

Joan of Arc.

"They do not die —they do not die,
Souls of the brave and just !
Is't not a coward's thought to say
Ye pass again to dust!
Ye live through every age —Yare given
To breathe in hearts of slaves
The patriot flame ye drew from Heaven!
That sleeps not in your graves !
Your shapes blind Homer's eyes beheld,
His harp ye strung —his soul ye swelled."

ONE of the predominant traits of man is to render homage and respect to his country's heroes. This noble impulse of nature is as old as the human race. It has found expression in the art and literature of every people. From it the masters of music and poetry have drawn inspiration for their greatest productions. Neither is this respect and homage restricted alone to heroes. On the contrary the renowned deeds that women have wrought in their country's behalf have called forth even greater admiration. It is not surprising, then, that the name of Joan of Arc should occupy an honoured place amongst the world's renowned heroines.

The character of Joan is unique. There is a peculiar and distinctive beauty and attraction, about her life, which can scarcely be equalled by any of the illustrious persons whose lives are recorded in profane history. Her youth and beauty, her gentle and sweet manner, her steadfastness and loyalty to her beloved country call forth the admiration, respect and love of all. **W**e could wish that there were no sequel to her glorious career but, alas! her unhappy fate is one of the most mournful tales that has ever been recorded.

Domremy, a small village of France, claims the honour of being the birthplace of the Maid of Orleans. She was born about 1411, being the daughter of Jacques Darc. She never learned to read nor write but what education she did receive was in the way of a religious training. Her youthful life was uneventful. In the quiet secluded village she knew little of the world about her. Her time was occupied in performing the little duties of the household, and particularly in the art of sewing, at which she seems to have excelled. She loved to roam through the woods and fields in company with her little comrades, whose affection and love she had so completely won. The unselfishness of her nature and the sweetness and sanctity of her life endeared her to all the inhabitants of Domremy. To them she was bound by a thousand ties of friendship. Even, in after life, when the terrible mission which placed her at the head of the victorious legions of France, was consummated, her one desire was to return to her quiet home and to continue her former happy and peaceful life amongst those earlier scenes which she could never forget.

These were evil days for France and perhaps the most humiliating that its gallant sons have known. Her country lay writhing in the fetters of an alien power. Murder, famine and pestilence had broken the spirit of the people. The hundred years of war with England had brought its ghastly train of evils. The treasury was bankrupt, the soldiers disheartened and dispersed. The king, discouraged, was prepared at any time to flee from the country. No power seemed able to arrest the successful advances of the ruthless foe. France was all but ruined.

It was in the midst of such scenes as these that Joan first became aware that God had intended her

St. Dunstan's

as a medium for freeing her country from the bonds of the cruel oppressor, in order that its people might again breathe the air of freedom. It was a summer evening, the air was soft and mild, the birds were singing in the trees, the little girl was seated in the garden with her needle-work, musing on the sad fate of her unhappy country. Suddenly a bright light shone round about her and a strange voice spake to her. "Jeanne sois bonne et sage, enfant; va souvent a l'église?" Jeanne be good and wise; go often to church. Something, within her, assured her that the heavenly visitor was none other than the warrior angel, St. Michael. Nor did those heavenly visitations cease. On the contrary, her "voices" as she called them became more frequent and the object of their visit was made known to her. "Jeanne", "you must go to the help of the King of France and it is you who shall give him back his kingdom." St. Catherine and St. Margaret also appeared to her, bidding her undertake the same perilous mission and encouraged and strengthened her, who was, so soon, to wear the martyr's crown.

For the purpose of accomplishing this noble end, she set out from her home on the twenty-third of February, 1429. After many weary days of travel, she finally reached the Court of the Dauphin, Charles. From this time on, she was beset with many difficulties and had to face many trying circumstances. It was no light task for a simple peasant girl, unlettered and ignorant of the ways of the world, to go before the Court of France and to obtain recognition from the weak, vacillating, and irresolute Charles. Finally, however, having convinced him of her sincerity, and truth she was placed at the head of a small army. Mounted on a white charger, carrying a banner bear-

ing the figure of the Redeemer, and attired in white garments, she led her gallant army into the city of Orleans. The capture of Jargeau and Beaugency followed soon after that of Orleans as a result of which the English were driven beyond the Loire. On July 17th, of the same year, she had the exquisite pleasure and satisfaction of seeing Charles VII, crowned in the Cathedral of Rheims. The scene has been beautifully depicted by the poet:

Never before, and never since that hour,
Hath woman, mantled with victorious power
Stood forth as thou beside the shrine did stand,
Holy amidst the knighthood of the land ;
And beautiful with joy and with renown
Lift thy white banner o'er the golden crown,
Ransomed for France by thee !

The prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. Her "voices" had not deceived her. Now that her heavenly mission was completed one ardent wish remained—to return to her beloved home and friends. But fate had decreed otherwise. In May of the following year while assisting in the defense of Compiègne against the Duke of Burgundy she was surrounded and taken prisoner. Negotiations were carried on between the English and French as a result of which Joan was handed over to the former. Fictitious charges were concocted and brought against her. It was resolved to bring her to trial. In her dire need there were none to aid her. The fickle Charles made no attempt to save her. The baseness of his ingratitude will cling forever to his memory. The procedure, which was unworthy of the name of a trial, was one of the most disgraceful in the history of civilized countries. Cauchon, the man who presided, had no jurisdiction

for instituting a trial. He was therefore neither responsible to the Church nor State, consequently the guilt of this atrocious act, is attributable chiefly to him. His name is covered with eternal obloquy. The unhappy girl was deprived of any witnesses and had to plead her own case as best she might. **As** might have been expected she was found guilty **of** the terrible charges preferred against her, and was sentenced to be burned.

Her slender body was bound to the stake. The fire was kindled. She asked for a cross. There was none to be had. An English soldier touched by her grief, constructed a rude one and held it before her. Till the end she declared that her "voices" were from God as indeed they were. No sign of fear or emotion was depicted on her features. A heavenly radiance illumined her fair countenance. Presently the smoke and flames encircled her and shut out, forever, from the vulgar gaze the beautiful form of one of the noblest creatures that has ever trod this earth. Thus ended the Maid of Orleans, the most sublime personality of her time—the best and holiest that her age produced.

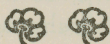
Twenty-five years after her martyrdom a new trial was held. The story of her whole life was made manifest. Witnesses were not wanting whose sworn testimony proved, beyond all doubt, that her character and life were spotless, and that the charges, brought against her, had their origin in the wicked and pitiless hearts of her accusers.

There are few indeed who are unwilling to accede to her a prominent place amongst the heroines of the world. Some, however, do not wish to give credence to the supernatural nature of her mission. These attempt to explain her visions in various ways. It

may be stated however, with certainty that no one has ever been able to account satisfactorily for the charm and mystery that surrounds her life. On the other hand, the literal fulfillment of her prophecies, concerning the future of France, must be accepted as indisputable proof that she was but the instrument of Heaven in bringing back liberty to her country. Without a moment's hesitation she recognized the Dauphin, who was disguised as a courtier, notwithstanding the fact, that she had never before seen him. Although ignorant of the art of war, she was the most successful military leader of her time. Even physical cures have been wrought through her ministrations. These marvellous deeds of her life, and many others, must be accepted as undeniable facts about whose certitude there can be no doubt. Indeed there is nothing repugnant in such a belief for we know that He has chosen the weak things of earth to confound the strong.

All honour, then, to the Maid of Orleans, to the Warrior-Saint of France. Her memory will remain fragrant in the hearts of men as long as time shall last. Ere long her name will be enshrined amongst the heroic and illustrious servants of God and millions, with joy and thanksgiving, will hail her as St. Joan of Arc.

P. B. M. '20



A little neglect may breed great mischief. For want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; and for want of a horse the rider was lost, being overtaken and slain by the enemy; all for want of a little care about a horseshoe nail.—Benjamin Franklin.