse, it is surely not strange that posterity, and the French nation especially, should embalm his memory in their traditions.

Héloïse survived him twenty years,—a priestess of God, a mourner at the tomb of Abélard. And when in the solitude of the Paraclete she felt the approach of the death she had so long invoked, she directed the sisterhood to place her body beside that of her husband in the same leaden coffin. And there, in the silent aisles of that abbey-church, it remained for five hundred years, until it was removed by Lucien Bonaparte to the Museum of French Monuments in Paris, but again transferred, a few years after, to the cemetery of Père la Chaise. The enthusiasm of the French erected over the remains a beautiful monument; and "there still may be seen, day by day, the statues of the immortal lovers, decked with flowers and coronets, perpetually renewed with invisible hands,—the silent tribute of the heart of that consecrated sentiment which survives all change. Thus do those votive offerings mysteriously convey admiration for the constancy and sympathy with the posthumous union of two hearts who transposed conjugal tenderness from the senses to the soul, who spiritualized the most ardent of human passions, and changed love itself into a holocaust, a martyrdom, and a holy sacrifice."

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JOAN OF ARC

A.D. 1412-1431

HEROIC WOMEN

Perhaps the best known and most popular of heroines is Joan of Arc, called the Maid of Orleans. Certainly she is one of the most interesting characters in the history of France during the Middle Ages; hence I select her to illustrate heroic women. There are not many such who are known to fame; though heroic qualities are not uncommon in the gentler sex, and a certain degree of heroism enters into the character of all those noble and strongly marked women who have attracted attention and who have rendered great services. It marked many of the illustrious women of the Bible, of Grecian and Roman antiquity, and especially those whom chivalry produced in mediaeval Europe; and even in our modern times intrepidity and courage have made many a woman famous, like Florence Nightingale. In Jewish history we point to Deborah, who delivered Israel from the hands of Jabin; and to Jael, who slew Sisera, the captain of Jabin's hosts; and to Judith, who cut off the head of Holofernes. It was heroism, which is ever allied with magnanimity, that prompted the daughter of Jephtha to the most remarkable self-sacrifice recorded in history. There was a lofty heroism in Abigail, when she prevented David from shedding innocent blood. And among the Pagan nations, who does not admire the heroism of such women as we have already noticed? Chivalry, too, produced illustrious heroines in every country of Europe. We read of a Countess of March, in the reign of Edward III., who defended Dunbar with uncommon courage against Montague and an English army; a Countess of Montfort shut herself up in the fortress of Hennebon, and successfully defied the whole power of Charles of Blois; Jane Hatchett repulsed in person a considerable body of Burgundian troops; Altrude, Countess of Bertinora, advanced with an army to the relief of Ancona; Bona Lombardi, with a body of troops, liberated her husband from captivity; Isabella of Lorraine raised an army for the rescue of her husband; Queen Philippa, during the absence of her husband in Scotland, stationed herself in the Castle of Bamborough and defied the threats of Douglas, and afterwards headed an army against David, King of Scotland, and took him prisoner, and shut him up in the Tower of London.

But these illustrious women of the Middle Ages who performed such feats of gallantry and courage belonged to the noble class; they were identified with aristocratic institutions; they lived in castles; they were the wives and daughters of feudal princes and nobles whose business was war, and who were rough and turbulent warriors, and sometimes no better than robbers, but who had the virtues of chivalry, which was at its height during the wars of Edward III. And yet neither the proud feudal nobles nor their courageous wives and daughters took any notice of the plebeian people, except to oppress and grind them down. No virtues were developed by feudalism among the people but submission, patience, and loyalty.

And thus it is extraordinary that such a person should appear in that chivalric age as Joan of Arc, who rose from the humblest class, who could neither read nor write,—a peasant girl without friends or influence, living among the Vosges mountains on the borders of Champagne and Lorraine. She was born in 1412, in the little obscure village of Domremy on the Meuse, on land belonging to the French crown. She lived in a fair and fertile valley on the line of the river, on the other side of which were the Burgundian territories. The Lorraine of the Vosges was a mountainous district covered with forests, which served for royal hunting parties. The village of Domremy itself was once a dependency of the abbey of St. Remy at Rheims. This district had suffered cruelly from the wars

between the Burgundians and the adherents of the Armagnacs, one of the great feudal families of France in the Middle Ages.

Joan, or Jeanne, was the third daughter of one of the peasant laborers of Domremy. She was employed by her mother in spinning and sewing, while her sisters and brothers were set to watch cattle. Her mother could teach her neither to read nor write, but early imbued her mind with the sense of duty. Joan was naturally devout, and faultless in her morals; simple, natural, gentle, fond of attending the village church; devoting herself, when not wanted at home, to nursing the sick,—the best girl in the village; strong, healthy, and beautiful; a spirit lowly but poetic, superstitious but humane, and fond of romantic adventures. But her piety was one of her most marked peculiarities, and somehow or other she knew more than we can explain of Scripture heroes and heroines.

One of the legends of that age and place was that the marches of Lorraine were to give birth to a maid who was to save the realm,—founded on an old prophecy of Merlin. It seems that when only thirteen years old Joan saw visions, and heard celestial voices bidding her to be good and to trust in God; and as virginity was supposed to be a supernal virtue, she vowed to remain a virgin, but told no one of her vow or her visions. She seems to have been a girl of extraordinary good sense, which was as marked as her religious enthusiasm.

The most remarkable thing about this young peasant girl is that she claimed to have had visions and heard voices which are difficult to be distinguished from supernatural,—something like the daemon of Socrates. She affirmed that Saint Michael the Archangel appeared to her in glory, also Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret, encouraging her in virtue, and indicating to her that a great mission was before her, that she was to deliver her king and country. Such claims have not been treated with incredulity or contempt by French historians, especially Barante and Michelet, in view of the wonderful work she was instrumental in accomplishing.

At this period France was afflicted with that cruel war which had at intervals been carried on for nearly a century between the English and French kings, and which had arisen from the claims of Edward I to the throne of France. The whole country was distracted, forlorn, and miserable; it was impoverished, overrun, and drained of fighting men. The war had exhausted the resources of England as well as those of France. The population of England at the close of this long series of wars was less than it was under Henry II. Those wars were more disastrous to the interests of both the rival kingdoms than even those of the Crusades, and they were marked by great changes and great calamities. The victories of Crécy, Poitiers, and Agincourt—which shed such lustre on the English nation—were followed by reverses, miseries, and defeats, which more than balanced the glories of Edward the Black Prince and Henry V. Provinces were gained and lost, yet no decisive results followed either victory or defeat. The French kings, driven hither and thither, with a decimated people, and with the loss of some of their finest provinces, still retained their sovereignty.

At one time, about the year 1347, Edward III. had seemed to have attained the supreme object of his ambition. France lay bleeding at his feet; he had won the greatest victory of his age; Normandy already belonged to him, Guienne was recovered, Aquitaine was ceded to him, Flanders was on his side, and the possession of Brittany seemed to open his way to Paris. But in fourteen years these conquests were lost; the plague scourged England, and popular discontents added to the perplexities of the once fortunate monarch. Moreover, the House of Commons had come to be a power and a check on royal ambition. The death of the Black Prince consummated his grief and distraction, and the heroic king gave himself up in his old age to a disgraceful profligacy, and died in the arms of Alice Pierce, in the year 1377.

Fifty years pass by, and Henry V. is king of England, and renews his claim to the French throne. The battle of Agincourt (1415) gives to Henry V. the same *éclat* that the victory of Crécy had bestowed on Edward III. Again the French realm is devastated by triumphant Englishmen. The King of France is a captive; his Queen is devoted to the cause of Henry, the Duke of Burgundy is his ally, and he only needs the formal recognition of the Estates to take possession of the French throne. But

in the year 1422, in the midst of his successes, he died of a disease which baffled the skill of all his physicians, leaving his kingdom to a child only nine years old, and the prosecution of the French war to his brother the Duke of Bedford, who was scarcely inferior to himself in military genius.

At this time, when Charles VI. of France was insane, and his oldest son Louis dead, his second son Charles declared himself King of France, as Charles VII. But only southern France acknowledged Charles, who at this time was a boy of fifteen years. All the northern provinces, even Guienne and Gascony, acknowledged Henry VI., the infant son of Henry V. of England. Charles's affairs, therefore, were in a bad way, and there was every prospect of the complete conquest of France. Even Paris was the prey alternately of the Burgundians and the Armagnacs, the last of whom were the adherents of Charles the Dauphin,—the legitimate heir to the throne. He held his little court at Bourges, where he lived as gaily as he could, sometimes in want of the necessities of life. His troops were chiefly Gascons, Lombards, and Scotch, who got no pay, and who lived by pillage. He was so hard pressed by the Duke of Bedford that he meditated a retreat into Dauphiné. It would seem that he was given to pleasures, and was unworthy of his kingdom, which he nearly lost by negligence and folly.

The Duke of Bedford, in order to drive Charles out of the central provinces, resolved to take Orleans, which was the key to the south,—a city on the north bank of the Loire, strongly fortified and well provisioned. This was in 1428. The probabilities were that this city would fall, for it was already besieged, and was beginning to suffer famine.

In this critical period for France, Joan of Arc appeared on the stage, being then a girl of sixteen (some say eighteen) years of age. Although Joan, as we have said, was uneducated, she yet clearly comprehended the critical condition of her country, and with the same confidence that David had in himself and in his God when he armed himself with a sling and a few pebbles to confront the full-armed giant of the Philistines, inspired by her heavenly visions she resolved to deliver France. She knew nothing of war; she had not been accustomed to equestrian exercises, like a woman of chivalry; she had no friends; she had never seen great people; she was poor and unimportant. To the eye of worldly wisdom her resolution was perfectly absurd.

It was with the greatest difficulty that Joan finally obtained an interview with Boudricourt, the governor of Vaucouleurs; and he laughed at her, and bade her uncle take her home and chastise her for her presumption. She returned to her humble home, but with resolutions unabated. The voices encouraged her, and the common people believed in her. Again, in the red coarse dress of a peasant girl, she sought the governor, claiming that God had sent her. There was something so strange, so persistent, so honest about her that he reported her case to the King. Meanwhile, the Duke of Lorraine heard of her, and sent her a safe-conduct, and the people of Vaucouleurs came forward and helped her. They gave her a horse and the dress of a soldier; and the governor, yielding to her urgency, furnished her with a sword and a letter to the King. She left without seeing her parents,—which was one of the subsequent charges against her,—and prosecuted her journey amid great perils and fatigues, travelling by night with her four armed attendants.

After twelve days Joan reached Chinon, where the King was tarrying. But here new difficulties arose: she could not get an interview with the King; it was opposed by his most influential ministers and courtiers. "Why waste precious time," said they, "when Orleans is in the utmost peril, to give attention to a mad peasant-girl, who, if not mad, must be possessed with a devil: a sorceress to be avoided; what can she do for France?" The Archbishop of Rheims, the prime-minister of Charles, especially was against her. The learned doctors of the schools derided her claims. It would seem that her greatest enemies were in the Church and the universities. "Not many wise, not many mighty are called." The deliverers of nations in great exigencies rarely have the favor of the great. But the women of the court spoke warmly in Joan's favor, for her conduct was modest and irreproachable; and after two days she was admitted to the royal castle, the Count of Vendôme leading her to the royal presence. Charles stood among a crowd of nobles, all richly dressed; but in her visions this pure enthusiast had seen more glories than an earthly court, and she was undismayed. To the King she

repeated the words which had thus far acted liked a charm: "I am Joan the Maid, sent by God to save France;" and she demanded troops. But the King was cautious; he sent two monks to her native village to inquire all about her, while nobles and ecclesiastics cross-questioned her. She was, however, treated courteously, and given in charge to the King's lieutenant, whose wife was a woman of virtue and piety. Many distinguished people visited her in the castle to which she was assigned, on whom she made a good impression by her modesty, good sense, and sublime enthusiasm. It was long debated in the royal council whether she should be received or rejected; but as affairs were in an exceedingly critical condition, and Orleans was on the point of surrender, it was concluded to listen to her voice.

It must be borne in mind that the age was exceedingly superstitious, and the statesmen of the distracted and apparently ruined country probably decided to make use of this girl, not from any cordial belief in her mission, but from her influence on the people. She might stimulate them to renewed efforts. She was an obscure and ignorant peasant-girl, it was true, but God might have chosen her as an instrument. In this way very humble people, with great claims, have often got the ear and the approval of the wise and powerful, as instruments of Almighty Providence. When Moody and Sankey first preached in London, it was the Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief-Justice—who happened to be religious men—that, amid the cynicism of ordinary men of rank, gave them the most encouragement, and frequently attended their meetings.

And the voices which inspired the Maid of Orleans herself,—what were these? Who can tell? Who can explain such mysteries? I would not assert, nor would I deny, that they were the voices of inspiration. What is inspiration? It has often been communicated to men. Who can deny that the daemon of Socrates was something more than a fancied voice? When did supernatural voices first begin to utter the power of God? When will the voices of inspiration cease to be heard on earth? In view of the fact that *she did* accomplish her mission, the voices which inspired this illiterate peasant to deliver France are not to be derided. Who can sit in judgment on the ways in which Providence is seen to act? May He not choose such instruments as He pleases? Are not all His ways mysterious, never to be explained by the reason of man? Did not the occasion seem to warrant something extraordinary? Here was a great country apparently on the verge of ruin. To the eye of reason and experience it seemed that France was to be henceforth ruled, as a subjugated country, by a foreign power. Royal armies had failed to deliver her. Loyalty had failed to arouse the people. Feudal envies and enmities had converted vassals into foes. The Duke of Burgundy, the most powerful vassal of France, was in arms against his liege lord. The whole land was rent with divisions and treasons. And the legitimate king, who ought to have been a power, was himself feeble, frivolous, and pleasure-seeking amid all his perils. *He* could not save the country. Who could save it? There were no great generals. Universal despair hung over the land. The people were depressed. Military resources were insufficient. If France was to be preserved as an independent and powerful monarchy, something extraordinary must happen to save it. The hope in feudal armies had fled. In fact, only God could rescue the country in such perils and under such forlorn circumstances.

Joan of Arc believed in God,—that He could do what He pleased, that He was a power to be supplicated; and she prayed to Him to save France, since princes could not save the land, divided by their rivalries and jealousies and ambitions. And the conviction, after much prayer and fasting, was impressed upon her mind—no matter how, but it *was* impressed upon her—that God had chosen *her* as His instrument, that it was her mission to raise the siege of Orleans, and cause the young Dauphin to be crowned king at Rheims. This conviction gave her courage and faith and intrepidity. How could she, unacquainted with wars and sieges, show the necessary military skill and genius? She did not pretend to it. She claimed no other wisdom than that which was communicated to her by celestial voices. If she could direct a military movement in opposition to leaders of experience, it was only because this movement was what was indicated by an archangel. And so decided and imperative was she, that royal orders were given to obey her. One thing was probable, whether a supernatural wisdom and power were given her or not,—she yet might animate the courage of others, she might stimulate

them to heroic action, and revive their hopes; for if God was with them, who could be against them? What she had to do was simply this,—to persuade princes and nobles that the Lord would deliver the nation. Let the conviction be planted in the minds of a religious people that God is with them, and in some way will come to their aid if they themselves will put forth their own energies, and they will be almost sure to rally. And here was an inspired woman, as they supposed, ready to lead them on to victory, not by her military skill, but by indicating to them the way as an interpreter of the Divine will. This was not more extraordinary than the repeated deliverances of the Hebrew nation under religious leaders.

The signal deliverance of the French at that gloomy period from the hands of the English, by Joan of Arc, was a religious movement. The Maid is to be viewed as a religious phenomenon; she rested her whole power and mission on the supposition that she was inspired to point out the way of deliverance. She claimed nothing for herself, was utterly without vanity, ambition, or pride, and had no worldly ends to gain. Her character was without a flaw. She was as near perfection as any mortal ever was: religious, fervent, unselfish, gentle, modest, chaste, patriotic, bent on one thing only,—to be of service to her country, without reward; and to be of service only by way of encouragement, and pointing out what seemed to her to be the direction of God.

So Joan fearlessly stood before kings and nobles and generals, yet in the modest gentleness of conscious virtue, to direct them what to do, as a sort of messenger of Heaven. What was rank or learning to her? If she was sent by a voice that spoke to her soul, and that voice was from God, what was human greatness to her? It paled before the greatness which commissioned her. In the discharge of her mission all men were alike in her eyes; the distinctions of rank faded away in the mighty issues which she wished to bring about, even the rescue of France from foreign enemies, and which she fully believed she could effect with God's aid, and in the way that He should indicate.

Whether the ruling powers fully believed in her or not, they at last complied with her wishes and prayers, though not until she had been subjected to many insults from learned priests and powerful nobles, whom she finally won by her modest and wise replies. Said one of them mockingly: "If it be God's will that the English shall quit France, there is no need for men-at-arms." To whom she replied: "The men-at-arms must fight, and God shall give the victory." She saw no other deliverance than through fighting, and fighting bravely, and heroically, as the means of success. She was commissioned, she said, to stimulate the men to fight,—not to pray, but to fight. She promised no rescue by supernatural means, but only through natural forces. France was not to despond, but to take courage, and fight. There was no imposture about her, only zeal and good sense, to impress upon the country the necessity of bravery and renewed exertions.

The Maid set out for the deliverance of the besieged city in a man's attire, deeming it more modest under her circumstances, and exposing her to fewer annoyances. She was arrayed in a suit of beautiful armor, with a banner after her own device,—white, embroidered with lilies,—and a sword which had been long buried behind the altar of a church. Under her inspiring influence an army of six thousand men was soon collected, commanded by the ablest and most faithful generals who remained to the King, and accompanied by the Archbishop of Rheims, who, though he had no great faith in her claims, yet saw in her a fitting instrument to arouse the people from despair. Before setting out from Blois she dictated a letter to the English captains before the besieged city, which to them must have seemed arrogant, insulting, and absurd, in which she commanded them in God's name to return to their own country, assuring them that they fought not merely against the French, but against Him, and hence would be defeated.

The French captains had orders to obey their youthful leader, but not seeing the wisdom of her directions to march to Orleans on the north side of the Loire, they preferred to keep the river between them and the forts of the English. Not daring to disobey her, they misled her as to the position of Orleans, and advanced by the south bank, which proved a mistake, and called forth her indignation, since she did not profess to be governed by military rules, but by divine direction. The city had been

defended by a series of forts and other fortifications of great strength, all of which had fallen into the hands of the besiegers; only the walls of the city remained. Joan succeeded in effecting an entrance for herself on a white charger through one of the gates, and the people thronged to meet her as an angel of deliverance, with the wildest demonstrations of joy. Her first act was to repair to the cathedral and offer up thanks to God; her next was to summon the enemy to retire. In the course of a few days the French troops entered the city with supplies. They then issued from the gates to retake the fortifications, which were well defended, cheered and encouraged by the heroic Maid, who stimulated them to daring deeds. The French were successful in their first assault, which seemed a miracle to the English yeomen, who now felt that they were attacked by unseen forces. Then other forts were assailed with equal success, Joan seeming like an inspired heroine, with her eyes flashing, and her charmed standard waving on to victory. The feats of valor which the French performed were almost incredible. Joan herself did not fight, but stimulated the heroism of her troops. The captains led the assault; the Maid directed their movements. After most of the forts were retaken, the troops wished to rest. Joan knew no rest, nor fear, nor sense of danger. She would hear of no cessation from bloody strife until all the fortifications were regained. At the assault on the last fort she herself was wounded; but she was as insensible to pain as she was to fear. As soon as her wound was dressed she hurried to the ramparts, and encouraged the troops, who were disposed to retire. By evening the last fort or bastille was taken, and the English retired, baffled and full of vengeance. The city was delivered. The siege was raised. Not an Englishman survived south of the Loire.

But only part of the mission of this heroic woman was fulfilled. She had delivered Orleans and saved the southern provinces. She had now the more difficult work to perform of crowning the King in the consecrated city, which was in the hands of the enemy, as well as the whole country between Orleans and Rheims. This task seemed to the King and his court to be absolutely impossible. So was the raising of the siege of Orleans, according to all rules of war. Although priests, nobles, and scholars had praised the courage and intrepidity of Joan, and exhorted the nation to trust her, since God seemed to help her, yet to capture a series of fortified cities which were in possession of superior forces seemed an absurdity. Only the common people had full faith in her, for as she was supposed to be specially aided by God, nothing seemed to them an impossibility. They looked upon her as raised up to do most wonderful things,—as one directly inspired. This faith in a girl of eighteen would not have been possible but for her exalted character. Amid the most searching cross-examinations from the learned, she commanded respect by the wisdom of her replies. Every inquiry had been made as to her rural life and character, and nothing could be said against her, but much in her favor; especially her absorbing piety, gentleness, deeds of benevolence, and utter unselfishness.

There was, therefore, a great admiration and respect for this girl, leading to the kindest and most honorable treatment of her from both prelates and nobles. But it was not a chivalric admiration; she did not belong to a noble family, nor did she defend an institution. She was regarded as a second Deborah, commissioned to deliver a people. Nor could a saint have done her work. Bernard could kindle a crusade by his eloquence, but he could not have delivered Orleans; it required some one who could excite idolatrous homage. Only a woman, in that age, was likely to be deified by the people,—some immaculate virgin. Our remote German ancestors had in their native forests a peculiar reverence for woman. The priestesses of Germanic forests had often incited to battle. Their warnings or encouragements were regarded as voices from Heaven. Perhaps the deification and worship of the Virgin Mary—so hearty and poetical in the Middle Ages—may have indirectly aided the mission of the Maid of Orleans. The common people saw one of their own order arise and do marvellous things, bringing kings and nobles to her cause. How could she thus triumph over all the inequalities of feudalism unless divinely commissioned? How could she work what seemed to be almost miracles if she had not a supernatural power to assist her? Like the *regina angelorum*, she was *virgo castissima*. And if she was unlike common mortals, perhaps an inspired woman, what she promised would be fulfilled. In consequence of such a feeling an unbounded enthusiasm was excited among the people.

They were ready to do her bidding, whether reasonable or unreasonable to them, for there was a sacred mystery about her,—a reverence that extorted obedience. Worldly-wise statesmen and prelates had not this unbounded admiration, although they doubtless regarded her as a moral phenomenon which they could not understand. Her advice seemed to set aside all human prudence. Nothing seemed more rash or unreasonable than to undertake the conquest of so many fortified cities with such feeble means. It was one thing to animate starving troops to a desperate effort for their deliverance; it was another to assault fortified cities held by the powerful forces which had nearly completed the conquest of France.

The King came to meet the Maid at Tours, and would have bestowed upon her royal honors, for she had rendered a great service. But it was not honors she wanted. She seemed to be indifferent to all personal rewards, and even praises. She wanted only one thing,—an immediate march to Rheims. She even pleaded like a sensible general. She entreated Charles to avail himself of the panic which the raising of the siege of Orleans had produced, before the English could recover from it and bring reinforcements. But the royal council hesitated. It would imperil the King's person to march through a country guarded by hostile troops; and even if he could reach Rheims, it would be more difficult to take the city than to defend Orleans. The King had no money to pay for an army. The enterprise was not only hazardous but impossible, the royal counsellors argued. But to this earnest and impassioned woman, seeing only one point, there was no such thing as impossibility. The thing *must* be done. The council gave reasons; she brushed them away as cobwebs. What is impossible for God to do? Then they asked her if she heard the voices. She answered, Yes; that she had prayed in secret, complaining of unbelief, and that the voice came to her, which said, "Daughter of God, go on, go on! I will be thy help!" Her whole face glowed and shone like the face of an angel.

The King, half persuaded, agreed to go to Rheims, but not until the English had been driven from the Loire. An army was assembled under the command of the Duke of Alençon, with orders to do nothing without the Maid's advice. Joan went to Selles to prepare for the campaign, and rejoined the army mounted on a black charger, while a page carried her furled banner. The first success was against Jargeau, a strongly fortified town, where she was wounded; but she was up in a moment, and the place was carried, and Joan and Alençon returned in triumph to Orleans. They then advanced against Baugé, another strong place, not merely defended by the late besiegers of Orleans, but a powerful army under Sir John Falstaff and Talbot was advancing to relieve it. Yet Baugé capitulated, the English being panic-stricken, before the city could be relieved. Then the French and English forces encountered each other in the open field: victory sided with the French; and Falstaff himself fled, with the loss of three thousand men. The whole district then turned against the English, who retreated towards Paris; while a boundless enthusiasm animated the whole French army.

Soldiers and leaders now were equally eager for the march to Rheims; yet the King ingloriously held back, and the coronation seemed to be as distant as ever. But Joan with unexampled persistency insisted on an immediate advance, and the King reluctantly set out for Rheims with twelve thousand men. The first great impediment was the important city of Troyes, which was well garrisoned. After five days were spent before it, and famine began to be felt in the camp, the military leaders wished to raise the siege and return to the south. The Maid implored them to persevere, promising the capture of the city within three days. "We would wait six," said the Archbishop of Rheims, the chancellor and chief adviser of the King, "if we were certain we could take it." Joan mounted her horse, made preparations for the assault, cheered the soldiers, working far into the night; and the next day the city surrendered, and Charles, attended by Joan and his nobles, triumphantly entered the city.

The prestige of the Maid carried the day. The English soldiers dared not contend with one who seemed to be a favorite of Heaven. They had heard of Orleans and Jargeau. Chalons followed the example of Troyes. Then Rheims, when the English learned of the surrender of Troyes and Chalons, made no resistance; and in less than a month after the march had begun, the King entered the city, and was immediately crowned by the Archbishop, Joan standing by his side holding her sacred banner. This coronation was a matter of great political importance. Charles had a rival in the youthful King

of England. The succession was disputed. Whoever should first be crowned in the city where the ancient kings were consecrated was likely to be acknowledged by the nation.

The mission of Joan was now accomplished. She had done what she promised, amid incredible difficulties. And now, kneeling before her anointed sovereign, she said, "Gracious King, now is fulfilled the pleasure of God!" And as she spoke she wept. She had given a king to France; and she had given France to her king. Not by might, not by power had she done this, but by the Spirit of the Lord. She asked no other reward for her magnificent service than that her native village should be forever exempt from taxation. Feeling that the work for which she was raised up was done, she would willingly have retired to the seclusion of her mountain home, but the leaders of France, seeing how much she was adored by the people, were not disposed to part with so great an instrument of success.

And Joan, too, entered with zeal upon those military movements which were to drive away forever the English from the soil of France. Her career had thus far been one of success and boundless enthusiasm; but now the tide turned, and her subsequent life was one of signal failure. Her only strength was in the voices which had bidden her to deliver Orleans and to crown the King. She had no genius for war. Though still brave and dauntless, though still preserving her innocence and her piety, she now made mistakes. She was also thwarted in her plans. She became, perhaps, self-assured and self-confident, and assumed prerogatives that only belonged to the King and his ministers, which had the effect of alienating them. They never secretly admired her, nor fully trusted her. Charles made a truce with the great Duke of Burgundy, who was in alliance with the English. Joan vehemently denounced the truce, and urged immediate and uncompromising action; but timidity, or policy, or political intrigues, defeated her counsels. The King wished to regain Paris by negotiation; all his movements were dilatory. At last his forces approached the capital, and occupied St. Denis. It was determined to attack the city. One corps was led by Joan; but in the attack she was wounded, and her troops, in spite of her, were forced to retreat. Notwithstanding the retreat and her wound, however, she persevered, though now all to no purpose. The King himself retired, and the attack became a failure. Still Joan desired to march upon Paris for a renewed attack; but the King would not hear of it, and she was sent with troops badly equipped to besiege La Charité, where she again failed. For four weary months she remained inactive. She grew desperate; the voices neither encouraged nor discouraged her. She was now full of sad forebodings, yet her activity continued. She repaired to Compiègne, a city already besieged by the enemy, which she wished to relieve. In a sortie she was outnumbered, and was defeated and taken prisoner by John of Luxemburg, a vassal of the Duke of Burgundy.

The news of this capture produced great exhilaration among the English and Burgundians. Had a great victory been won, the effect could not have been greater. It broke the spell. The Maid was human, like other women; and her late successes were attributed not to her inspiration, but to demoniacal enchantments. She was looked upon as a witch or as a sorceress, and was now guarded with especial care for fear of a rescue, and sent to a strong castle belonging to John of Luxemburg. In Paris, on receipt of the news, the Duke of Bedford caused *Te Deums* to be sung in all the churches, and the University and the Vicar of the Inquisition demanded of the Duke of Burgundy that she should be delivered to ecclesiastical justice.

The remarkable thing connected with the capture of the Maid was that so little effort was made to rescue her. She had rendered to Charles an inestimable service, and yet he seems to have deserted her; neither he nor his courtiers appeared to regret her captivity,—probably because they were jealous of her. Gratitude was not one of the virtues of feudal kings. What sympathy could feudal barons have with a low-born peasant girl? They had used her; but when she could be useful no longer, they forgot her. Out of sight she was out of mind; and if remembered at all, she was regarded as one who could no longer provoke jealousy. Jealousy is a devouring passion, especially among nobles. The generals of Charles VII. could not bear to have it said that the rescue of France was effected, not by their abilities, but by the inspired enthusiasm of a peasant girl. She had scorned intrigues and baseness, and these marked all the great actors on the stage of history in that age. So they said it was a judgment

of Heaven upon her because she would not hear counsel. "No offer for her ransom, no threats of vengeance came from beyond the Loire." But the English, who had suffered most from the loss of Orleans, were eager to get possession of her person, and were willing even to pay extravagant rewards for her delivery into their hands. They had their vengeance to gratify. They also wished it to appear that Charles VII. was aided by the Devil; that his cause was not the true one; that Henry VI. was the true sovereign of France. The more they could throw discredit and obloquy upon the Maid of Orleans, the better their cause would seem. It was not as a prisoner of war that the English wanted her, but as a victim, whose sorceries could only be punished by death. But they could not try her and condemn her until they could get possession of her; and they could not get possession of her unless they bought her. The needy John of Luxemburg sold her to the English for ten thousand livres, and the Duke of Burgundy received political favors.

The agent employed by the English in this nefarious business was Couchon, the Bishop of Beauvais, who had been driven out of his city by Joan,—an able and learned man, who aspired to the archbishopric of Rouen. He set to work to inflame the University of Paris and the Inquisition against her. The Duke of Bedford did not venture to bring his prize to Paris, but determined to try her in Rouen; and the trial was intrusted to the Bishop of Beauvais, who conducted it after the forms of the Inquisition. It was simply a trial for heresy.

Joan tried for heresy! On that ground there was never a more innocent person tried by the Inquisition. Her whole life was notoriously virtuous. She had been obedient to the Church; she had advanced no doctrines which were not orthodox. She was too ignorant to be a heretic; she had accepted whatever her spiritual teacher had taught her; in fact, she was a Catholic saint. She lived in the ecstasies of religious faith like a Saint Theresa. She spent her time in prayer and religious exercises; she regularly confessed, and partook of the sacraments of the Church. She did not even have a single sceptical doubt; she simply affirmed that she obeyed voices that came from God.

Nothing could be more cruel than the treatment of this heroic girl, and all under the forms of ecclesiastical courts. It was the diabolical design of her enemies to make it appear that she had acted under the influence of the Devil; that she was a heretic and a sorceress. Nothing could be more forlorn than her condition. No efforts had been made to ransom her. She was alone, and unsupported by friends, having not a single friendly counsellor. She was carried to the castle of Rouen and put in an iron cage, and chained to its bars; she was guarded by brutal soldiers, was mocked by those who came to see her, and finally was summoned before her judges predetermined on her death. They went through the forms of trial, hoping to extort from the Maid some damaging confessions, or to entangle her with their sophistical and artful questions. Nothing perhaps on our earth has ever been done more diabolically than under the forms of ecclesiastical law; nothing can be more atrocious than the hypocrisies and acts of inquisitors. The judges of Joan extorted from her that she had revelations, but she refused to reveal what these had been. She was asked whether she was in a state of grace. If she said she was not, she would be condemned as an outcast from divine favor; if she said she was, she would be condemned for spiritual pride. All such traps were set for this innocent girl. But she acquitted herself wonderfully well, and showed extraordinary good sense. She warded off their cunning and puerile questions. They tried every means to entrap her. They asked her in what shape Saint Michael had appeared to her; whether or no he was naked; whether he had hair; whether she understood the feelings of those who had once kissed her feet; whether she had not cursed God in her attempt to escape at Beauvoir; whether it was for her merit that God sent His angel; whether God hated the English; whether her victory was founded on her banner or on herself; when had she learned to ride a horse.

The judges framed seventy accusations against her, mostly frivolous, and some unjust,—to the effect that she had received no religious training; that she had worn mandrake; that she dressed in man's attire; that she had bewitched her banner and her ring; that she believed her apparitions were saints and angels; that she had blasphemed; and other charges equally absurd. Under her rigid trials

she fell sick; but they restored her, reserving her for a more cruel fate. All the accusations and replies were sent to Paris, and the learned doctors decreed, under English influence, that Joan was a heretic and a sorceress.

After another series of insulting questions, she was taken to the market-place of Rouen to receive sentence, and then returned to her gloomy prison, where they mercifully allowed her to confess and receive the sacrament. She was then taken in a cart, under guard of eight hundred soldiers, to the place of execution; rudely dragged to the funeral pile, fastened to a stake, and fire set to the faggots. She expired, exclaiming, "Jesus, Jesus! My voices, my voices!"

Thus was sacrificed one of the purest and noblest women in the whole history of the world,—a woman who had been instrumental in delivering her country, but without receiving either honor or gratitude from those for whom she had fought and conquered. She died a martyr to the cause of patriotism,—not for religion, but for her country. She died among enemies, unsupported by friends or by those whom she had so greatly benefited, and with as few religious consolations as it was possible to give. Never was there greater cruelty and injustice inflicted on an innocent and noble woman. The utmost ingenuity of vindictive priests never extorted from her a word which criminated her, though they subjected her to inquisitorial examinations for days and weeks. Burned as an infidel, her last words recognized the Saviour in whom she believed; burned as a witch, she never confessed to anything but the voices of God. Her heroism, even at the stake, should have called out pity and admiration; but her tormentors were insensible to both. She was burned really from vengeance, because she had turned the tide of conquest. "The Jews," says Michelet, "never exhibited the rage against Jesus that the English did against the Pucelle," in whom purity, sweetness, and heroic goodness dwelt. Never was her life stained by a single cruel act. In the midst of her torments she did not reproach her tormentors. In the midst of her victories she wept for the souls of those who were killed; and while she incited others to combat, she herself did not use her sword. In man's attire she showed a woman's soul. Pity and gentleness were as marked as courage and self-confidence.

It is one of the most insolvable questions in history why so little effort was made by the French to save the Maid's life. It is strange that the University of Paris should have decided against her, after she had rendered such transcendent services. Why should the priests of that age have treated her as a witch, when she showed all the traits of an angel? Why should not the most unquestioning faith have preserved her from the charge of heresy? Alas! she was only a peasant girl, and the great could not bear to feel that the country had been saved by a peasant. Even chivalry, which worshipped women, did not come to Joan's aid. How great must have been feudal distinctions when such a heroic woman was left to perish! How deep the ingratitude of the King and his court, to have made no effort to save her!

Joan made one mistake: after the coronation of Charles VII. she should have retired from the field of war, for her work was done. Such a transcendent heroism could not have sunk into obscurity. But this was not to be; she was to die as a martyr to her cause.

After her death the English carried on war with new spirit for a time, and Henry VI. of England was crowned in Paris, at Notre Dame. He was crowned, however, by an English, not by a French prelate. None of the great French nobles even were present. The coronation was a failure. Gradually all France was won over to the side of Charles. He was a contemptible monarch, but he was the legitimate King of France. All classes desired peace; all parties were weary of war. The Treaty of Arras, in 1435, restored peace between Charles and Philip of Burgundy; and in the same year the Duke of Bedford died. In 1436 Charles took possession of Paris. In 1445 Henry VI. married Margaret of Anjou, a kinswoman of Charles VII. In 1448 Charles invaded Normandy, and expelled the English from the duchy which for four hundred years had belonged to the kings of England. Soon after Guienne fell. In 1453 Calais alone remained to England, after a war of one hundred years.

At last a tardy justice was done to the memory of her who had turned the tide of conquest. The King, ungrateful as he had been, now ennobled her family and their descendants, even in the female

line, and bestowed upon them pensions and offices. In 1452, twenty years after the martyrdom, the Pope commissioned the Archbishop of Rheims and two other prelates, aided by an inquisitor, to inquire into the trial of Joan of Arc. They met in Notre Dame. Messengers were sent into the country where she was born, to inquire into her history; and all testified—priests and peasants—to the moral beauty of her character, to her innocent and blameless life, her heroism in battle, and her good sense in counsel. And the decision of the prelates was that her visions came from God; that the purity of her motives and the good she did to her country justified her in leaving her parents and wearing a man's dress. They pronounced the trial at Rouen to have been polluted with wrong and calumny, and freed her name from every shadow of disgrace. The people of Orleans instituted an annual religious festival to her honor. The Duke of Orleans gave a grant of land to her brothers, who were ennobled. The people of Rouen raised a stone cross to her memory in the market-place where she was burned. In later times, the Duchess of Orleans, wife of the son and heir of Louis Philippe, modelled with her own hands an exquisite statue of Joan of Arc. But the most beautiful and impressive tribute which has ever been paid to her name and memory was a *fête* of three days' continuance, in 1856, on the anniversary of the deliverance of Orleans, when the celebrated Bishop Dupanloup pronounced one of the most eloquent eulogies ever offered to the memory of a heroine or benefactor. That ancient city never saw so brilliant a spectacle as that which took place in honor of its immortal deliverer, who was executed so cruelly under the superintendence of a Christian bishop,—one of those iniquities in the name of justice which have so often been perpetrated on this earth. It was a powerful nation which killed her, and one equally powerful which abandoned her.

But the martyrdom of Joan of Arc is an additional confirmation of the truth that it is only by self-sacrifice that great deliverances have been effected. Nothing in the moral government of God is more mysterious than the fate which usually falls to the lot of great benefactors. To us it seems sad and unjust; and nothing can reconcile us to the same but the rewards of a future and higher life. And yet amid the flames there arise the voices which save nations. Joan of Arc bequeathed to her country, especially to the common people, some great lessons; namely, not to despair amid great national calamities; to believe in God as the true deliverer from impending miseries, who, however, works through natural causes, demanding personal heroism as well as faith. There was great grandeur in that peasant girl,—in her exalted faith at Domremy, in her heroism at Orleans, in her triumph at Rheims, in her trial and martyrdom at Rouen. But unless she had suffered, nothing would have remained of this grandeur in the eyes of posterity. The injustice and meanness with which she was treated have created a lasting sympathy for her in the hearts of her nation. She was great because she died for her country, serene and uncomplaining amid injustice, cruelty, and ingratitude,—the injustice of an ecclesiastical court presided over by a learned bishop; the cruelty of the English generals and nobles; the ingratitude of her own sovereign, who made no effort to redeem her. She was sold by one potentate to another as if she were merchandise,—as if she were a slave. And those graces and illuminations which under other circumstances would have exalted her into a catholic saint, like an Elizabeth of Hungary or a Catherine of Sienna, were turned against her, by diabolical executioners, as a proof of heresy and sorcery. We repeat again, never was enacted on this earth a greater injustice. Never did a martyr perish with more triumphant trust in the God whose aid she had so uniformly invoked. And it was this triumphant Christian faith as she ascended the funeral pyre which has consecrated the visions and the voices under whose inspiration the Maid led a despairing nation to victory and a glorious future.

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SAINT THERESA

A. D. 1515-1582

RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM

I have already painted in Cleopatra, to the best of my ability, the Pagan woman of antiquity, revelling in the pleasures of vanity and sensuality, with a feeble moral sense, and without any distinct recognition of God or of immortality. The genius of Paganism was simply the deification of the Venus Polyhymnia,—the adornment and pleasure of what is perishable in man. It directed all the energies of human nature to the pampering and decorating of this mortal body, not believing that the mind and soul which animate it, and which are the sources of all its glory, would ever live beyond the grave. A few sages believed differently,—men who rose above the spirit of Paganism, but not such men as Alexander, or Caesar, or Antony, the foremost men of all the world in grand ambitions and successes. Taking it for granted that this world is the only theatre for enjoyment, or action, or thought, men naturally said, "Let us eat and drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die." And hence no higher life was essayed than that which furnished sensual enjoyments, or incited an ambition to be strong and powerful. Of course, riches were sought above everything, since these furnished the means of gratifying those pleasures which were most valued, or stimulating that vanity whose essence is self-idolatry.

With this universal rush of humanity after pleasures which centred in the body, the soul was left dishonored and uncared for, except by a few philosophers. I do not now speak of the mind, for there were intellectual pleasures derived from conversation, books, and works of art. And some called the mind divine, in distinction from matter; some speculated on the nature of each, and made mind and matter in perpetual antagonism, as the good and evil forces of the universe. But the prevailing opinion was that the whole man perished, or became absorbed in the elemental forces of nature, or reappeared again in new forms upon the earth, to expiate those sins of which human nature is conscious. To some men were given longings after immortality, not absolute convictions,—men like Plato, Socrates, and Cicero. But I do not speak of these illustrious exceptions; I mean the great mass of the people, especially the rich and powerful and pleasure-seeking,—those whose supreme delight was in banquets, palaces, or intoxicating excitements, like chariot-racings and gladiatorial shows; yea, triumphal processions to raise the importance of the individual self, and stimulate vanity and pride.

Hence Paganism put a small value, comparatively, on even intellectual enjoyments. It cultivated those arts which appealed to the senses more than to the mind; it paid dearly for any sort of intellectual training which could be utilized,—oratory, for instance, to enable a lawyer to gain a case, or a statesman to control a mob; it rewarded those poets who could sing blended praises to Bacchus and Venus, or who could excite the passions at the theatre. But it paid still higher prices to athletes and dancers, and almost no price at all to those who sought to stimulate a love of knowledge for its own sake,—men like Socrates, for example, who walked barefooted, and lived on fifty dollars a year, and who at last was killed out of pure hatred for the truths he told and the manner in which he told them,—this martyrdom occurring in the most intellectual city of the world. In both Greece and Rome there was an intellectual training for men bent on utilitarian ends; even as we endow schools of science and technology to enable us to conquer nature, and to become strong and rich and comfortable; but there were no schools for women, whose intellects were disdained, and who were valued only as servants or animals,—either to drudge, or to please the senses.

But even if there were some women in Paganism of high mental education,—if women sometimes rose above their servile condition by pure intellect, and amused men by their wit and humor,—still their souls were little thought of. Now, it is the soul of woman—not her mind, and still less her body—which elevates her, and makes her, in some important respects, the superior of man himself. He has dominion over her by force of will, intellect, and physical power. When she has dominion over him, it is by those qualities which come from her soul,—her superior nature, greater than both mind and body. Paganism never recognized the superior nature, especially in woman,—that which must be fed, even in this world, or there will be constant unrest and discontent. And inasmuch as Paganism did not feed it, women were unhappy, especially those who had great capacities. They may have been comfortable, but they were not contented.

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