



CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

THE STORY OF
JOAN OF ARC
THE MAID OF ORLEANS

Andrew Lang

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

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The Story of Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orleans

by

ANDREW LANG





THE DAUPHIN IS CROWNED IN RHEIMS CATHEDRAL.



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TO
ANGELA COTTRELL-DORMER

Dear Angela,

May I dedicate this little book to you, who are already a friend of the Maid?

As you grow up you will meet certain wise people who will tell you that there was never any such person as Joan of Arc, or that, if she ever lived, she was mad, or an impostor. If you ask them how they know that, they will probably reply that Science is the source of their information. You can then answer that you prefer to begin with History, and ask these wise people if they have read even so much as Monsieur Quicherat's five volumes containing the Trial of Joan, and the evidence of her friends and enemies who knew her in her lifetime? As the books are in Latin and Old French, the people who speak about Joan disrespectfully have not read them, and do not know what they are talking about.

"They say: What say they? Let them say!"

Affectionately yours,

A. LANG.



I.

The Childhood of Joan of Arc

JOAN OF ARC was perhaps the most wonderful person who ever lived in the world. The story of her life is so strange that we could scarcely believe it to be true, if all that happened to her had not been told by people in a court of law, and written down by her deadly enemies, while she was still alive. She was burned to death when she was only nineteen: she was not seventeen when she first led the armies of France to victory, and delivered her country from the English.

Joan was the daughter of a poor man, in a little country village. She had never learned to read, or write, or mount a horse. Yet she was so wise that many learned men could not puzzle her by questions: she was one of the best riders in France; one of the most skilled in aiming cannons, and so great a general that she defeated the English again and again, and her army was never beaten till her King deserted her. She was so brave that severe wounds could not stop her from leading on her soldiers, and so tender-hearted that she

would comfort the wounded English on the field of battle, and protect them from cruelty. She was so good that her enemies could not find one true story to tell against her in the least thing; and she was so modest that in the height of her glory she was wishing to be at home in her father's cottage, sewing or spinning beside her mother.

Joan, who was born at Domremy, in the east of France, on January 6, 1412, lived in a very unhappy time. For nearly a hundred years the kings of England had been trying to make themselves kings of France, just as they had been trying to make themselves kings of Scotland. Perhaps they might have succeeded, if they had confined themselves to one conquest at a time. But they left Scotland alone while they were attacking France, and then Scotland sent armies to help the French, as at other times the French sent armies to help Scotland.

Eight years before Joan was born a sad thing happened to her country. Henry V. of England had married the Princess Katherine of France, and the French, or some of them, tired of being beaten in war, consented to let the child of Henry and the Princess Katherine be their King, instead of the son of their old King. The old King's son was called "the Dauphin"; that was the title of the eldest son of the French kings. This Dauphin was named Charles. His friends went on fighting the English for his sake, but he was not crowned King. The coronations of French Kings were always done in the Cathedral at Rheims, where they were anointed with sacred oil. The oil was kept in a very old flask, which was said to have been brought from heaven,

to a Saint, by an Angel. No eldest son of the King was thought really King of France, after his father's death, till he had been anointed with this heavenly oil at Rheims by the Archbishop. It is important to remember this; you will see the reason afterwards. Now, Rheims was in the power of the English, so the Dauphin, Charles, could not go there and be made King in earnest. The English said that he was not the son of his father, the late King, which made him very unhappy. We shall hear how Joan comforted him and made him King for good and all. What Scots and Frenchmen could not do, she did.

In the meantime the French were divided into two parties. Some sided with the Dauphin, Prince Charles; more, and especially all the people of Burgundy, and the Duke of Burgundy, a great and rich country, were on the side of the English. So they fought very cruelly, for the land was full of companies of ill-paid soldiers, who plundered the poor, so that towns fell into decay, many fields were empty of sheep and cows, and the roads became covered with grass. In the villages a boy used to watch all day, from the spire of the church, to see whether any soldiers were riding up. If they came, the cattle were driven into the woods, and men, women, and children ran to hide themselves, carrying such things away as they could. The soldiers of all sorts robbed equally, for they had often no regular pay, and the Scots were not behindhand in helping themselves wherever they went. Even gentlemen and knights became chiefs of troops of robbers, so that, whoever won in the wars, the country people were always being plundered.

In the middle of these miseries Joan was born, in a village where almost everybody was on the side of the Dauphin: the right side. In the village nearest to hers, Maxey, the people took the English side, and the boys of the two places had pitched battles with sticks and stones. It is true that they would have found some other reason for fighting, even if the English had not been in France. Joan used to see her brothers, Peter and John, come home from these battles with their noses bleeding, and with black eyes, but she did not take part herself in these wars.

Her village was near a strong-walled town called Vaucouleurs, which was on the side of the Dauphin. When Joan was a little girl she did not see very much of the cruelty of the soldiers; the village was only visited once or twice by enemies. But she heard of what was going on in the rest of France: "there was great pity in France," she said. She did, once or twice, see some of the "pity." There was a man called Henry d'Orly, living in a castle named Doulevant, who, like many other gentlemen in these days, was a captain of robbers.

One day several spearmen of his rode into Domremy, Joan's village, and seized Joan's father's cows, with all the other cows that they could find, just as the Scotts, Elliots, and Armstrongs used to ride across the Border and drive the cattle of the English farmers. But a lady lived in a strong castle rear Domremy, and when she heard how the village people had been plundered she sent the news to a gentleman in the neighbourhood, who gathered his spearmen and rode after the robbers. The thieves, of course, could



THE OAK CALLED THE FAIRY TREE

not ride faster than the stolen cows could trot; they pricked the poor beasts with their spears, and made them lumber along, but a cow is slow at best. The pursuers galloped and came on the cattle in a little town, while the thieves were drinking in the wine shops. When they heard the horses of the pursuers gallop down the street, they mounted their horses and spurred for their lives; but now came their master, Henry d'Orly, with more spearmen, who followed after the cattle and the gentlemen who were driving them home. They turned and charged Henry d'Orly, and cleared the road, and the cows came home to Domremy, all safe.

Another time all the people in Domremy had to fly from home, and go to a town called Neufchâteau, where they were safe behind strong walls. They only stayed there for a few days, but, later, the English said that Joan had been a servant in an inn at this town, and had learned to ride there, which was quite untrue.

There were beautiful woods near the village, and in one oak wood an oak called the Fairy Tree. There was a story that a beautiful fairy used to meet her lover at that tree, just as under the Eildon Hill, the Queen of Fairyland met Thomas the Rhymer. The children used to take cakes, and make feasts, and hang garlands of flowers on the boughs of that oak; but Joan did not care much about fairies, and preferred to lay her wild flowers beneath the statues of Saints in the village Church, especially St. Catharine and St. Margaret. Of course, all this was long before the Reformation in which the Protestants broke the images of Saints in the churches, and smashed their pictures on the glass



JOAN LAYS HER WILD FLOWERS BENEATH THE STATUE OF ST. CATHERINE.

windows with stones, and destroyed a beautiful statue of Joan on the bridge at Orleans.

These things were done more than a hundred years after Joan was dead.

Though Joan could run faster than the other girls and boys, and beat them when they ran races, she liked to be quiet. Nobody could sew and spin better than she did, and she was very fond of praying alone in church. She would even go away from the other children into lonely places, and implore God to have pity on France. The services in church, the singing and music, made her very happy, and when she heard the church bells across the fields, she would say her prayer. She was very kind, and would give up her bed to any poor traveller whom her father took in for a night, and would sleep beside the hearth. She took care of the sick, and, if ever she had any money, she would spend it on Masses to be said in honour of God, and for the sake of men's souls.

So Joan lived till she was thirteen. She was a strong, handsome girl, beautifully made, with black hair. We do not know the colour of her eyes, probably brown or dark grey. A young knight wrote to his mother, when he first saw Joan, that she was "a creature all divine." Jean never sat to a painter for her portrait, though once she saw a kind of fancy picture of herself in the hands of a Scottish archer.

Young men do not say so much about a girl who is not beautiful, and indeed, armies do not rush together to follow a maiden with no good looks. But though Jean, when she came to command armies, liked to be well dressed,

and to have fine armour, that was partly because she was a natural, healthy girl, and partly because she was a kind of banner for men to follow into fight, and banners ought to be splendid.

She took, no thought of her own beauty, and the young knights and squires who fought, later, under her flag, said that they looked on her as a sacred thing, and never dreamed of making love to her. She let it be known that she would never marry any one, while the English were still in France. She was not a nun, and had not made a vow never to marry at all, but while her country was in danger she never thought of marriage; she had other things to do.



II.

How the Voices Came To The Maid

WHEN Joan was about thirteen a very wonderful thing happened to her. One day she and the other girls and boys were running a race for a crown of flowers. Joan was easily the winner, and as she was running, a child who was looking on cried, "Joan. I see you flying along without touching the ground." After the race Joan had a curious feeling as if she did not know where she was and then heard a young man's voice near her bidding her go home, for her mother needed her. She did not know who spoke; she thought it might be her brother, or one of her neighbours, so she ran home. She found that her mother had not sent for her, and she was going back to her friends, when a bright light like a shining cloud appeared to her, and a Voice told her to go and save France from the English. Till that hour she had been sorry for the sorrows in France, but as she was only a little girl, she had never thought that she could lead an army against the English.

This is the first account that people heard of the coming of the mysterious Voices to Jeanne: it was written down

about four years after the Voices first came, and six weeks after Jean's first great defeat of the English (in May 1429). Two years later, after Joan was a prisoner of the English, the French priests and lawyers who took the English side asked her thousands of questions about everything that she had done in her life, and the answers were written down in a book, word for word. They asked her about these wonderful Voices. There were things that she refused to tell these priests and lawyers, but she did say this:—

“When I was about thirteen there came to me a Voice from God, teaching me how I was to behave and what I was to do. And the first time that Voice came, I was afraid. I was standing about the middle of the day, in summer, in my father's garden. The Voice came from the right hand, from where the church stands, and when it came I usually saw a great light on the side from which it spoke. The Voice told me to be a good girl and go to church, and go to save France. I said that I was only a poor girl, who could not ride or lead the soldiers in the wars,” but the Voice kept on for years, telling her that she must go.

She not only heard Voices, but she saw shining figures of the Saints in heaven. She never would tell the lawyers much about how the Saints appeared to her, but said, “I saw them as clearly as I see you, and I used to cry when they went away. And I wished that they would take me with them where they went.”

These Saints were St. Margaret, St. Catherine, and the Archangel St. Michael. When Joan spoke to her own friends about what she saw and heard they say that “she

seemed marvelously happy, lifting her eyes to heaven.” This is all that we know about these wonderful things which kept Joan company from the time when she was thirteen to the day of her death, when she was nineteen, advising her about what she was to do for the saving of France. If the Voices had not spoken to her often, she would never have gone to the wars, and for some years she told nobody about the Voices, and stayed at home in her village. Even when she went to the wars, her friends could not persuade her to say more than I have told you about these strange things. She said that she had a “council” which advised her in everything. If there was much noise in a room where she might be, she could not hear the Voices distinctly. Only one person said that he saw angels’ faces in her company; none of her friends who knew her best saw or heard anything extraordinary. She very much disliked to speak about the Saints and Voices.

