TEXT FLY
WITHIN THE
BOOK ONLY

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OU_156095

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

The White Standard

A Story of the Maid of Orleans

BY

ELIZA F. POLLARD

Author of "For the Red Rose" "The Doctor's Niece"
"The King's Signet" &c.

ILLUSTRATED BY J. JELLICOE

BLACKIE AND SON LIMITED
LONDON GLASGOW DUBLIN BOMBAY
1905

CONTENTS

CHAP.		Page
I.	A PRINCESS	9
II.	IN A FOREIGN LAND	18
III.	DISCIPLINE	27
IV.	THE BATTLE OF THE HERRINGS	34
V.	THE CALL	45
VI.	THE POET	56
VII.	A MEETING	70
VIII.	THE SWORD OF THE FIVE CROSSES	82
IX.	THE DWARF	92
X.	ON THE RAMPARTS	105
XI.	PRINCE LOUIS	117
XII.	ORLEANS	127
XIII.	THE RENUNCIATION	144
XIV.	AT RHEIMS	156
XV.	THE KING'S MESSAGE	169
XVI.	THE COUNTESS OF YOLANDE	180
XVII.	IN HIDING	191
XVIII.	PLESSIS-LES-TOURS	205
XIX.	THE BITTER END	218
XX.	LOST AND FOUND	232

ILLUSTRATIONS

Page

"She made her way slowly through the midst of the people" . . . . . *Frontis.* 112

Margaret and Priscilla on the Ramparts 26

"She caught him by the hands and forced him to his knees" 189

"The King held out his hand and raised her". . 222

THE WHITE STANDARD

CHAPTER I

A PRINCESS

THERE are few transient joys in life equal to the joy of the young at play. This does not apply only to girl and boy; we see it equally in the animal creation: the lambs and the foals gambolling in the meadows, the chirping of the young birds as they leave their nest for their first flight, the kitten as it scrambles after the fluttering leaves, all tell the same tale. They have no care, they have no pain, their hearts are light within them, and they rejoice. So it came to pass that the Princess Margaret of Scotland and her friend Priscilla Grahame played and laughed and ran light-heartedly in the meadows on the banks of the Tay. It was a summer morning, and the wild flowers were plentiful, and they had gathered great bunches and woven for themselves crowns of cowslips and bluebells, which mingled with their long flowing hair as they ran hither and thither, not with any intention or any set purpose, but, as the poet describes it, because they "lightly drew their breath and felt their life in every limb". They were girls of ten and twelve years old, tall and well built. They were both fair, and

it would have been difficult to say which was the better-looking of the two. Margaret of Scotland had the red hair of so many of her race, but she had not the blue eyes which go along with it; hers were of a deep hazel, and shone forth with a lustre which was rendered more remarkable by the brilliancy of her complexion: which was shell-like, pink and white. Her lips were of a deep carmine. Her hair was gathered loosely into a golden net, besprinkled with pearls, which added not a little to the brightness of her appearance. The gown she wore was of a rich brocade, bordered with gold; a white lace kerchief was thrown lightly round her neck, because it was the fashion of the day for the gowns to be cut low. She was altogether a very sparkling little person, and formed a striking contrast to her companion, who was the elder of the two, and whose plain black dress, relieved only by white muslin ruffles at the neck and arms, showed plainly that she was in mourning. In face Priscilla was as fair as the princess, but she had blue eyes and soft, light, fluffy hair, which the black velvet cap she wore failed to keep in place, so that it tumbled about her face in little love-locks. They were very suitable companions, and they seemed to feel it, for when, flushed and tired with play, they threw themselves in the green grass, instinctively they clasped hands and lay thus breathing hard, still half-laughing. The princess was the first to speak.

"Dost know, Pris, the French ambassadors are expected to-day? There will be a grand reception this forenoon."

"So I heard," answered Pris; "it seems they are coming to ask the king, your father, to send more help to King Charles, so that he may recover his kingdom

from the English. Andrew told me this, and if it should so happen that the king consents, Sir John Stewart is likely to offer his services, and then Andrew will move heaven and earth to go with him as his page. He says he is tired of knocking about the court, and would like to see active service. He has a strange longing to go to France."

"Lads are always restless," said the princess with a quaint old-world gravity. "I do not see why we join the French against the English, or why we interfere at all. My mother is English, therefore I naturally side with her people.

"But we are not," said Priscilla; "we Grahames have no English blood in our veins, and I have heard my father say that England is the Scot's natural enemy and France his friend."

"Ah well," said the princess, "if Andrew wants to go thou wilt not prevent him! It will make a man of him."

Suddenly, from the farther end of the meadow they saw a somewhat stout serving-maid, who came hurrying along with red face and bustling air. Evidently she was by no means pleased to be thus hurrying across the meadow in the heat of the day. As she approached she called out:

"Mistress Priscilla, wherefore have you brought the princess out at this hour to burn her skin?"

Quick as thought the princess rose. "She did not bring me, Janet; I brought her. What hast thou to say to me?" and she tossed her head proudly.

The woman stood dumfounded.

"I have nothing to say, Princess, nothing at all," she answered, "save that your governess, Dame Morrison,

has sent me to find you because the queen, your mother, desires to speak with you."

The princess had listened to her with a little frown.

"That is a different matter," she said. "In future, know that when thou hast a message for me thou must keep a civil tongue in thy head, and not rate my friend. Come, Pris!" and she took Priscilla's hand, turning her back on Janet, and the two girls went slowly, almost unwillingly as it were, across the meadows towards the Dominican monastery where at that time James the First and his Queen Jane held their court. They did not know what they were going to, because in mercy we do not see one step before us in life; on we walk regardless of precipices until we stand on the very edge; we laugh at one moment not knowing that we shall weep the next; even so these two children went to their fate as the lamb goes to the slaughter-house.

The refectory of the monastery had been turned for the nonce into a throne-room. A dais had been constructed at one end, beneath which stood two carved oaken chairs which had probably been used once upon a time by the abbots or high dignitaries of the Church, and were now to serve the King and Queen of Scotland as thrones from which they were to receive the ambassador of France and his suite, sent by Charles the Seventh to enter into negotiations for mutual friendship and service. There were already upwards of five to six thousand Scotch warriors in the French army, and they were greatly esteemed; but of late, owing to Charles's numerous defeats, his inability to pay them, and the difficulty of obtaining food, they had become discouraged, and a certain number had gone back to their own country. It was on account of this that the French king

now sought to draw closer the links which bound him to the Scotch court.

King James the First of Scotland was in a peculiar position. As a lad of twelve years old he had been sent by his father to France to save him from the fate which had befallen his elder brother through the unprincipled ambition of their uncle, Malcolm, Duke of Albany, who, himself desirous to be king, is said to have compassed his death. The vessel in which the young prince had embarked was seized by an English cruiser, and James was carried prisoner to London and committed to the Tower. Henry the Fourth, then King of England, treated him with marked generosity, causing him to be carefully educated in all accomplishments, mental and physical. He thus became a good rider, distinguished for dexterity in all martial exercises, a poet, and a musician. He was allowed to suffer in no way except for lack of liberty, and at last England entered into a treaty with Scotland, that by the payment of forty thousand pounds for his education and maintenance their king should be restored to them. It was time this should happen, for under the regency of the Duke of Albany Scotland had fallen into a state of disorder and anarchy. During these years of imprisonment James was not wholly deprived of what makes life sweet to most men and women; he had become deeply enamoured of Jane Beaufort, a lady of royal extraction, daughter of the Earl of Somerset, niece of Richard the Second, and granddaughter of John of Gaunt. They say pity is akin to love, and doubtless for this reason my Lady Jane returned the poor prisoner's affection, and when he was restored to liberty she asked for nothing better than to become his wife, and they were

married with all due pomp and befitting ceremony. Together they travelled to Scotland, where they received a great welcome, and were crowned at Scone, King and Queen of Scotland. It might be thought, therefore, that having an English wife, and having spent his youth among the refinements of social life in England, he would not have cared to break with his former associations; but there had ever been, and there would ever be, until the great union, a spirit of jealousy between the two countries.

Added to this, the bond of union between France and Scotland had never really been broken, and when, at Henry the Fourth's death, his infant son was crowned King of France, the Scotch showed their sympathy for Charles by enlisting in vast numbers on his side. Thus it came to pass that James was prepared to receive the French ambassador with all honours. Scotland was too poor a country to give money, but she could give her blood and her interest, and she did so gladly.

The low-vaulted refectory of the Dominican monastery was on this day filled with knights and warriors; the chief nobility of Scotland stood around the throne. When James and his consort took their places many noticed that the queen's face was troubled, nay, some said she had been weeping; but whatever her private feelings were she bore herself bravely. When the foreigners were introduced in great state, to the sound of trumpets, King James rose and made one step forward to meet them. They were very gorgeously attired, notwithstanding the poverty of their master; satins and jewels and gold lace adorned their persons. The ambassador knelt before James and delivered his master's message, entreating him, if it were possible, to send some of his

brave men over to France to assist them; making promises of great rewards as soon as by their aid Charles should come into his kingdom. There was a general tremor through the room when to this he added:

"And, further, my master bids me to ask for the hand of Princess Margaret of Scotland for his son the Dauphin of France. They are both of tender years, but if this betrothal can take place it will cement the union between the two countries as nothing else will. The maiden can remain still for a time under her mother's care, or, what would be preferable, she could be transferred to the care of the great and virtuous Countess Yolande of Sicily, whose goodness, virtue, and talent have a world-renown. She would thus learn to love France, which is desirable, as she will be Queen of France. My master has bidden me lay this before your majesties," said the ambassador, "and to ask you to consider the matter, beseeching you also that we may be permitted to see the princess, so that we may speak of her many charms and beauty to the young dauphin, her future husband."

Then James answered:

"This morning we had delivered to us a letter from our brother Charles, in which he lays before us the request you have just made. The queen, my consort, and myself have taken counsel together with our chief nobles, and we have decided, though it cuts us to the heart to part with the princess, that, for the sake of our two countries, and in view of the *entente cordiale* which we desire to maintain, we will give our daughter in marriage to the Dauphin of France, and we will authorize our nobles to enter the service of King Charles the Seventh, taking with them as many of our loyal sub-

jects as we can spare without endangering the safety of our own country. Is not this the case, my lords?" and he turned to the Scotch nobles.

"It is," said Sir John Stewart, Constable of Scotland, stepping out from amidst his fellows and bowing first to the king then to the French ambassador, to whom he held out one hand, whilst with the other he drew his sword. "And I hereby place this sword at the disposal of your master."

Several others of the great nobles of Scotland did likewise, and there was quite a commotion in the hall as knights and nobles alike pressed forward to follow the example of the constable. Close behind him was a tall youth, whose eager face betokened great interest in the proceedings, and when the constable ceased speaking he bent forward, saying:

"You will take me with you, Sir John?"

"We will consider the matter, Andrew Grahame; thou art but a youth;" and Andrew fell back into his rank amongst the pages with a disappointed face.

That night there was a great banquet, at which the Frenchmen were entertained with the abundant fare for which Scotch hospitality was noted; but possibly they found it by no means as delicate as, even then, the French cuisine was noted for. But the feast was rendered memorable by the presence of the young Princess Margaret of Scotland, who thus made her first appearance in public, and by her sweet beauty, and the archness of her face and manner, captivated those who had come to ask her hand in marriage for their prince. It seemed almost ridiculous; she was still such a child as she sat between her father and mother at the head of the long table, arrayed in white satin, with a stomacher of jewels

and a coronet of pearls binding the long flowing masses of her red hair. She demeaned herself after a stately fashion, as if to be a queen were mere play; indeed she took it very much in that way, for when the queen told her, with tears, what had been decided, she smiled, and, putting her arms round her mother's neck, said:

"I suppose I was born to this, so must I try and fulfil my duties as a queen so nobly that I shall not shame either you or my dear father."

And truly all who saw her that night were enraptured with her.

"If she be thus wise when she is little more than a child," said the ambassador, "surely she will be a great queen, and our dauphin needs someone to sweeten him, for he is by nature morose, and not given to cheerfulness." And so they went their way back to their own country, and it was agreed that Margaret should stay in her father's house for a few months longer, and that then she should go to France to Yolande of Sicily, who would mother her.

"And Pris will go with me, Mother," she said.

"Yes," answered Queen Jane; "it will be good for you to have a friend, one of your own people, in a strange land."

It is always hard for mothers to part with their children, but it was more especially so in this case. France was torn to pieces with war and dissensions within and without, and to send a tender child into the very midst of it, with people she did not know, into a court whose reputation was by no means good, was a sore trial to Queen Jane. She had done battle with her husband to prevent it, but the nobles were anxious to serve France, and had persuaded him that no harm

could happen to the child, and that his trusting her to Yolande of Sicily would satisfy all people that France was not in such a desperate condition.

CHAPTER II

IN A FOREIGN LAND

ON a high rock, hanging as it were in mid-air, is still to be seen the ancient Castle of Chinon. The River Vienne flows through the surrounding country, noted for that wonderful charm which belongs especially to this garden of France, the ancient province of Touraine. The town of Chinon lies at the foot of the rock, and its existence is evidently due to the great château which was the dwelling-place in the Middle Ages, not only of the French kings, but of our own Plantagenets. It has even been called the Windsor of France, and though the ruins of to-day do not represent one-third of the original castle, they give one a good idea of what the frontier fortresses of provincial France were like. It is difficult to realize in England how France was divided and subdivided. She had as many enemies within as without; each province was governed by its own duke or prince. The result of this was that the Normans invaded Brittany, penetrated into Touraine, attacked Anjou, and so passed on from north to south and west to east. Therefore, upon every rock and every summit along the borderland, castles and beacons *soared*. During the reign of Charles the Seventh, when the English were overrunning the

country, and when there was, so to speak, no law and no governance in the land, this state of things grew to excess. We are told that there were about three hundred nobles who lived by rapine and violence. Charles could not pay his soldiers; therefore, more often than not, they were disbanded and roamed the country, hiring themselves out first to one noble, then to another. They were verily nothing more than troops of bandits, and were known under the names of the "Clippers and Flayers". Every noble dwelt in his château as a military chief, with his soldiers round him by night and by day. The women seldom or never went abroad, and when they did they were guarded by armed men in their lord's service. It sometimes happened that if there were a feud between the lords of neighbouring provinces, they would pounce down upon such a convoy and carry the women to their own châteaux, where they would keep them in durance vile until such time as their lords should ransom them or, possibly, deliver them by some feat of arms.

At the time of our story Charles the Seventh of France was residing at the Château of Chinon with his wife, Marie d'Anjou, and her mother, Yolande of Sicily, the widow of Louis of Anjou. This Yolande was a woman both wise and good, who, at her husband's death, had joined her daughter to comfort her, because her marriage with Charles was by no means a happy one, and together mother and daughter hoped to obtain greater influence over him. It was by Yolande's advice that he had sought the alliance of the King of Scotland, and had asked for the hand of his daughter Margaret in marriage for his son, and Yolande had not rested until she succeeded in persuading the Scottish Queen Jane to give the child into

her charge. The correspondence between the two ladies had been very beautiful. "I am a mother myself," Yolande wrote, "therefore I can feel for you; but surely it were well for your little Marguérite to learn to love those with whom she will have to dwell, to be interested in her future home, and to know her husband intimately before she marries him. My grandson is of a sombre temperament, and the company of his betrothed will rouse him. I beseech you, send us the child, and I will be answerable for her; she shall be to me as my own daughter. I will not suffer her out of my sight." And so, after much persuasion, Queen Jane had given her consent, and Margaret had come to France, attended by Priscilla and Dame Morrison, the wife of Sir Alexander Morrison, to whom Priscilla had been given in charge by her guardians — Sir John Stewart, Constable of Scotland, and his son William, accompanied by a troop of three thousand Scotsmen for the service of the King of France. They made their way into Touraine, and were quartered in Orleans and the surrounding country. The little princess and her women were conducted to Chinon, and were received with open arms. Fortunately for Margaret the court of Scotland was by no means a luxurious home; so the bare rooms and small comfort to be found within the Castle of Chinon did not affect her as it might have done had she been more delicately brought up; besides, children do not suffer from such things as do their elders, and as long as she had Priscilla Grahame with her she was content. The novelty of her surroundings amused her, and the gentle kindness of her future mother-in-law, Marie, satisfied her, while from the first the Countess Yolande inspired her with both love and admiration:

she was in very truth the heart and soul of the château. It was not that the Countess's life was happy. She had much trouble, for she saw with anxious eyes the desperate state of affairs in France, and the difficulty of rousing her son-in-law to action was very great; but she never despaired.

"God will not let us be undone," she continually said. "The sins of France and of her kings are many and great, but He will surely raise up a deliverer in His good time; it is right and just that France should be scourged for her sins."

The one person Margaret and Priscilla really disliked was Louis, the Dauphin. A betrothal in those days was almost tantamount to a marriage, but as Margaret was so young the final ceremony was deferred, and she took the matter lightly, not perhaps, in her extreme youth, realizing the importance thereof or how she might suffer when the time came for the fulfilment of her promise. Naturally mother and grandmother did their best to excuse the many misdemeanours of the surly youth.

But in temper he differed so greatly from the frank open-heartedness of the Scotch boys with whom the two girls had held intercourse, that as much as possible they avoided him. Seeing this, Dame Morrison took Priscilla apart and told her that she was unwise to behave thus, that, on the contrary, she ought, by all means in her power, to laud him to the princess.

"For you see," she said, "if she cannot love him she must endure him. It is the fate of all royal maids; they cannot wed as they will, and therefore it is desirable that they should early learn to submit themselves to the inevitable. The prince will doubtless improve as he grows older."

Nevertheless they much preferred the company of Andrew Grahame and the Scotch pages, all youths of gentle birth, who had accompanied the knights of Scotland to France, and who from time to time appeared at Chinon in company with their lords. There grew up to be a sort of feud between the French pages and the Scotch pages, which required at times a firm hand to quell. Andrew was some years older than Priscilla, being nigh upon eighteen years of age, and his great ambition was to demean himself in this war after such a fashion that he might win his spurs; the inaction of the King of France was therefore very trying. Ever since the English had taken possession of Paris, the city of Orleans and the city of Bourges had been considered the centres of the kingdom, at least of that part of the kingdom south of the Loire, where Charles had been proclaimed king. The crowned King of France was the infant Henry the Sixth of England, who had been consecrated at St. Denis. It was a strange combination, humiliating to the French nation and by no means satisfactory to the English. The country was well-nigh desolated, especially in the north; villagers had forsaken their homesteads for fear of the soldiers, and had taken refuge in the large cities; pestilence and famine strode hand in hand through the land. The city of Orleans was the pride of the French; it was one of their most ancient cities, and they gloried in it. It lay in the very centre of France, and the best roads to the provinces ran through it. Whatever of prosperity remained to them was gathered within its walls, and the English, who had already become possessed of so much, cast envious eyes on this last jewel of the French crown. The Regent Bedford, therefore, determined that Orleans

must fall, and when the inhabitants became aware that he was sending an army against them, they prepared for defence. Naturally, at Chinon the news that the English were advancing to besiege Orleans was received with dismay; a sort of hopeless lethargy seemed to have fallen upon Charles. He made no effort, for he saw no way of escape. The commander-in-chief of the English was the redoubted Salisbury, and they had in their ranks men who had distinguished themselves throughout the French war—Suffolk, Talbot, and William Gladsdale, who had all solemnly sworn that if they entered Orleans they would slay every man who crossed their path.

No wonder that, under these circumstances, the spirits of the royal family were at a low ebb. At one time it was almost thought advisable to send the women away farther south, lest they should fall into the hands of the enemy; but Yolande knew full well that, left to himself, Charles would fall into a state of complete inaction from which nothing would rouse him, and the result in all probability would be the giving up of Orleans. She therefore decided to remain by the brave and handsome Dunois, cousin of the king, but in every way his superior.

"Have no fear," he said to Yolande, "no harm will come to you or to these little maidens;" and he laid his hand in kindly fashion on Princess Margaret's head. "I am here, and I will answer for your safety. Your presence is a guarantee to many that the king still holds his own; if you leave us, our soldiers will lose all heart."

And so Yolande told the king that she and her daughter would remain, the other women did likewise, and forth-

with, without hesitation, Dunois and the brave La Hire threw themselves, with six or seven hundred soldiers, into Orleans, and, with the citizens of that town, began to fortify the place after the most approved fashion. Their example was followed by others, so that before long Orleans had seven thousand armed men within her gates. It was a curiously-situated town, surrounded on two sides by the Loire. On the other two it was comparatively open, with vast suburbs beyond the gates of the city. Its walls were built upon Roman foundations, and were two metres in thickness, with innumerable towers. A bridge was thrown across the Loire, with nineteen arches; at the upper end of it was an immense tower, called a *tournelle*, which was strongly fortified. As we have said before, provinces and towns in France were always jealous one of the other, but in the case of Orleans at this time this jealousy seemed to disappear: to assist her they vied with one another—Tours, Angers, Bourges, even the towns of far-away Languedoc, sent provisions into Orleans. This was the more remarkable, as not so very long before, at the siege of Calais, they had not troubled to send help; but this city in the heart of France, renowned in past history, appealed to the nation, and one and all did what they could for her relief.

A few weeks after Dunois had thrown himself into Orleans, the Constable of Scotland, Sir John Stewart, received a message desiring him to join Dunois and La Hire in Orleans, and he prepared to do so. Andrew was the first to announce this to Priscilla and the Princess Margaret:

"I am going with the Constable," he said; and when the tears came into Priscilla's eyes he rebuked her.

"Ought you not to be glad," he said, "that I have a chance of distinguishing myself?"

And so she wiped her eyes and smiled, and Margaret gave him her hand to kiss, and he looked so handsome and so bright that, child though she was, the little princess could not help wishing that her betrothed husband, who was lounging about in the court below, were half as handsome and as pleasant as Andrew Grahame.

These two young people, who will occupy a prominent part in our story, were orphans, and wards of the crown. They were descended from Sir John de Grahame, who had fallen in the bloody field of Falkirk. At the death of their father and mother King James had sent for them to his court, and they had been brought up under his own eye. Priscilla was taken into the royal nursery, though she was somewhat older than the princess; but she shared everything with her, and was her daily, hourly companion. Andrew, by his own wish, became page to the Constable of Scotland, John Stewart, his father's most intimate friend, and he shared in the sports and exercises of William Stewart, the Constable's son. It was a rude age, but nevertheless these two children had been brought up tenderly, and considered more than was usual, on account of their lonely estate; being orphans, every man sought to father them and every woman to mother them, and no one would have allowed them to suffer wrong at the hand of anyone. Where Princess Margaret went, as we have seen, Priscilla followed her. The queen trusted her, for she was wise and gentle beyond her years, and her love for Margaret was the love of an elder sister. She would have endured any hardship herself, but would not allow

any harm to approach the princess, and the queen knew this. Therefore now, when Andrew bade them farewell, they consoled each other. It was right; he was a man, and he must make his way in the world. So they watched him, from the turret-chamber which they shared in the Castle of Chinon, ride away, and if there was sorrow in their hearts there was also a certain pride. Margaret said gently:

"I am tempted to envy him, for he is going to join Count Dunois, and if I had to fight under any man I should wish to fight under him."

"So should I," said Priscilla. "I heard the Countess Yolande say only yesterday: 'Le beau et brave Dunois, as long as he is with us we may hope to conquer!'"

"And he is not likely to forsake us," said Margaret. "He has told us that he will not, and a brave man never lies!"

It was not possible that these two children should understand the importance of what was taking place around them; indeed to them it was a great excitement, this coming and going of lords and knights, the continual marching of soldiers, the whole paraphernalia of war. They were never tired of standing at the windows, or, when they were permitted, walking on the castle terrace with Dame Morrison, watching all that went on in the little town below; even the fact that food was running short at Chinon, and that there was considerable difficulty in providing the royal household with the bare necessaries of life, did not affect them. They wove for themselves a romance, and never for one moment doubted but that the king would win his kingdom back again. He was kind and gentle to them, making much of Margaret, and so they loved him; and Margaret



B181

MARGARET AND PRISCILLA ON THE RAMPARTS

found it in her heart to wish that the surly Louis, her betrothed, were as courteous as his father, for as the days went on she loved Louis less and less. He would ofttimes scowl at them when they met him, and so they avoided doing so as much as possible, and Margaret was only seen in his company when it was necessary at any court function.

The days and weeks passed by, and matters changed but little, except that the English encircled the town of Orleans with wooden huts and deep trenches to protect themselves during the coming winter. It was a formidable array, but the besieged kept brave hearts, because from the open side of the town volunteers still drifted in and food was fairly plentiful.

CHAPTER III

DISCIPLINE

HABIT is a strange thing, and it is astonishing how quickly one falls into any groove. One might imagine that, as the autumn days shortened into winter, life would have been dull for those two young girls in the fortress château of Chinon; but not at all. They were as merry as crickets, and they said themselves the days went only too quickly. For their elders it might not have been thus had they not had the children to think of—they must be amused, they must be cared for. Within the château there was a chapel, and after early mass they would walk on the ramparts. The ten o'clock dinner-hour followed, after which, while it was still day-

light, the women—maids and mistresses—assembled in the room set apart for them and worked at the great tapestry-frames which were set up beneath the narrow windows to enable them to see until the daylight waned. And Priscilla and Margaret, who had never been accustomed thus to employ themselves, soon learnt to love it; at least Margaret did, but Priscilla was of a more active nature, and she wearied sooner than the Princess. Margaret was more artistic, she loved weaving the many-coloured wools into soft lights and shadows, and she soon learnt to copy with exactitude the outlines of the flowers and figures which served them as models. The French ladies have always been remarkable for their tapestry; in many an old château in Touraine there are still to be found whole suites of furniture of the finest tapestry-work, beautiful alike in design and execution. Sometimes, indeed almost daily, the Countess Yolande would break the monotony by reading, from old books or manuscripts, legends and romances; to Margaret this was a great joy, and she would often be seen to drop her needle and to listen ecstatically to the rhythm of the ancient metres. But there was one thing which delighted her beyond measure. In the suite of the king and the queen, notwithstanding their disasters and the want of means to supply the necessaries of life for their household, they had many hangers-on. There was the court fool, who would ofttimes bring a smile upon lips which would otherwise have remained serious; there were the musicians, the buffoons, the story-tellers, who in the south were called troubadours; and, above all, the man who was most esteemed, and had been for years the secretary, first of Charles the Sixth, and now of Charles the

Seventh, Alain Chartier by name, the poet who had told the story of Agincourt until it brought tears to the eyes of his listeners, who could weave the tenderest romances of love and war with sentiments always noble, always true. Now day after day he would find his way into the queen's room, or of an evening after supper into the great hall, and by his eloquence encourage the faint hearts and fill the brave ones with exultation. It is for ever and for ever the same story, how mind reigns over matter. The Spartan schoolmaster led his countrymen to victory; the ancient Greeks listened to their poets and were inspired by them to fight for liberty and country; the sagas of the north, the ancient bards and Druids, tell the same tale. The love of the beautiful, high-sounding words, and the sweet notes of harp or fife have ever been a necessity to inspire human nature with courage and valour.

So it ofttimes happened that when the day had been dreary, and the news from Orleans unfavourable, Alain Chartier would have a new ballad which he would recite before the king and his despondent courtiers, until their courage revived, and men and women would look up again with faith in God and in themselves. Margaret of Scotland verily hung upon his words. Her usual seat was beside the Countess Yolande. Sometimes she would stand up so that she might see him better at the farther end of the room, and the duchess would encircle her with her arm. It was a striking picture—the noble woman upon whom the cares of state hung heavily, and the slight, inexperienced girl, for whom the future held no man knew what except that she was to be a queen, the saddest fate, in those days especially, which could befall any woman. Her large brown eyes rested upon

Chartier's more than usually plain, not to say ugly, face. But to her he was beautiful, and he, feeling the magnetic power of that young soul, would almost address himself to her as if she inspired him. They grew to have a strong sympathy one with the other, so much so that when Margaret retired to the room she shared with Priscilla, she would sit down on her low bed and repeat again and again the verses he had spoken, sometimes even she would add lines of her own to his, and when Priscilla said, listening in astonishment:

"You will be a poetess some day, Princess."

"If I only could!" she would answer. "I would far sooner wear a poet's wreath of laurels than the gemmed coronet of a queen;" and thus, half-murmuring rhymes to herself, and sweet words of tender love, her eyes would close upon the dreariness of the fighting world, and she would sleep, lulled by soft music which reached her from that far-away region where the souls of poets and artists wander in Elysium.

Dunois, who, though he did not love the foreigner, and hated with a desperate hatred everything that was English, was yet ready to recognize the sterling qualities of the Constable of Scotland, and welcomed him when he made his way into Orleans with his hardy Scots, who made light of the rough fare and only asked to be led against the enemy.

Andrew Grahame conceived an immense admiration for the French soldier. He took to following Dunois whenever he was himself at liberty, rendering him little services with that dog-like fidelity which frequently distinguishes the affection a young man conceives for one older than himself, and Dunois was keenly alive to it. His own nature was frank and open, his fearless bravery

was proverbial, and by nature he was affectionate and very lovable, so before many days had elapsed the two were fast friends, and Dunois got into the habit of looking round in search of Andrew if by reason of his other duties he was absent from his side. One thing more than all things else interested Andrew, and that was the new artillery. The French possessed a far greater number of cannon than the English did at this time, and Orleans was especially well provided in this respect; they had no less than seventy pieces of ordnance and twelve master-gunners, all of them reckoned to be very expert. Every day, or rather twice a day, Andrew accompanied Dunois when he made his round of inspection. Every cannon had its name and its own particular gunner. This highly amused Andrew; he learnt to know them all and was on the best of terms with the men. The cannon most in favour was called "Rifflard", and the gunner was Maître Jean. It was what we call a culverin, and was fixed on a small, light, wooden carriage. It was here, there, everywhere; its execution was something fabulous, Maître Jean was said never to miss his mark. One day Lord Gray was struck, another day the marshal of the English camp fell, till indeed the whole English force grew to hate the sight of it, and their gunners united in their efforts to get possession of it, but in vain. Once they seriously thought they had succeeded in crippling it, for Jean fell and was apparently dead; he was carried away by his comrades, and the whole camp was delighted. Alas! to their horror, an hour later Jean reappeared with his culverin. One morning the Count of Salisbury climbed one of the bastions with William Gladsdale, who said. looking down into the city:

"My lord, there is your town."

It so happened that at that very time Andrew was on the rampart opposite. It was the dinner hour, and he had told the gunner that he would keep guard for him whilst he went to his mid-day meal, and so he stood leisurely beside the cannon. He had never yet discharged one; an intense longing seized him to do so. He had seen the gunners at work scores of times, so without hesitation he struck his flint and held the fuse to the rammed mouth of the cannon; in a few seconds it discharged the bullet and struck the Count of Salisbury full in the face. Surprised at the sound of the explosion, the gunner and Dunois came running up, the latter swearing violently. Dunois laid his hand on Andrew's shoulder, saying:

"What business had you to do that? I must put you under arrest."

Without attempting to answer, Andrew submitted, and was marched off to prison between two French soldiers. Half an hour later the whole city was in a state of joy, for the news reached them that the English commander-in-chief had been killed, and Dunois was besieged with entreaties for the deliverance of Andrew, who, as chance would have it, had accomplished this feat. But, determined to maintain discipline, Dunois refused to listen to the intercessions made on his behalf, so he kept him in prison on bread and water for forty-eight hours.

"If I were to ignore his breach of discipline," he said to Sir John Stewart, "because it so happens that the effect has proved fortunate, I should lose all command over my men, and the gunners would be no longer responsible for their cannon."

"You are quite right," said Sir John; and when Andrew was released he received a severe admonition from his lord.

Nevertheless everyone rejoiced that such a severe blow had been given to the English, and for two or three days there was a sort of amnesty between the two camps. Dunois sent a messenger to Chinon informing the king what had taken place, and naming the culprit.

When Priscilla heard that he was in prison she wept bitterly. She was still weeping, and Margaret was trying to console her, when Prince Louis came up with an evil look on his face and began taunting her, saying among other things that it was as well the Scotch had come to France to learn discipline, for he had heard that in their own country they were little better than savages.

At that Margaret rose and told him it was a lie, and that he was a coward, which the Scotch never were, that he had best mend his manners or she, Margaret of Scotland, would go back to her father and would not be his wife; and forthwith, like a beaten hound, he slunk away, but the glance he cast upon Priscilla was evil, and she exclaimed:

"Oh, Princess, why do you anger him? he will surely do us some evil turn. I am afraid of him."

But Margaret laughed, and at that moment the king came by smiling, evidently elated, and, patting Priscilla on the shoulder, said:

"Have no fear, my child, your brother will be set free, or rather he is probably free by this time. He has done a great deed in delivering us from our enemy, Lord Salisbury."

"I do not understand, Your Majesty," answered

Priscilla. "I thought he was in prison for breach of discipline."

"True, so he is," replied Charles, laughing good-humouredly; "but the end justifies the means. He fired a cannon, which he had no business to do; but as good luck would have it he killed our worst enemy in the English camp."

Margaret clapped her hands with delight.

"Prince Louis has no right, then, to call us Scotch cowards," she said, "and you will tell him so, surely, sire, will you not?" she added.

A frown darkened the king's face.

"What has that Jackanapes been saying?" he asked; and Margaret told him. The king shrugged his shoulders.

"Pay no heed to him, my children, he cannot so much as look at a cannon himself, much less fire one;" and he turned away, muttering to one of his courtiers: "If Louis be not careful he will lose the princess, and so we shall make for ourselves enemies in our new allies. Send the boy to me."

But Louis was nowhere to be found, and by the time the king next saw him he had, in his light way, forgotten the incident.

CHAPTER IV

THE BATTLE OF THE HERRINGS

THE English were not disconcerted even by the loss of their chief, who was succeeded in his command by the Earl of Suffolk. Throughout the winter months

which followed there was but little fighting. The English built huts all round the town, and so strove to circumvent it, but its enceinte was so vast that there was always some point by which the besieged obtained stores and fresh troops. They had so many friends; every town and village had its eyes fixed on Orleans, and would watch its opportunity for taking in provisions. More than once some of the garrison found their way out. On Christmas-day, not unknown to Sir John Stewart and to Dunois, Andrew rode to Chinon with young William Stewart, who had a great liking for Priscilla.

"Let be," Sir John had said to Dunois, "the lads are cunning, they must have their fling; they will come back safe enough. It is innocent sport."

And so they went unmolested; in high spirits they had sworn they would go through the enemy's camp and return the same way. The going was easy enough, but the coming back was a very different matter, for they found the road they had taken was guarded. Fortunately, as we have said, they had many friends, and a peasant warned them that it was so.

"Then someone has betrayed us," said William Stewart, "and I am minded it is that cur Louis, for after mass on Christmas morning he slunk up to me and asked me by what road we had come, and how we should go back, and, fool-like, I told him. I noticed then he smiled grimly; but I will be even with him yet, and if he does not mend his manners, my father will let King James know. We will not have our princess wedded to a knave!"

The warning being given them, they skirted the town until they reached a place where the river ran furiously at this winter season; but they were good swimmers,

and, letting the reins loose on their horses' necks, they entered the river and swam across, not without difficulty and much danger, but to the cheers of the garrison who watched them from the ramparts. Many of the soldiers ran down to the water's edge to give them a helping hand and land them safely. They were prime favourites, these two youths, and good friends, loving each other as brothers and comrades-in-arms.

Indeed, life in Orleans for the first few winter months was by no means dull. The Scotch and the French were maybe slightly jealous of each other, but their chiefs were united, and they kept the peace; besides, there was always a certain excitement going on, a secret coming and going, a state of expectation. Neither were they without news from the outside world; continuously small troops of men succeeded in entering the town to reinforce it, and the garrison would sally forth and attack some outlying English post, and so divert the enemy's attention while they accomplished this feat. Once De Coulant, whom Charles had made Admiral of France, penetrated into Orleans with two hundred lances. Women and children turned out to meet them, and there were great rejoicings, though unfortunately their coming made more mouths to feed. But as the winter drew to a close the English were well-nigh as hard up as the French. Round Orleans the French had destroyed everything which could afford shelter or serve as food for their enemies; they burnt the vineyards, cut down trees, destroyed the gardens, in fact laid the whole country bare for more than a league round. If the peasants had private stores they were so well hidden that it was not easy to unearth them, so the English were suffering sorely from lack of food. Early in Feb-

ruary the Regent Bedford in Paris was informed of this. Immediately he requisitioned five hundred carts and wagons in Normandy and from round Paris; these he caused to be filled with provisions and stores to be despatched to the army before Orleans. Sir John Fastolf was appointed captain, and the escort consisted of sixteen hundred fighting-men. He was not long in reaching the city. The news was received by the besieged with shouts of delight. It was a diversion; they would not only beat the English, but they would provision their own city of Orleans! The Count of Clarmont at the head of the French, and Sir John Stewart, Constable of Scotland, with his four thousand Scotchmen, undertook to stop the convoy. They allowed Fastolf to approach as far as Rouvray, the nearest village before reaching Orleans. His journey had been so far successful; he had met no enemy and no hindrance of any sort, but he heard at Rouvray that the French and Scotch were barring his way to Orleans. Of his sixteen hundred men only six hundred were English; the rest were men gathered rapidly together from Paris and its environs, upon whom, as fighting-men, he could by no means depend. He faced the emergency bravely, and had recourse to what might almost be termed a stratagem. He made a square barricade of his carts and wagons, leaving only two gaps. These gaps he filled up with his English archers, placing on either side of them men-at-arms. There was little doubt in his own mind that if those coming against him were in the least wary his little army would be destroyed, but he was determined to hold his own as long as possible. At this crisis a dispute arose between the French and the Scotch in Orleans; the Scotch advocated fighting

on foot, the French desired to remain on horseback. It was decided at last that each party should go their own way. The result was, of course, disastrous. Sir John Stewart, his son, and many noble Scotch knights advanced on foot against Fastolf's square, determined to force an opening, but the English archers in the gaps shot so well that they hit off their enemy almost to a man. Moreover, the Scotch were not properly supported by the French men-at-arms, although many of the French nobles made a supreme effort to rescue them, and perished in the attempt. Andrew Grahame was close beside his friend William Stewart, and saw him fall. Unwounded himself, he threw himself down beside him at the risk of being crushed underfoot by man or horse. Indeed, he was so trodden under that he lost consciousness, and when he came to himself again the fight was over. He was so bruised that for a moment he imagined his legs and arms were broken. He succeeded, however, in raising himself, and then saw the face of his friend. His helmet had been knocked off, his head was bruised if not broken, and an arrow had pierced his harness, from which the blood was oozing. Venturing to look around, he heard naught but moans, and saw heaps of men dead or dying. He dared not rise to his feet, for fear of attracting the attention of the marauders of battle-fields, who robbed the dead and slew the dying.

It was late in the afternoon when the fight came to an end; it was now night. Andrew lifted his friend's head, and placed his mouth on his to make sure whether he were alive or dead. He dared not touch the arrow's head to draw it forth, for he had heard many a story of how by so doing an unskilful hand had caused im-

mediate death. There was a strange stillness all around him. In the distance he could see the lights of Fastolf's camp; the conquerors were evidently engaged in rejoicing over the day's work, feasting and making merry. So, to assure himself of his own condition, he rose to his feet, stretched himself, and though he felt at first under his armour as if his whole body were bruised, he knew that he was really one of the few who had escaped unhurt. The quick way in which he had thrown himself over William Stewart had saved him. He was a strong youth, well-built and powerful for so young a man, and he now determined to make an effort to carry his friend off that disastrous battle-field. William Stewart was of lighter build than himself, therefore it was just possible he might be successful. As we have said before, the defenders of Orleans had many friends in the neighbouring country; the peasants hated the English yoke, and though they had no great reason for devotion or gratitude to Charles, he was still their own king, uncrowned though he was. Andrew knew this quite well; he therefore felt assured that if he could only get to a peasant's cottage, or even to a barn, it would mean safety. Again he stooped over William Stewart, and by the light of the moon examined him closely. He unfastened the greaves of his armour, loosening them at the throat, and then, tearing away a portion of his under-doublet, with infinite care he drew out the arrow, quickly binding the cloth with his scarf tight over the wound. To his surprise, after a few seconds William Stewart's eyes opened, and he gave a little sigh as of relief. Boy-like, Andrew almost laughed with glee.

"You are all right, Will; don't move," he said. At

the sound of his friend's voice William Stewart looked up.

"Where are we?"

"Hush, you mustn't speak! We've been undone. We are left for dead; we must get out of this somehow. Do you think you can stand?"

"My father," said William, "where is he?"

"I know not," answered Andrew; "let us hope he has got out of the medley. Now wait one second, I will lift you up."

He did so. Evidently, whether mortally wounded or not, William had lost much blood, for he staggered and leant heavily against Andrew. It was an awful scene—that battle-field. Under the fitful light of the moon they could see the crowd of dead faces, as it were staring at the birds of prey which were already hovering over their heads, and, worse still, figures with little lanterns were to be seen here and there robbing the dead who had fought for France. Suddenly close beside them a man appeared, a dark figure with flowing black robe and a broad hat upon his head. Was he one of those night vultures? Surely they were lost, and Andrew, throwing his arm round William Stewart, drew his sword. At least if they must perish they would perish together. But the voice which bade him sheathe his sword was the voice of one of those few servants of God who, even in these godless times, sought to do their duty and to administer comfort to the dead and dying. This man was well known in the country round as the monk Isambert; he was to be found on every battle-field, regardless of danger, a true soldier of the Cross, comforting the dying, closing the eyes of the dead, fulfilling his holy office when none other dared to do so.

"Have no fear," he said now. "I need not ask you to which side you belong, for around you lie your comrades. Alas, Orleans and France are the worse for this day's work! Are you wounded or whole?"

"My friend is sorely wounded," said Andrew. "I saw him fall, and threw myself upon him. By some means I escaped unhurt, save that I am greatly bruised. Good sir, can you take us to a place of safety?"

"If you can follow me."

"We will follow you," said Andrew. He spoke hastily, for it needed the monk's help and his own to move William Stewart. The wound had broken out bleeding again, and they had to lay him down, and the monk, from the stores he carried with him, dressed and bound up the wound so as to stay the bleeding, after which between them they carried William, the monk going foremost. More than once Andrew thought he himself would have fallen, his body ached so, his limbs had no strength left in them, but the monk drew forth a flask and bade him drink. The pure wine of the grape of this part of France has a marvellous virtue, and thus he was enabled to continue his way.

"Out yonder," said the monk, pointing to the distant horizon, which lay still and white in the night shadows under the starlit sky, "there is a cart. I came in it; one of our brethren drove me. If we can reach it we shall be safe."

This assurance was a great incentive.

"Surely I can do it," said Andrew.

"Lay me down and save yourself," said William.

"Did a Grahame ever do so mean a thing as to forsake his friend?" answered Andrew, almost fiercely, and William was silent. So they went on. Fortunately it

was a flat plain across which their road lay, and at last the monk said:

"We will stop here." Taking a small horn from underneath his black robe he blew it. Then for the first time Andrew saw his face. It was a beautiful face, such as we see but seldom in life—clear-cut, chiselled features, with a strong under-jaw, large, dark eyes, from which even through the darkness a great soul gleamed forth. He was a very tall man, with no spare flesh upon him, for he was one who fasted and prayed, and used himself working for his fellows. If there had been a few more such as he in France at that time she had not been so forsaken.

Another horn answered him.

"It is well," said the monk; "Brother Anthony has heard us, and will be with us in about ten minutes. We will lay your friend down."

They did so, and Father Isambert gave him a drink out of the flask he carried, which revived William Stewart, and, as Andrew knelt beside him supporting his head, he asked:

"How did it all happen?"

"I do not know," said Andrew. "There was a great rush, and the English arrows darkened the air. I saw you fall, and others, but I could not distinguish anything. I threw myself down over you, so, I suppose, I saved my own life."

"And mine probably," said William.

They were still speaking when they saw a covered cart approaching.

The monk went forward to meet it, and, taking hold of the horse's bridle, guided him to the spot where the wounded man lay. In a few seconds they had lifted him

into the cart and laid him upon the straw with which the bottom of the vehicle was thickly strewn. Andrew mounted beside him, but the monk took his place by the driver.

"Where shall I drive to?" asked Brother Anthony.

"Back to the monastery," answered the monk; "the lad must be tended at once." And they started.

To Andrew that journey seemed never-ending. The jolting of the cart caused William Stewart great pain, indeed it brought back the bleeding, and they had to stop while Father Isambert once more dressed the wound. It was a good two hours' journey before they reached the Monastery of the Holy Spirit. It was by no means a large monastery, but it was noted for the many services it rendered to the sick and wounded. The monks were not a cloistered order, they went and came; wherever there was need they were found. Their superior, Father Isambert, was famed for the austerity of his life and for his large charity. In these hard times the poor crowded to the gates of the monastery, and were never sent away without their dole. As they approached, the father once more blew his horn, so that when they reached the monastery they found the gates open, and the cart entered the stone-paved yard. Andrew heard a voice ask:

"What have you brought home to-day, Father?"

"A wounded lad and his friend," he answered; and the rough canvas curtain was moved back, and strong, gentle hands lifted William out of the cart and carried him into the house, Andrew following.

They placed William on a stretcher in a cell, bare and clean, with nothing on the white walls save the great crucifix from which the Christ looked down upon what,

to all seeming, might be a dying man. But the monks were clever and learned in the art of healing, and soon they had washed and dressed the wound and administered what food was necessary to their patient, and Andrew had the satisfaction of seeing his friend fall into a quiet sleep. Then they took him into the great refectory and put bread and meat and wine before him, and while he was eating, Father Isambert told him how the fight had gone.

"There never was a braver onslaught," he said, "than the Scots made upon the English convoy, but the French cavalry remained in position and the artillery only opened fire on the English barricades. A great number of the English wagons were thus overthrown and broken to pieces, so that their contents were scattered abroad. Barrels rolled hither and thither, which, being burst open by the balls, vomited forth quantities of herrings; for you see we are in Lent, and evidently those who sent food for the army had considered this. If matters had continued thus the French would have remained masters of the field, but they were unwilling to leave all the glory to the artillery; so, dismounting in their heavy armour, they marched without order on to the English, whose archers were still almost uninjured, pouring out upon them a cloud of arrows. They did not turn their backs; Scots and French alike hurried forward to their own destruction. Scarcely a man escaped. You must have fallen among the first; it is a marvel how you escaped. The flower of the Scotch and French army is lying yonder; it is a terrible defeat. Follow me into the chapel; we will say a mass for the dead, and return thanks for the living."

Andrew obeyed, and in the little chapel a solemn

service was intoned by those pious men, who, dead to the world as far as they themselves were concerned, still lived to pray and help their fellows. They did their work in those dark ages, and the world without them would have been all the poorer to-day. If they did not spread knowledge they at least preserved it for the days to come, when greater lights should illumine the earth, and others should be enabled to gather up the threads of knowledge and weave them into a great whole. When the service was over, and they had once more visited the sick man (beside whose pallet a lay brother sat and told his beads), seeing he was resting in peace, the father himself conducted Andrew to another cell and bade him sleep. He needed no second telling. Worn out with that long day and night Andrew threw himself on his hard bed. His head scarce touched the pillow before he was asleep.

CHAPTER V

THE CALL

IN every country in the world there linger still legends of the fairies, good and bad. We scarcely know whether they be of flesh and blood, like unto ourselves, or another order of creation, blossoming like the flowers and springing up, as they do, out of the earth to which they lend both grace and beauty; but surely there is a link which makes them kindred with the children of men! There are those who say they have seen fairies dancing in the meadows, disporting themselves, and yet

no one has ever touched them! What their corporeal essence may be no one knows. There is the fairy ring, where their little feet have danced on the green sward wet with dew; there are the trees beneath whose shadows they gather, singing with sweet human voices words of happiness, tender, true, and always joyous. Men are said to have fallen in love with them, and to have whispered of human passion into ears which heard, but whose soulless natures could not comprehend the divine in man. In the days of which we are writing they were specially popular in the province of Champagne, on the flowering banks of the Meuse. Fairies form part of the story of the country—they were here, there, and everywhere, and were beyond measure beloved. A great wood of oak-trees crowned the summit of the hills which rise in gentle slopes from the river-side. This wood was called the Bois de Chênes. Half-way up there was a chapel dedicated to the Virgin; not far distant was a great beech-tree known in all the country round as "L'Arbre des Dames". "Dames" had at this time two significations—it was applied to ladies of high rank, and the peasants gave the name of "dames" to the fairies. In the spring-time knights and ladies came with their sons and daughters and feasted beneath the branches of this famous tree. Another legend tells how the lord of a neighbouring château came night after night to hold converse with one especial fairy, and so it was called "L'Arbre des Dames" and "L'Arbre des Fées".

From Domrémy and the surrounding villages young men and maidens came on Sundays and spent there the day—a happy, merry tribe, breaking bread together—special little rolls baked for them by their mothers,—laughing and playing as they feasted, quenching their

thirst out of the limpid stream which ran below. And when the shadows fell they bade the famous tree good-night, and trooped homewards by twos and threes to the different villages where they dwelt—young men and maidens in all the joy of life, laying up for themselves sweet memories to brighten the days when the shadows should fall, and all joy would lie in remembrance. Among these maidens was one differing but little from her companions in appearance, but she was noted for the holy life she led and for a certain mysticism which seemed to envelop her. It was evidently an effort for her to conform herself to the merriment and the dancing which were so dear to her companions. She would often escape from their midst and find her way into the little chapel, and there spend her time in prayer. She was only a little peasant girl, who all the week wandered along the paths and through the meadows with the sheep and cows which formed the wealth of her poor parents. She sat by the road-sides or by the river, knitting whilst her charges pastured; but when the great sorrow fell upon France, and the country was devastated, she would let her knitting drop on her lap, and great tears would pour down her face; thus she wept for France! We are told that our angels are ever with us, that they feel our sorrows and strive to comfort us; there are also some who have had visions of angels, but they are those who are spiritually-minded, able to cast away the vanities of this world and penetrate, through the darkness which encompasses us, into the regions of light. To suffering humanity this great and invisible sympathy, this link between our world and the unseen, has in it mysteries and possibilities which no man can fathom. The soul that dwells on holy things and holds converse

with the spiritual world must be essentially pure, like the soul of a little child; and this young girl, just budding into womanhood, had never known what wrong meant. She had done her daily work, she had carried the lambs in her arms, she had led the little calves into the most flowery pastures, and now she had a sudden awakening. She came back to her home with wonderful stories of how she had seen angels, and one more mighty than all the rest, the Archangel Michael, had spoken to her and told her strange things. She said he spoke to her as an elder brother, with gentle admonition: "Be good, my child; go often to church," and such like words; and she told how around her voices seemed to sing, chanting holy songs. For a long time she did not speak of these things; like the Virgin-Mother, she "pondered them in her heart". But at last one day she saw a great light, and in the midst of it there was a figure more beautiful than any she had seen before, arrayed in white armour, with great white wings spread out, and a staff in his hand. He stood on the trunk of the tree and looked down on her, and she fell upon her knees before him.

"Joan, my child," he said, "go forth and deliver the King of France and give him back his kingdom."

And she, trembling, answered him: "Sir, how can a poor girl lead the armies of France?"

And the Voice answered her: "The Saints will help thee!"

Months, aye years, went by, and still the Voices spoke to her, and she did not heed them. She listened to them, she even spoke to them, but she lacked courage to do as they bade her. At last she could keep silence no longer. Courage came to her; she knew not how or why, but she lost all fear. The people in the village

in which she dwelt believed in her visions and encouraged her. Only her father and mother wept, declaring that they would rather see her drowned than that she should go forth in the company of armed men. Therefore, alone, the Voices speaking to her, the angels upholding her, she left her native village, found her way to the town of Vaucouleur, presented herself before the captain in command, and told her tale. But he would not heed her, and told her uncle, who was with her, to punish her and to take her back to her father, for that she was mad. But Joan answered:

"It matters not, for my Voices have told me that I must be with the king before mid-Lent, and, if I wear my legs out, I will go!"

Strange to say, the people of the town believed in her as the country folk had done, and even the captain who sneered at her at first now hesitated. But what he would not give her others did. They bought her a horse and equipped her in armour. She cut off her long hair, and she girded on the sword which Captain Baudricourt, half in mockery, half in earnest, himself gave her, and, thus attired, she started on her long journey, accompanied by six men-at-arms.

From the banks of the Meuse to the banks of the Loire is no mean distance, and Joan had to travel alone with these six strange men through a country overrun by brigands and enemies. But she had lost all fear; she even encouraged her companions.

"Fear not," she said, "God will clear the way for me. For this I was born; the angels in paradise will tell me what to do."

And so, a few days after the Battle of the Herrings, Joan arrived at the town of Fierbois, which lies about

five leagues from Chinon and within a stone's-throw of the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, where William Stewart and Andrew Grahame had lain for some days, both of them well-nigh sick unto death, for when the momentary excitement which had obliged Andrew to exert himself had subsided, the injuries he had received became evident. When the monk Isambert went in to him the following morning he found him in high fever and suffering intensely, evidently from some internal injury. His case was, for the time being, even more serious than William Stewart's, whose wound, now the bleeding was stayed, was not of so grave a nature, the arrow having penetrated no vital part. But there was in the monastery one man famed for his knowledge of surgery, and his treatment of both the youths was so judicious that they soon gave signs of mending. William Stewart was already up and about, in so far that he could crawl from his own cell to his friend's, but Andrew was not allowed to move. He lay swathed in linen bands "like a mummy", he said; but evidently it was the right thing, for after a few days the great pain subsided, and he was permitted to take small quantities of liquid food.

As we have said, the monastery was beset by the poor folk, who sought help for their many ailments, so it came to pass that one morning Father Isambert's ears were besieged with a strange story of how a maid clad in armour, calling herself Joan of Arc, had come into the town the night before, saying that she was sent by God to deliver Orleans and to crown the Dauphin Charles King of France.

"Poor girl, she is mad," said Father Isambert; "I will go to her."

And he went. Those who had told him said:

"If she be mad it is a holy madness, for since early morn she has been in the parish church praying."

Thither the father went, and found a youth kneeling before the high altar, his face hidden in his hands. Evidently he heard his steps, for he rose instantly, and with a marvellous smile upon his face came towards the monk, knelt, and said humbly:

"Your blessing, holy Father."

"A blessing is not idly given," replied Father Isambert. "Art thou man or maid?"

"I am a poor maid from Domrémy," answered Joan, still kneeling, "but my Voices have told me to clothe myself thus and to go to the Dauphin of France, who is our rightful king, and tell him it is the will of God that I should deliver Orleans, and, when I have driven the English from their stronghold, I am to ride with him to Rheims and see him anointed with the holy oil and crowned king. Such is my mission, holy Father, and I must fulfil it, not of my own will, but of God's and of His holy angels. Ah, His angels!" she cried, rising to her feet, a smile of beatitude overspreading her young face. "I hear their voices always, by night and by day. I am not troubled, for they tell me whither I must go and what I must say—my Voices!"

Father Isambert stood and listened to the maid, and as he did so, the conviction came upon him that she was no dreamer of dreams, but one sent by God to do what she had said. Men had failed, the bravest and the strongest were ready to lay down their arms and yield to the English. Dunois—even the brave Dunois—was fast losing courage, only he would not acknowledge it even to himself. The citizens of Orleans had already sent a message to the Duke of Burgundy offering to

yield the city to him rather than to the English. The duke had laid the matter before the Regent Bedford, but he had refused to treat with him, saying: "He was not going to beat the bushes for others to trap the birds!"

So even that hope had failed. Father Isambert knew all this, and for some time past he had realized that nothing but a miracle could save France, and he believed in miracles. He gazed at the maid before him, and he asked himself whether she might not really be the saviour sent by God. Her straight young figure, the excessive purity of her face, bespoke a nature which had sprung from no common source. Before the father had entered the church someone had whispered to him: "She is a mere peasant girl, and has kept her father's sheep and cows all her life!"

And yet there was an extreme nobility in her carriage. As she stood there with her uncovered head, the short, brown hair curling on her forehead, she might have been a prince of royal birth. He remembered the shepherd, David, who became king, and Saul, who had kept his father's asses; what had been, might surely be again.

"Follow me," he said to her, for the church was gradually filling, men and women were crowding in, talking and whispering as they gazed at Father Isambert and the youth. He, advancing, led the way to the back of the great altar to the Virgin's Chapel, Joan following him with bowed head and humble mien. Father Isambert ascended the steps of the altar, but she knelt below.

"Tell me," he said, "art thou a true maid, and is thy mission, as thou sayest, from God, or is it an invention of the devil?"

She lifted her head and gazed at him for a second with astonishment.

"The devil?" she repeated. "I know him not. I have seen but angels, beautiful and fair, and their voices have bidden me do what I am doing. They are ever with me, upholding me lest my foot should slip upon a stone. I have come all this long way from Domrémy to see the king, and to offer to lead his men to what appears a forlorn hope. If he will have none of me, then I will go back; it is not by my own desire or by my own will that I am here. I have been sent!"

As the father looked at her, it seemed to him that he saw a great light shining round her, and the conviction came to him that this was the miracle destined to save France, if men would but see it—a maid, a simple maid! He approached nearer to her, and, raising his hand, he made the sign of the cross over her.

"Tell me," he said, "what has brought thee hither? If thou liest, verily thou shalt die the death of the wicked; but if I am persuaded of the truth of thy mission, I will take thee to the king."

They heard the murmur of many voices in the nave and aisles of the church, but for some reason no one came near to them; the sound of the voices was like unto the breaking of the waves upon the sea-shore.

"Quick!" he said, "speak quickly!"

Joan obeyed, and in rapid words told him of her childhood, her innocent girlhood, how the visions had come to her, how the voices which haunted her by day and by night were so sweet that when she did not hear them her spirit sank within her and her soul thirsted for them:

"They have talked with me for over four years," she

said, "and ever oftener and oftener, until at last I am driven to obey them, and therefore I am here. Good Father, take me to the king!"

"I will," he said. "In an hour we will start for Chinon, where the king dwells."

Joan rose, and the father, taking her by the hand, led her down the church, through the people, who fell back as they advanced. To those who pressed round him he said only:

"I am satisfied; I am taking her to the king."

They stood in the porch together, whilst one of the men who had travelled with her went to the inn to fetch her horse, and another to the monastery for Father Isambert's nag. People marvelled when they saw them set out together, the maid and the monk!

Consternation reigned at Chinon. The king was so despondent that he proposed moving with the court to Auvergne and Languedoc, but neither the Queen Marie of Anjou nor her mother Yolande would allow him to entertain such an idea; they scoffed at it as cowardly and unworthy of his royal blood, and even his indolent nature was shamed by the courage of these two women. Their necessities were very great. There was no money; the king had not the wherewithal to pay the cobbler for the mending of his shoes; for very food they were dependent upon the charity of anyone who would supply their needs, be he noble or peasant. Everyone in the château was sad; Margaret of Scotland and Priscilla Grahame were the saddest of all. Dame Morrison watched over them tenderly. She feared greatly for Priscilla, who mourned so deeply for her brother that a low fever set in, and so consumed her that in the

space of ten days she was reduced to the very shadow of her former self. Margaret never left her bedside, and the queen and Countess Yolande would come and sit beside her, striving to comfort her, but in vain; she wept and moaned.

"I am alone in the world," she repeated again and again. "I have neither father nor mother; Andrew was my only brother. Now he is gone I have no one!"

"Am I not as thy sister?" said Margaret. "I love no one as I love thee; thy sorrow is my sorrow," and she, too, wept.

Many times during those long dreary days the gentle queen and her mother Yolande would repair to the chapel, and, kneeling before the altar, prayed earnestly that it would please the Almighty to raise up a saviour for France. Then they would return to their chamber, and, seated by the narrow window in the turret, look out over the country which in summer-time was so fair.

It was early in February, and the first touch of spring was awakening the birds and covering the trees with that soft white mist, the promise of the future bloom. In the Countess Yolande's heart, without any reason, a faint hope seemed to spring into being. She heard a voice whisper "Espérance!" Turning quickly, she saw beside her the ugly face of the divine poet, Alain Chartier.

"Hope! How can I hope?" she moaned. "See, the land is swept clean, the corn has not been sown or the horses have trampled it underfoot; famine and death await us!" and the tears rolled down her face.

"Look!" said Alain Chartier, pointing to the narrow

path which led from the town of Chinon up to the château.

Coming slowly, as if he were very weary, a monk climbed the steep ascent, his staff in his hand.

"It is Father Isambert," said the countess; "what can he do for us? He is but a poor monk!"

"Who can tell?" answered Alain Chartier. "Have faith! I will go and fetch him to you." And he went.

CHAPTER VI

THE POET

THE poet had spoken of hope, and it seemed as if the word had brought light to the château of Chinon in the person of the monk Isambert. He stood before the queen and her mother, and told them the strange story of how he had saved the two youths in the Battle of the Herrings, William Stewart and Andrew Grahame. When he uttered the names a great cry of joy went up from the royal ladies. They waited not to hear what else he had to say, but, like simple women whose hearts were full of love, they went straight to the chamber where Priscilla lay and, bending over her, told her that her brother lived, and that if she would arise and come with them, the monk who had saved him would give her news of him. They helped to robe her, and the queen taking her by the hand, whilst Margaret supported her on the other side, they went back to the queen's room. When Priscilla saw the monk she held out her hands:

"Oh, Father," she said, "where is he?"

"In the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, near Fierbois," answered the monk. "He is sorely hurt, and had a bad bout of fever, but in a few days he will come to you. Now put away thought of thyself, for there are higher matters to be spoken of. Will you not send for the king, madam, that I may deliver my message to him?" he added, turning to Marie of Anjou.

"The king is in the council chamber," answered the queen; "a messenger came from Orleans, and they are considering the news he brought."

"Nevertheless I must see him," said the monk; "I also bring a message, not from man, but from God!"

He had thrown back his cowl and there was something almost inspired in the stern beauty of his face. The queen turned to Alain Chartier, who was standing beside her.

"Will you venture into the king's presence and tell him what the father says?" she asked.

Alain Chartier bowed. "I will go, madam," he answered.

"Cannot you tell us what has brought you, Father?" said the Countess Yolande.

"Surely I could," he answered; "but it were better for you to wait till I have spoken to the king."

At that moment Alain Chartier returned.

"His majesty will receive you," he said, addressing the monk; and he added, turning to the queen: "I asked his majesty if he would permit you and the Countess Yolande to be present. He learnt with great satisfaction that Andrew Grahame and William Stewart are yet alive." As he spoke these gentle words he turned and smiled at Margaret and Priscilla, whose

happy faces were very different from the sad, sorrowful ones he had been accustomed to of late.

Following the two royal ladies the monk entered the presence-chamber. The nobles rose as the queen appeared, and the king signed to an usher to place chairs on either side of him, whilst the monk stood at the farther end of the table facing the king.

"I am told you have brought us news," said the monarch; "would to God it were good news, for our heart is very sad and our spirit is broken at the ill-success of our arms!"

"I know not whether it be good or bad," answered the monk; "it is not news I bring, but a message."

"Speak, then," said Charles; and the monk told him how he had met Joan of Arc, and how he had heard her story; he told of her visions, of the voices of her angels, of how she had come from the little village of Domrémy across the country infested by wild soldiers and brigands.

"And she had no fear," he said, "because her Voices bade her come."

Even while he was speaking smiles and suppressed laughter went round from man to man; only the women listened and believed—but then they were women! The king looked doubtingly from one to the other; catching the eye of one of the councillors he too burst out laughing.

"Good Father, what would you have us do with the maid? If her father had corrected her when first she talked such nonsense she would not have troubled us now. It surprises me that so learned a man should give heed to a girl's ravings. Send her back, good Father, the way she came, and that speedily."

But Yolande laid her hand on Charles's arm.

"My good son-in-law, will you not first see the maid?"

"To what purpose?" answered Charles.

"Verily, to what purpose?" repeated one of the nobles. "Maybe she is a witch; certain it is she is not in her right mind, and might harm the king."

Father Isambert shrugged his shoulders.

"You are there to defend his majesty," he said, "and what harm can a maid of scarce twenty summers do?"

"You say she offers to relieve Orleans!" said another with a scoffing laugh. "To accomplish such a feat she must indeed be strong both in mind and body."

"Not in her own strength will she fight," said Father Isambert, throwing back his head, "but in the power of God! Surely you will not send her hence without seeing her?"

"I know not," answered Charles, "what I had best do. Where is she now?"

"A good woman at Chinon has taken her in; she will wait there till your majesty permits her to present herself before you."

"I cannot do that," said Charles; "it were tempting Providence!"

The monk looked across the table at the Countess Yolande, and he saw an expression of disdain on her face, but she evidently restrained herself and said quite gently:

"You will not surely send the maid hence without hearing her, Sire?"

"Ah, there you are! Always against me!" said Charles pettishly. "You care not whether I live or die, what dangers or what risks I run."

"You know that is not so," answered Yolande; "no one has a greater care for your person than I have. But

I will not press you further. Come, Marie, we will leave the king to these gentlemen." She rose and with her daughter walked haughtily out of the room.

"I have nothing more to say," said the monk. "I will go also. If you require my presence you will find me for one night longer at the hostelry of the White Eagle, afterwards I return to the monastery;" and he went his way.

"Madam, I will bid you also farewell," said Father Isambert when they had reached the end of the corridor. The queen hesitated and turned to her mother. Everyone looked up to Yolande; hers was the guiding spirit of the court. Her daughter's life was a sad one, for her husband did not love her, and her son Louis, with his strange humours, troubled her; so she learnt to lean for comfort on her mother, who had always been strong and brave, although by her husband, Louis of Savoy's, early death she had lost the high position in Savoy which she would otherwise have held. She was not by nature ambitious of aught save good, and she bitterly regretted having allowed her daughter to marry the then Dauphin of France. His weak vices revolted her, and yet she was wise enough to restrain herself, to humour and to flatter him, and to make her daughter submit to a rule which was hard indeed, because there was no love to sweeten it. With difficulty she had persuaded Charles throughout this war to hold his own. He would murmur:

"Of what use is it? I am an uncrowned king. The people will not heed me. I would sooner be a plain gentleman and have my liberty."

But Yolande reasoned with him: "You will not speak thus when the tide changes and you are king in very

truth by the grace of God. Have patience, that day will dawn."

She was one of those women who have the knack of catching at the sunbeams of life, and on the present occasion she felt that the coming of this maid was a sunbeam. Surely it would lead to something! So she answered Marie's look with a smile. "We must leave no stone unturned," she said. "If your husband will not see the maid, I will; only we must do it secretly, not to offend him."

The monk looked at her. "Where will you see her?" he asked.

"I cannot say," answered the duchess. "We will wait till to-morrow evening. Maybe the king's mood may change of itself; if not, I will either send for or go to her. We are bound to risk something."

"You will do well," answered the monk; and he departed.

Throughout that day there was a certain excitement in the château; news had got abroad about the maid who had come to offer her services to the king, and how he had refused to see her. They said she had been to early mass, and remained long in prayer, that her beauty was strange, and people blamed the king for not seeing her. As for Charles himself, he did what was his custom—he sulked, and would not speak either to his wife or to her mother.

"He was not to be led by women," he said; and so he shut himself up in his chamber with his own companions.

"I tell you it will be quite easy," said Priscilla; "no one can forbid our going to mass; whether it be an hour earlier or an hour later what can it matter?"

"Only that Dame Morrison will not go to the church in the town. She does not like the cold, and the mornings are dark, so she prefers the chapel," answered Margaret.

"And she rises late," said Priscilla; "she would not hear us if we went to the six o'clock mass. We need not even go through her room; there is the little side door, we could slip down the turret stairs and be off and away without anyone knowing it."

"Indeed we could not," answered the princess; "there is the guard at the bottom. He would not let me pass unescorted."

Priscilla's face fell. "True!" she answered, and silence fell between them. Suddenly Priscilla looked up.

"I have it!" she said. "We will ask Monsieur Chartier; he will do anything for you, Princess, anything in the world!"

A faint pink tint crept over Margaret's face.

"Yes, he is good, he is very good, our poet!" and a look of light, almost of gladness, shone in her eyes. "But how shall we tell him?"

"To-night, after supper," said Priscilla. "He is always tired after he has recited, and he goes into that little dark nook which forms a tiny turret off the duchess's retiring-room, and there he rests alone, looking out over the country and dreaming. All poets dream awake," she added; "it is their nature. They never sleep really, for, sleeping or waking, I have heard, they converse with unseen spirits, they hear voices, and that *is* how they learn the wonderful things they tell us."

"Voices!" said Margaret; "this Joan of Arc says she hears voices, and that they have bidden her relieve Orleans and have the king crowned at Rheims. I wonder whether it be true!"

"We shall know that when we have looked at her," said Priscilla in a matter-of-fact sort of way. "We cannot judge of a person we have not seen. Perhaps she may let us hear her Voices."

"Perhaps," answered Margaret. "But let us go back to what we were saying. We must slip out of the salon and go to Monsieur Chartier in his turret and tell him we want to see this Joan, and that as the king will not let her come up to the castle we will go down to her, only we cannot go alone—he must take us."

"Yes, that is all," said Priscilla; "it is quite easy. He has his exits and his entrances into the castle as he chooses. He will meet us at the bottom of the stairs, and the guard will let us pass under his care. You have only to ask him, Princess."

"I will ask him this very night," said Margaret; then suddenly she flashed round on Priscilla. "I want to see this Joan because I believe in her. I am not like Thomas, I am not faithless. I have not seen her, and yet I believe in her," and she drew her young girlish figure up to its full height. She was tall and slim, with the willowy grace of girlhood. There was something shadowy about her; she had lost that exuberant health which had been hers when she ran and played on the banks of the Tay. Hers was a sensitive nature, and since she had come to France she had felt acutely the sorrow of her adopted country. Parting from her own dear mother had been a sore trial to her, and she had pined more than she had let others see—save the Duchess Yolande, who had taken her to her heart and comforted her. And the Queen Marie also loved her, pitying her because out of her own sad life she foresaw what that child's would be. The loves of these two women and

Priscilla had enabled Margaret to live. But it was not a joyous life as of old, for there was fear in it, a certain dread as to what might be. Poets' natures are naturally fearful; they see too deeply into the souls of men and the mysteries of nature. It was thus with Margaret, for she was, as we have said before, a born poetess. She joyed with, and she sorrowed with, the multitude. Everything touched her; she was like a sensitive cord of the lute, vibrating to the slightest touch —a lovely nature, true, pure, angelic. As the Countess Yolande looked at her sometimes she thought:

"She will never live to grow old; the angels will want her!" And day after day, month after month, the beauty of her face and person grew; her smile was so tender and mysterious. It was almost as if she had been a dweller in some unknown land from which she had just stepped down to earth. She had a will of her own, quiet and persistent, and yet she often lacked the physical strength to carry out her desires. It was Priscilla, with her matter-of-fact ways and power of action, who accomplished, or made her accomplish, what she desired.

"And so you will go to him and you will win, dear," she said now, throwing her arms round her. "We will arrange everything for to-morrow morning."

And for the rest of the day they went about like two birds, whispering to each other, laughing and chatting. All the sickness which had oppressed Priscilla for the loss of her brother had disappeared.

"What should we be without our children?" said the Countess Yolande, looking at them. "They fill the old château with light; they penetrate like sunbeams into its darkest corners."

After supper, as usual, Alain Chartier recited a long poem, the whole tenor of which was the story of a maid who delivered an old château which was beset by enemies, and how she did it all by the power of God and of his saints; and Charles frowned and the courtiers giggled, but the women listened, and the two children clapped their hands and smiled, but they said nothing. But the king rose angrily from the table, and his courtiers with him, and this was the sign for the queen and her ladies to retire to their own quarters.

"And you had best go with them, Sir Poet!" said Charles to Alain Chartier. "Your songs are fit for women, seeing you honour them over men!"

Alain Chartier bowed and retired.

"A monkey with monkey's ways!" said a saucy page as he disappeared. This allusion to Chartier's ugliness was received with a coarse laugh by many. Chartier had heard the words, and the laugh, as he let fall the curtain which separated the hall from the passage, then caused him to wince. He knew full well that his personal appearance was unpleasing, to say the least of it. He had heard himself called the ugliest man in France, and to one who loved beauty and aimed at perfection it was a moral grief. So when now an arrow was thrust at him it quivered in his flesh until he drew it forth and threw it from him; but the scar remained, and he had many such. He did not join the queen and the ladies as was his wont, but passed up by narrow stone steps to a turret which jutted out from the main building. It was a solitary place, where no one had any business. The walls were of stone, the floor was tiled; it was lighted by narrow slits of windows, so that the sun filtered through the deep niches in the thick walls. A rude wooden table and an

elbow-chair of dark oak were all the furniture it contained. On the table were some books, paper, and a long quill pen. A silver lamp, not yet lighted, stood also thereon, and a few embers of a wood fire glimmered on the hearth. As he entered he gave a sigh of relief. This place was his own, and he loved it; the Countess Yolande had given it to him, and he had peopled it with the sweet imaginings of a sweet soul. It seemed to him, as he threw himself into his chair, that he heard the flapping of wings welcoming him, and all the bitterness went out of his heart because of the things beautiful which floated like wavelets around and about him. The world never penetrated here — the world which wounded and hurt him! His joys were not their joys, and he forgot them and lived his own life, the life which God had made for him. He sat thus in the darkness dreaming, until suddenly he was aroused by the sound of light footsteps coming up the stone stairs. The velvet curtain was pushed upon one side, and two white figures stood at the entrance. Was he dreaming, or were they really angels? He could not distinguish the faces in the darkness. Suddenly a sweet voice said:

"Maître Alain Chartier!" and he knew that it was the Princess Margaret calling him; therefore he rose hastily and bent before her.

"Princess, what has brought you here at this hour?" he asked.

Quietly Margaret answered. It was strange, but she who was so timid by nature had no fear of this man; he was like a friend to her, quite different from all others, and so she advanced boldly into the room and said:

"Maître, I have come to ask a favour of you, and I would have you grant it even before the asking."

"That I cannot do, even for you, Princess," he said sadly, "for you might ask something of me which my conscience would not suffer me to do or say; but this I will promise you, to do my uttermost to satisfy your desire. You know I am your most humble servant, for I recognize in you, young as you are, a kindred soul, and you too will sing your song, and the world will listen and admire."

"Thank you!" answered Margaret. "I hope what you prophesy may come true, for, as I told Priscilla, I would sooner wear the bay leaf than a queen's coronet."

"You will wear both," said Alain Chartier.

At that moment the moon shone into the dark room, and its silver light fell upon Margaret and illumined her so that she seemed like unto a spirit, and when she spoke, instead of a request, her words sounded in the man's ears like a command:

"We would see Joan the Maid, and converse with her," she said; "and unless you help us we cannot, for we are shut up in the castle, and we cannot go where we would, because we are but children. Nevertheless, I must see and speak with the maid. I am drawn towards her, and so we thought—Priscilla and I—that if we could but go to the first mass in the church at Chinon to-morrow morning I might see her and be satisfied."

"And what would you have me do in the matter?" asked Alain Chartier.

"I am coming to that," answered Margaret, smiling.

"At the foot of the stairs of the turret which I and Priscilla occupy, a soldier is on guard. He would not let us pass out; but if you were there with the password, to take us under your protection, he would be satisfied, and we might go and come without hindrance.

Good Master Chartier, I beseech of you do this little thing for me!"

He looked at her and smiled sadly. She did not dream that the little thing she asked for would be counted as high treason. This daughter of Scotland was very precious to the kingdom of France. She was a pledge. If evil befell her he would pay for it with his own life. The king had taunted him because he had pleaded the Maid's right to be seen and heard, and had refused to listen to him because others had whispered that dreaded word "Sorceress". And now this child came to him asking to see the maid. Was it curiosity, or the guiding hand of that God in whom he believed so fervently?

He had not spoken idly of Joan, for Father Isambert, with whom he was great friends, had taken him to her that forenoon, and he had conversed with her, and had been much struck by the quiet way in which she had answered him.

"It is not that I have willed to do this thing," she had said, "but I am driven to it. By night and by day I hear my Voices, and I dare not disobey!"

"And if the king will not see you, and will not aid you," he had said, "what then?"

"Ah, but he will!" she had answered; "I have no fear. Not to-day, not to-morrow perhaps, but the next day. It is the will of God; who shall fight against the Highest?"

Something of her inspiration had entered into the poet, and so he had spoken out of the very fulness of his heart before the king and court, only he had not Joan's faith, and when they sneered at him, and the king banished him from his presence, his spirit had failed him. Suddenly this vision of Margaret appeared before

him, and he remembered having heard that "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained strength".

His courage came back to him.

"Yes, I will take you," he said, regardless of all danger to himself or her. "But it must be quite early, before there is much movement in the castle or in the town. The winter mornings are dark. Will you be brave enough?"

A deep flush lit up Margaret's face.

"Do you ask me, a king's daughter, whether I can be brave enough to face the darkness of a winter's morning?" she retorted indignantly.

"Pardon me," he answered; and then with quick words he told her of a private passage which was reached through a low doorway situated at the bottom of the steps of the very turret in which she was lodged with Priscilla.

"You will not have to pass the soldier on guard," he said. "It communicates with a vault in the parish church. I will take care that Joan is warned; she will await you in Our Lady's Chapel, which is just above the entrance. We can come and go, and I trust no one will be any the wiser."

"Thank you!" said Margaret. "Priscilla was right, she knew you would help us, and she held out her hand to him, who, stooping, kissed it with deep reverence, for he felt that this girl was above the ordinary level of humanity, and something within him whispered that she was treading the earth with a light step, and would not long be amongst them. Indeed, even now she flitted away from him, Priscilla following, the velvet curtain rose and fell, and he was alone.

CHAPTER VII

A MEETING

THE light from the sanctuary lamp was the only glimmer which penetrated the darkness pervading the Chapel of our Lady in the church of Chinon. The day had not yet dawned, there was a great silence all around, when a side-door opened and closed, and a figure in close-fitting steel armour advanced to the altar steps. The holy light fell straight upon it, leaving all else, save the statue of the Virgin and the child Jesus over the altar, in darkness. The figure had scarcely knelt a few seconds when there was again a sound of light footsteps, and two muffled shapes stepped out of the darkness and knelt on either side of it. They were followed by a man wrapped in a large cloak, with a hat drawn deep down over his brow, so as to conceal his face. He also knelt, and for many minutes there was deep silence; then the figure which had first entered the church rose, and, looking down upon those who still knelt, said:

"You have bidden me come hither, and I have done so. What do you desire of me?"

The girl on the right hand rose.

"I did not send for you, I only begged of you to come, because I love France, and am to be her queen some day, and she is beset with many enemies. I have been told that you, too, love France, and that God has sent you to save her. Is this true?"

"It is true," answered Joan. "I am sent of God to deliver my country from the English, and to see the king crowned at Rheims. Such is my mission, and I

am much mistaken if you are not sent to help me accomplish my task; for the king will not understand, he will not believe, and so he thwarts me!"

"No, he does not understand," said Margaret. "We none do; it is so wonderful."

"Why is it wonderful?" answered Joan. "God is all-powerful, but there is no faith in the world now, men will not believe that aught can save them but their own strength and power, and so God has sent me, a maid—the weakest thing on earth—to prove that it is He, the Almighty Whose arm is omnipotent, Who will save France. Is there any miracle in this? Did He not part the waters of the Red Sea so that the armies of His elect might pass through its midst and their enemies be confounded? So now He will give courage to faint hearts, and here I stand waiting until the king shall call for me. That he will call I am assured. Himself he will place my banner in my hand, and bid me go forth in the name of the Lord!"

The light which fell upon her seemed to increase in brilliancy. The pure young face looked down with a smile upon the two girls, whose hoods had fallen back, and whose faces were turned upwards towards her, drinking in her words. Priscilla was the first to speak.

"And if the king will not see you, what then?" she asked.

"Ah, but he will!" she answered. "Are you, too, faithless?"

Abashed, Priscilla bent her head, and Margaret, stretching out her hand, took Joan's, saying:

"Teach us, tell us all the things you know;" and she led her to the steps of the altar, and there they sat

down together side by side, and Joan told them all that had happened to her in her life, unto this day. Alain Chartier stood by, leaning against a pillar, listening. When Joan had finished, Margaret rose.

"I am persuaded you are true," she said. "I will see to this matter. Be ready; the king will call for you before the sun sets to-night."

"I am always ready," answered Joan. "I have need to be, for I know not what may happen to me to-day or to-morrow. I did not know your name a few hours ago, and now you are my friend—Margaret of Scotland! Is not that God's work? Only man will not see how subtle His ways are, and how He leads us like little children." She smiled, a divine smile, as she spoke, and, turning away from Margaret, she once more knelt before the altar.

There was a fascination about her which exercised a strong influence over these two girls. They suddenly felt that they were being drawn into a circle of spiritual influences which they could not resist. Joan knelt with her hands folded on the hilt of her sword, a virgin sword which had never yet been drawn in mortal combat. Margaret laid her hands over hers and said softly:

"In the name of God, the Virgin, and the holy angels, I swear that I will in all things aid Joan the Maid to fulfil the mission which has been given her, whether it be to my loss or to my gain. Priscilla, do thou likewise." She spoke in a tone of command such as she had never used before; and Priscilla obeyed, adding the words:

"I will serve thee unto death!"

Then Joan rose and looked at the two girls after so

kindly a fashion that tears came into their eyes, and Margaret, holding up her face, said sweetly:

"Will you kiss us, my sister Joan?"

And Joan kissed them both on the lips.

"Farewell," they said, "farewell until we meet at the castle to-night!"

Alain noticed that their manner of speech had changed, there was no doubt now in Margaret's voice, she spake with the same assurance as Joan did; faith had come to them.

"We must go," he said, stepping forward, "or we shall be missed."

A few seconds later Joan was alone.

Both Margaret and Priscilla were in their places at early mass in the castle chapel, but the Countess Yolande noticed that the princess hung back as they were leaving the chapel, and did what she had never done before, walked up to her betrothed, Prince Louis, and said graciously to him:

"Shall you walk on the terrace with the king before you break bread?"

"In this raw weather?" answered Louis; "I think not. Besides, the king my father is greatly troubled. I heard him say that people are worrying him concerning this sorceress, whom many would have him see and converse with; but he will not. Good-day!"

It was not often that Louis gave utterance to so long a speech. As he spoke the last word Margaret put her hand out.

"Wilt thou do me a favour, Louis?" she asked. "The king has not been into the queen's apartments since yesterday, and I would have speech with him."

Louis laughed.

"Wilt thou complain of me to him?" he asked.

"Oh no! I will tell him that thou art a good lad, and that we are friends, if thou wilt but ask him to let me have speech with him, because I am grieved not to have seen him all this long time. He is ever kind and gentle to me."

Louis looked at her with a certain cunning in his face.

"What wouldst thou say to him?"

"Only that I have a message for him which I must deliver myself."

"And thou wilt not tell it me? I will be thy messenger."

"Nay, I must be my own messenger," said Margaret. Then suddenly she turned upon him: "If thou wilt not do what I ask of thee, then I will ask someone else;" and she was moving away when Louis caught hold of her; at that very moment Dame Morrison came in search of Margaret.

"Princess," she said, "the queen is asking for you. It is not seemly that you should remain here alone."

"Not with my affianced husband?" said Margaret with a twinkle in her eye.

"No, not even with your affianced husband. It is not etiquette."

Margaret shrugged her shoulders.

"Farewell, Louis!" she called out.

"Farewell, Margot!" he answered. "Maybe I will do your pleasure." And he turned in the opposite direction.

All the court knew that if there were one person in the world whom Charles desired to please, and who had power to win him over to do as she wished, it was the Princess Margaret. She was very winsome, and in his presence he would not suffer her to be thwarted; so no

one was surprised when, after the early dinner, which took place at eleven o'clock, he called to her:

"My son Louis tells me you would speak with me, my child," he said. "We will go on to the terrace together, and thou shalt confide thy little griefs to me." And so Margaret and the king paced up and down together, while the courtiers stood afar off. The Countess Yolande and the queen watched them anxiously. Once the countess said to Priscilla:

"Dost thou know, my child, what our sweet Margot wants of the king?"

"Yes, I know," answered Priscilla, "but I may not tell; it is the princess's secret."

Well-nigh an hour passed by. Evidently the discussion waxed warm between the king and the princess. She had slipped her hand into his and was talking with such sweet earnestness that it excited great curiosity in the lookers-on, but they dared not approach; for when the Master of the Ceremonies ventured to do so, because a messenger had arrived from Orleans, Charles's face, which had been serene before, clouded over.

"I will speak with no one until this matter be settled," he called out.

What the matter was none guessed. At last the king and Margaret stood at the edge of the terrace overlooking the town, and the king said:

"My child, I will do this thing even as you desire, and no one shall know that thou hast persuaded me thereto. The device you propose is good. I will see Joan this afternoon in the midst of my court. Another man shall personate me. If she perceive the fraud, then I shall know that her soul is enlightened. But before she comes to us I will give orders that the priest shall

sprinkle her with holy water, to drive the evil spirits out of her, and, thus purified, I will receive her."

"That is all I ask. I thank you with all my heart!" said Margaret, and she took the king's hand and kissed it.

He patted her on the head.

"I fear, my pretty one," he said, "that my son Louis will not be as indulgent to thee as his father is."

"Who knows?" answered Margaret. "I may learn to please him too."

She dropped a curtsy, and, tossing her pretty head, she ran away. To the astonishment of the whole court Charles gave orders that that same afternoon the maid calling herself Joan of Arc should be brought before him. He ordered all his nobles, officers, and ministers of state to be present in the great hall of the Castle of Chinon by the third hour after noon. The hall was indeed crowded at that hour, for curiosity as well as obedience drew all men hither. When the king appeared he was in plain clothes, and he took his place amongst his nobles, desiring that one of his knights should wear the royal mantle and represent the King of France in his stead. He was obeyed, but all men wondered.

The aspect of the great hall presented a certain degree of grandeur, not perhaps to those who were accustomed to courts; but on a simple maid who had never seen anything of the great world, who had wandered in the fields and meadows, and lived in a poor cottage, taking her food out of the common bowl, living a common life, one might suppose it would create an impression of awe, almost of fear. The throne was at the farther end, upon it sat the knight whom Charles had deputed to represent him. On either side of him nobles, knights with their squires and pages, were

ranged in shining armour, arrayed in tunics and mantles of velvet and satin. Many of them had made themselves more than usually gorgeous, with the view, they had laughingly said, of striking the peasant maid with awe, for they suspected why they were thus called together. But they did not know they had to deal with one whose eyes were accustomed to such visions of perfect light and beauty that the things of earth faded into nothingness before them. So it came to pass that, when the doors were thrown open, her ears did not hear the note of laughing mockery which greeted her appearance: her soul was far away.

"That girl proposes to relieve Orleans—a task before which the greatest warriors of France have recoiled! The king must be mad to listen to her!" exclaimed more than one.

She did not hear, because her soul was intent upon another purpose. Stepping forward into the centre of the hall, she looked at the throne and at him who sat thereon. Instantly her face fell. She made no obeisance, but quietly, and with a steady glance, searched amid the ranks of those who stood on either side. Suddenly her face brightened, and she moved with quick step towards where Charles stood, half-hidden from view, and, bending her knee, she said reproachfully:

"Gentle Dauphin, why will you not believe me? I tell you that God has had pity upon your kingdom and your people; for Saint Louis and St. Charlemagne are kneeling before Him praying for you. If you will give me men I will raise the siege of Orleans, and I will take you to be consecrated at Rheims, for such is the will of God. The English shall go back to their own country, and the kingdom of France shall remain yours."

A strange scene followed these words. Everyone crowded round her—bishops, doctors, monks, and warriors. It was not in the French nature easily to believe in a miraculous mission; the witty, fun-loving character of the nation resisted conviction, and so almost a battle ensued as to who should question her. She stood there calm, with her young, serious face, her soft, brown hair cut short and tossed back from her brow.

"Joan," said a lawyer, Maître Guillaume by name, "you say that God wills to deliver the people of France from the English; if such be His will He has no need of men-at-arms."

"Ah," she said without troubling herself, "our men-at-arms must fight first, and then God will give us the victory!"

Still in a mocking tone another man asked her: "What about your Voices? In what language do they speak to you?"

"A better language than yours," she answered, for he spoke with the strong *patois* of the southern provinces.

"Do you believe in God?" the same man asked.

"Better than you do," she answered again.

Angered, he turned to the king. "It were folly to confide troops to one who can give no outward sign of her mission."

Once more Joan answered: "I have not come here to show signs. Take me to Orleans, and give me as few men as you will, and I will show you signs that will convince you that I am sent of God. I will go to Orleans!"

Here Charles interfered. Going up to her he took her by the hand, and, making way through the crowd, he led her to the embrasure of a window, signing those

present to move away and leave them alone, and then he talked with her in an undertone. What he asked of her, or what she answered him, was not heard. Suffice to say that whether he would or would not she obtained a certain influence over him, in so far that she convinced him that she was no impostor. And when he came forth leading her he ascended his throne, whilst she stood before him.

"Knights and gentlemen," he said, "I will act with no haste in this matter. I will go before my parliament at Poictiers to-morrow, and the Maid shall be brought thither, and the great doctors shall question her, and then we will see what we are to do."

Joan bent her head in acquiescence, saying in her clear voice:

"Sire, I am willing to go wherever you send me, but I am an unlettered peasant; I know no difference between letter A and letter B; but this I do know, that God has sent me to raise the siege of Orleans and to conduct the dauphin to Rheims."

At that moment the doors of the council chamber opened once more, and the Countess Yolande appeared with the Princess Margaret, who ran forward and threw her arms round Joan, exclaiming:

"Let me look at you. Will they not believe in you?"

"Not yet," said Joan with a marvellous smile; "their needs are great, but their faith is small."

"You are not sending her away?" said Margaret, looking up at Charles.

"No, ma mie!" answered Charles, smiling; "but we will do nothing rashly. She is going to Poictiers to-morrow, and then we shall decide."

"A day lost," murmured Joan, "a whole day!"

"Then come with me," said Margaret, "to my turret chamber until it is time for you to go."

The Countess Yolande was speaking to Charles; evidently he had quite got over the displeasure of the day before, and the duchess was saying:

"She would come, but she will not tell me how she saw her. Dame Morrison is afraid it may be a trick of the devil."

Charles shrugged his shoulders.

"I know, that is sufficient," he said. "The devil has had no hand in it. But I, too, have sworn secrecy." And as he spoke he looked towards the corner where Alain Chartier stood. "Poets and maidens and children," continued the king, "we men of the world must be very merciful to them." And then he made a sign which was intended to disperse his court, and the crowd trooped out, talking noisily for and against the maid, whilst she, dropping her martial bearing, became a girl again. She went to the princess's chamber and laid aside her armour; Margaret and Priscilla dressed her in a white woollen gown of their own. That livelong afternoon she worked and played with them, never leaving the queen's apartments. Everything was wonderful for her. She stood and watched the queen as she sat at her embroidery frame weaving, with many-coloured wools, figures of men and women, flowers and trees.

"It is wonderful!" she said. "To me it is a miracle. Men talk of miracles, but, you see, a miracle is what we have not learning enough to understand. I do not understand why I am sent hither, why I, a poor maid, am bidden to relieve Orleans and take my dauphin to be crowned king at Rheims; but I shall do it, and

quite simply. God knows how to bring it about; therefore I have no fear."

The girls listened to her with wonder. She was like themselves, innocent and sweet, singing to them the little peasant songs which have such a wonderful charm, and which they had never heard before. She ate and drank with them, and when the evening came they went down to Chinon together to vespers with the Countess Yolande and Queen Marie, and the whole town marvelled.

"Pray for me," she said to Margaret, "that I may know how to answer the great and the learned men I am to see to-morrow."

"I will pray for you," answered Margaret, "but I have no fear for you; God will put the words into your mouth."

And so in the porch they bade her farewell. The queen had desired that she should return with them to the castle, but she would not.

"Mère Lambert took me in when no one else would have me; I will not leave her," said Joan, laying her hands affectionately upon the shoulders of a fat, kindly-faced woman, who returned the look, saying aloud, so that all men might hear:

"I tell you she is a saint. She spends her time in prayer; all day she is in the church, and men are so blind they cannot see it. Come home with me; I have a good supper for you, my child."

"I must keep my vigil to-night, Mère Lambert," she said, "for to-morrow I go forth; therefore after sunset I eat no food."

"Then the angels will feed you," said Margaret quickly.

"You will come back to us to-morrow?" pleaded Priscilla, holding her hand.

"If God wills, I shall," answered Joan; and forthwith she left them and entered the church, and the great doors closed upon her, for, like the knights of old, she would keep her vigil alone.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SWORD OF THE FIVE CROSSES

YIELDING to the Countess Yolande's entreaties, Charles permitted her with her court lady, Madame Gaucourt, to accompany him to Poictiers.

"After all she is a maid," he said to his chamberlain, "and it is more seemly that a woman should be present with her."

When Joan heard this she was grateful, for she had a certain fear of appearing before the parliament and all the great and clever men who were called together to examine her once more. She had not foreseen this trial; her Voices had not told her that she would have to go through this ordeal. Do we ever know how one thing leads to another, how one experience entails many others? The command had been so simple: "Relieve Orleans and have the dauphin crowned!" but there lay much between the beginning and the end. Alas! if she had known the end would she have taken the first fatal step, the consummation of which was to be the martyr's crown? Now she went forth, fearful, yet rejoicing, and on the morrow, when she was to appear before the par-

liament, she had lost all fear. The queen had insisted that she should be lodged in the same house as herself, and when she saw her in the morning there was a smile on her young face as she said:

"I am quite happy, for all night long my Voices have spoken to me and have comforted me."

And in truth this interview which she had so dreaded proved a veritable triumph. Her speech, her story, carried conviction to the hearts of many, especially to the Archbishop of Ambrun. When the question of her wearing man's attire was discussed, he declared that it was not unlawful if it was pre-ordained and necessary to the end in view. As for miracles, why, beasts had been employed for that—witness Balaam's ass—why, therefore, should they not be wrought by a virgin?

"Indeed," he said, "God had more than once entrusted his secrets to virgins, and it was well known that such a one could have no connection with the devil."

And so in the end the bishops, doctors, lawyers, and ladies, having all questioned and examined her, declared that they had neither seen, known, nor discovered in her anything which was not conformable with the character of a true Christian and a good Catholic. One more trial awaited Joan: the soldiers desired to see if the maid could sit a horse and wield a lance. A charger was brought, and they mounted her, and though it caracoled, and sprang backwards and forwards, she kept a firm seat. Then they put a lance into her hand, and, though it was evident she had never handled one before, she showed that she had a vigorous grasp and a good eye; a little teaching was all she needed.

And so it was decided that Joan was what she said

she was—a miraculous maid, sent by God—and it was resolved to give entire faith to her mission and adopt her as the forlorn hope of France.

There was one present at this examination who had been brought by Father Isambert—Andrew Grahame. His strong constitution had enabled him to throw off his illness with marvellous quickness, and when Father Isambert returned to the monastery, and told what was happening, he had decided that he would go to Poictiers and judge for himself. He did not know how much Margaret and Priscilla had had to do in the matter, but he felt drawn towards this wonderful maid whom the people of Fierbois spoke of as a saint. And so he bade farewell to William Stewart, whose arm was still in a sling and would not suffer him to mount on horseback, and by easy stages he rode with the monk to Poictiers. From the first moment he saw and heard Joan he believed in her, and when she came forth triumphant, surrounded by an admiring crowd which but lately had been so antagonistic to her, he determined what he would do. He had lost his master, his dear Sir John Stewart. No one had any hold upon him; he was free, and, as must ever be the case with a true-hearted man, he had thrown himself with enthusiasm into the cause into which he had enrolled himself under his beloved lord. Now he might have detached himself from it, but he felt no desire to do so. Dunois, the brave Dunois, the very flower of chivalry, had inspired him with a deep affection. His own Princess Margaret was on the same side, therefore what could he do better than remain staunch to those who were his friends?

The sight of Joan settled the question, even if he had

hesitated before; her pure face, her modest demeanour notwithstanding her man's garb, appealed to him. Surrounded, courted, as she was at that moment, there was no appearance of pride about her; she was simple as his own sister might have been. So he followed her to the house where she lodged under the Countess Yolande's care. Already she was a person of importance, and guards had been placed at the entrance of the house to prevent stragglers from importuning her; but Andrew had many friends in the king's suite, amongst others a little page called Bertram, with whom he had often played in the tennis-courts at Chinon. When he caught sight of Andrew now he came running towards him.

"Ah, I am glad, Master Andrew!" he said, catching hold of his hand. "We heard you were killed in the Battle of the Herrings with milord Stewart and his son."

"My Lord Stewart was killed, alas!" said Andrew; "but his son and I escaped by the grace of God."

"And have you seen the Maid—the miraculous Maid—who is to relieve Orleans and drive the English out of France?"

"Yes, I have seen her," answered Andrew, "and I would see her again. Will you tell the Countess Yolande that I am here waiting her pleasure?"

"Ah, indeed I will," said the little lad, "for Mistress Priscilla was well-nigh sick unto death when she heard what had befallen you! I will go now at once. Stay where you are till I come back and fetch you."

Andrew nodded, and the page ran away.

Then, standing in that crowd, Andrew heard many things. Everyone was discussing Joan. Some, attempting to mock at her, were hustled and silenced by others.

"The archbishop spoke for her, and no one has an evil word to say of her," said one. "She lives a saintly life."

"Ah," said another, "Satan has many ways for enthralling souls! Have you never heard *Le diable se fait hermite* when it is convenient to him?" and the speaker laughed coarsely, and elbowed his way through the crowd.

A feeling of indignation invaded Andrew's heart and inclined him more than ever to serve one who could be so maligned. Two or three former acquaintances, recognizing him, came up to him and congratulated him upon his escape.

"And Lord William—for he is Lord William now,—where is he?" said one.

"He would be here with me but that his arm is still helpless," said Andrew.

"Ah, it was a terrible fight!" said the speaker; "and unless the Maid keeps her word Orleans must fall. They say the people are starving."

"I am not surprised," answered Andrew; "there was little enough when I was there, but there will be less before Dunois yields. People will be eating the rats!"

At that moment Bertram, the page, came running up.

"The Countess Yolande says I am to bring you to her," he said.

"It is well," answered Andrew, and he followed him.

They passed together, elbowing their way through a motley crowd of squires and pages, to the foot of a broad stone staircase, which they ascended till they reached a square landing with doors on either side, in front of which soldiers, with their lances in rest, stood on guard. With the easy impertinence of a page Bertram nodded to one who, recognizing him as attached to the Countess

Yolande, smiled back and allowed him to turn the handle of the great door and enter the room beyond, signing to Andrew to follow him. It was a low-pitched room, as it was the custom in those days for rooms to be. The walls were adorned with frescoes, across the ceiling were great beams, and the fireplace, upon which huge logs were burning, was of vast dimensions. But Andrew had nót come to take note of this; his eyes were immediately attracted to the group at the farther end of the room, consisting of the Dauphin (as he was still called); Charles; the Countess Yolande, with her ladies-in-waiting; and Joan the Maid.

"It was revealed to me," she was saying as Andrew entered, "that in the church of Saint Catherine at Fierbois there exists an ancient blade bearing the mark of the five crosses. I will have no other sword, for it was made known to me that this was to be my own, by which and with which I shall be victorious over our enemies; yet not I, but God!"

"If such be the case," said Charles with his easy *bonhomie*, "someone must fetch it. Who will volunteer a ride to Fierbois?"

"I will!" exclaimed Andrew, stepping forward and kneeling on the ground before the group.

"Welcome, Messire Grahame!" said the king, holding out his hand, which Andrew kissed; "we are glad to see you amongst us again. Where is your friend, Lord William?"

"He is still at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, near Fierbois, your majesty," said Andrew, rising. "His arm is still stiff, so that he cannot yet handle either sword or lance; but I have recovered from my fever, and came hither to offer my services to whomsoever would have

them, seeing I have lost my master. And now, I pray of your majesty to grant me permission to serve the holy Maid. I am ready to swear to protect her person and to do her loyal service under all circumstances."

Charles frowned.

"This is somewhat bold of you, Messire Grahame," he said, "for the life of the Maid is precious above all things else to us, and you are over-young to be responsible for her."

But Joan spoke.

"Gentle Dauphin," she said, "if the youth will go to Fierbois and bring me back my sword, then grant him his request. I shall be content with his service."

"But he is not even an esquire," said Charles moodily.

"When he comes back make him one," said Joan, "for he is of gentle birth, and his sister Priscilla is my friend. So will he serve me better because he will serve me for love, which another might not do."

"As you are so persistent," said Charles, "it shall be as you will. If he comes back from Fierbois with the sword he shall be your second squire, but it has been decided already that John Daulon, one of the bravest and most experienced of our knights, who has served me for many years, shall have the guardianship of your person. So, you understand, Messire Grahame, go and come back, and your place shall be beside the Maid, as she desires."

Andrew bowed low, and went his way.

It was a long ride from Poictiers to Fierbois, and beset with many dangers. Andrew knew this well, for he had but lately traversed it. Bandits and *écorcheurs* and loose characters swarmed on the roads, besides the rude soldiery of England and France, but he never gave

this a second thought. He started on his way with a light heart, glad to have so easily obtained his desire. As he crossed the courtyard of the king's temporary residence he saw Prince Louis slouching along, he had by no means a gainly gait. He cast an evil look towards Andrew, for of all the people he hated, he hated him more than any other; his mean nature resented his nobleness. Andrew had more than once caught him cheating in their common sports, and had he not been a king's son he would have chastised him, so there had arisen an unspoken feud between the two. At this present moment he came over to Andrew smiling, his thin lips tightly closed, and with an unfathomable look of cunning in his eye. Andrew had not noticed him in the royal group, but he had been there and had heard all that passed.

"So you are going on a wild-goose chase?" he said, coming close up to him. "If you get killed on the road another will take up your task. Do you believe in it?"

"What do you mean, Prince? Believe in what?" asked Andrew sharply.

"In the sword with the five crosses which the Maid covets."

"Assuredly I believe in it," answered Andrew. "Fare you well, Prince, and a better mind to you!" and so saying he strode away.

At the prince's elbow there was one of those strange creatures which occupied such a prominent part in the history of the Middle Ages; they were called fools, and they wore the cap and bells and the particoloured sleeves, and were perhaps more feared by the courtiers than if they had been wise men. Their foolishness was so subtle! This Charlot was Prince Louis's companion

by night and by day; they were devoted to each other, but there were those who would go out of their way rather than come across this said fool. He stood now by the prince, mumbling, and Louis, turning sharply, queried:

"Wilt thou take the ride too?"

The dwarf—for he was a dwarf—took to jabbering like a monkey.

"To what end, to what end?" he repeated.

"The end thou lovest best of all things," answered Louis. "Find me a man to ride after that man and I will give thee what thou shalt not be able to lift with thy two hands."

"Stones," said the fool, "for there is no gold in France."

"That is all thou knowest," said Louis. "Hast thou forgotten Jacques Cœur? He came to Poictiers yesterday, and has offered to equip the Maid and finance the king—or the dauphin, as it pleasures her still to call my father."

"Why do you want me to go to Fierbois?" mumbled the fool.

"I said, find someone to go and I will reward thee out of Jacques Cœur's pocket."

"And I should have to share the reward with the man who does the work," retorted Charlot. "That does not suit me." And he put his arms behind him and strutted beside Louis.

"Then go thyself, and bring me back that sword, if there be such a one; in any case Andrew Grahame must not have it."

Charlot twisted his face into all manner of shapes, flinging his legs to the right and to the left.

"Why do you hate Andrew?" he asked.

"I hate the whole lot of them," said Louis, "from the princess who is to be my wife downwards! If this sword is to be found he shall not have it, nor Joan either if I can help it."

The dwarf stood still in front of Louis so that he prevented him from advancing.

"What will you give me?" he said.

"What I have told thee—a bag of gold. And I will double it if thou slayest him."

The fool pirouetted on his heels, and, facing round again, said sharply:

"By what do you swear?"

"A prince's word," answered Louis.

The fool snapped his fingers.

"That won't do!" and he laughed loudly.

Even Louis's pale face flushed at the insult. He struck out, but the dwarf leapt backwards and whined:

"By the bones of St. Louis, good Prince. You will not break an oath taken on them; it would bring a curse upon you!"

"Is a prince's word not as good as a saint's bones? Yet I favour the saints," said Louis.

"No, I am only a fool;" and, twisting himself round, he shouted: "There's my man."

A soldier was crossing the courtyard; he ran after him and caught him by the leg.

"Come hither, good Philip," he whispered in his ear, "the prince has dirty work on hand and will pay well, only we must nail him to the bargain."

"What is it?" asked the soldier.

"That is my concern, come along!" and the dwarf grabbed at his nether garment and pulled him towards

the prince. "My man!" he said. "We will do your business, Prince, if you will swear to give us two bags of gold when we give you what you ask for. And you will swear it on the bones of Saint Louis, and on this;" and he pointed to the sword which was hanging by the prince's side, the hilt of which was a cross.

"Curse you!" said the prince; but nevertheless he drew his sword, raised it to his lips, and kissed it, saying sulkily:

"I swear by this holy sign and by the bones of Saint Louis. Now get ye gone;" and he gave Charlot a kick which would have upset him if his new friend had not caught him and set him on his legs again.

The dwarf cast an evil glance at Louis, and, muttering to himself:

"Gold! for love of gold I'll do it, and then—! come, friend Philip."

The big and the little man strode away, leaving Louis alone, his whole soul steeped in hatred.

CHAPTER IX

THE DWARF

A RIDER threw himself off his horse at the gate of the Monastery of the Holy Spirit. It was a dark night and the rain was pouring heavily, and had been doing so persistently for many hours, so that he was soaked to the skin and shivered as he stood waiting for the gates to be opened. When the porter appeared at the "Judas" he said:

"Let me in, good Father Guillaume, it is not a night to keep a dog outside."

A few seconds and the gates rolled back, and Andrew, leading his horse, entered the courtyard of the monastery.

"You say rightly, sir, one would not turn a dog from the door. Is Father Isambert not with you?"

"No, I came away without his knowing," answered Andrew.

He stalled his horse, like the good master that he was, wiping it down and giving it a feed before he thought of himself; then he went into the kitchen of the monastery and stood before the fire. The monks laughed, for the steam rose up around him, until one said:

"You would do best to change your clothes, though we have none other to give you."

"Is my friend gone?" asked Andrew.

"No, but he is leaving to-morrow," answered one of the brothers; "he has fretted and fumed ever since you took your departure, and though his shoulder is barely healed he will not abide any longer with us."

"Could he come hither to me?" said Andrew; "I think it would scarcely be safe for me to go to him in this condition."

"We will tell him."

At that moment the chapel bell rang for some service.

"You can converse alone together," continued the monk, "whilst we are in chapel."

Even as he spoke the brother filled a bowl with wine which had been heated and spiced.

"Drink that, it will drive the cold out of you," he said.

"Thanks!" answered Andrew. He took it and, still

standing before the fire, sipped it. The monks retired to their devotions, and in a few minutes the door was thrown open and William Stewart came forward. Holding out his hands he said:

"Ah, Andrew, it is good of you to come for me!"

"I have not come for you," answered Andrew, "I have a mission."

"A mission! What is it?" asked William, but as he approached his friend he drew back.

"You have no business to stand in those clothes," he said; "you are just steaming."

"I have none other," said Andrew; "they must dry on me."

"And I have only what I stand up in," answered William. "I have it! One of the brothers is lying sick in the cell next to mine; you had better get into his for the nonce. Come along."

But Andrew was loth to leave the fire.

"Fetch them here," he said, "there's a good fellow."

Without hesitating William departed and returned in a few minutes with a monk's habit into which Andrew slipped, thankful to let his own garments fall to the ground, a wet heap. They both laughed.

"You would make a sorry monk," said William. "Pull the cowl over your face and let me look at you."

Andrew obeyed, saying:

"I am thinking the disguise may serve me. I should have been here yesterday but for the mischance of my horse casting a shoe, which delayed me several hours at the village of Patay."

Then he told William Stewart what his mission was.

"To-morrow at dawn I must get into the church. It seems that in some part of it, probably in the vaults, this sword is hidden, and the Maid will have none other."

"And if you should not find it?" said William.

"I shall find it," answered Andrew, "if I stay there night and day. Whilst I was delayed at Patay," he continued, "I was accosted by a soldier who tried to find out from me where I was going. I evaded his questions, but I am minded that someone else is on the scent, whether friend or foe I cannot say."

"If that be your idea," said William Stewart, "I should not wait till morning; I would get into the church this night and lie there."

"How can I get in now, and in such weather? I know not even where the sacristan lodges at Fierbois, and it is a ride from here to Saint Catherine's."

William Stewart shrugged his shoulders.

"It were safer."

"Ah, well, if you think so, I am not one to hold back, as you know!" said Andrew. "As soon as my clothes are dry I will start."

"Don't wait for them to dry; go as you are," said William Stewart, "and I will go with you. I have been longing for an adventure; this is a godsend. I would that Father Isambert had been here, it would have made the matter easier for getting out and getting in again; but I will go and see what Father Clement will say. Come with me; you shall tell him your story;" and the two went off together.

The sacristan of the church of Saint Catherine was roused by a loud knocking at his door. He looked out from his top window.

"Is this a time of night, and is this weather, for Christian men to be abroad?" he called out; but as he spoke he recognized the monk's habit, and softened his tone, saying: "Pardon, holy Fathers, I thought it was some vagrant, or some stray man-at-arms; such a one as came only a few hours ago and would have me let him into the church. I sent him on his way."

"Well, come down now and open to us, we are monks from the Monastery of the Holy Spirit."

The sacristan tumbled into some clothes and did as he was bid. The two monks kept their cowls well over their faces, and one of them said:

"Give us the key of the church, we have business there."

The man looked doubtingly at them: "So that other man said!"

Andrew thrust a paper into his hand, which he read by the light of the lamp; it was from Father Clement bidding him give the two brothers admittance into the church.

"That settles it," said the sacristan at once, "but I misliked the looks of the other two—one was a dwarf and the other was a giant."

"A dwarf and a giant!" said Andrew, and it flashed across his mind that he had seen two such in the court-yard at Poictiers; "surely you have not let them in?" he added sharply.

"No, and I will not until I can keep them out no longer, when the church is open to-morrow to all-comers for mass."

"You were right, William, we have done well to take time by the forelock," said Andrew in a low voice. "Come along, Sir Sacristan."

The man wrapped his great cloak round him, put a cap over his head, and the three went forth together.

The distance was not far.

"We will get in by the side door," said the sacristan, and, going down some steps, they reached a small oak-clamped door. He brought forth his bundle of keys, and Andrew held his lamp to the lock whilst he fitted one. The door opened noiselessly, and, entering, they found themselves in an underground chapel, now disused, but which had formerly belonged to the convent at Fierbois and had served the nuns as a private chapel.

"Can I be of any use to you?" asked the sacristan.

For a moment Andrew hesitated. Should he consult this man, who virtually lived in the church? He would surely know if there were any old armour to be found within its precincts? But on second thoughts he decided not to do so.

"Thank you! if you will lend us your lantern that will suffice," he said.

But the man still hesitated.

"Has Father Isambert come back?" he asked. "He went away with the Maid, and with a youth who was wounded at the Battle of the Herrings."

"He has not come back," answered Andrew, "but he will doubtless do so before long.

"And what about the Maid?" asked the man.

"She has been judged to be what she says she is—sent of God! No evil has been found in her."

"It could not very well be otherwise," said the sacristan; "the devil cannot bear the sight of the cross, and she for ever carried one with her. Nay, she is verily a holy maid."

"You say truly," answered Andrew; "now be gone."

"I'll just leave this door ajar," said the sacristan; "you may choose to depart before daylight."

"We may," answered William Stewart; "who can tell? There is no danger of anyone discovering it and invading our solitude, I presume?"

"No one knows of this entrance save myself and the clergy," answered the sacristan; "you are safe." He turned to go, reluctantly, for his own curiosity was excited.

"I misdoubt me of that man," said Andrew; "I think I'd sooner shut the door behind him."

"Nonsense!" said William, "we shall not be long here; what we have come to find must be found before daylight. Let us begin our search."

They went from chapel to chapel, hunting behind the altars, in every conceivable nook and cranny, but in vain. At first they made no account of not finding the sword, but at last they both began to grow impatient and weary, for we must remember that Andrew had had a long journey and many sleepless nights, besides having but lately recovered from sickness. Still, he had sworn that he would find the sword with the five crosses. Suddenly they heard a clatter of feet running, and then a sound as of something falling. For a moment they could not make out from whence it came, but William Stewart whispered:

"It is from the sacristy!"

They hurried in that direction. By the light of the lantern they saw a creature like a monkey holding on to a high chest, trying to hide behind the frontal.

"It's a monkey," said William Stewart.

Instantly the truth flashed through Andrew's mind.

He had seen the fool at Poictiers talking to Louis. He put two and two together; it was pure instinct which thrust the thought into his mind.

"Come down from there or I'll make you," he called out.

A snarl, like that of a wild beast, answered him. Without hesitating Andrew put his foot on a window ledge and drew himself up until he stood poised on a level with the creature, who thrust at him with something which he held in his hand. Like a flash of lightning Andrew stretched out his hand and twisted the thing, whatever it was, out of his clutch. The dwarf, for it was Charlot, flew at his face, screaming, and would have scratched at him, but Andrew caught hold of him by the nape of the neck.

"Silence, or I'll throttle you!" he said, and, suiting the action to the word he pressed his fingers on his throat; a gurgling, choking sound was the result, the dwarf relaxed his hold and fell back unconscious. Quick as lightning Andrew unloosened the knotted rope round his own waist and bound him hand and foot; he also stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth, then he left him where he had found him. Hastily flinging himself to the ground he whispered to William:

"Come away quickly; I have it!" and he held up to view an old sword, worn and rusty, upon the hilt of which were five crosses. Silently they strode through the church down to the vault below. Instead of being ajar, the door was wide open!

"Ah!" ejaculated Andrew; "he must have been spying upon us;" and signing to William Stewart to go out first, he carefully shut the door behind them. They did not return to the sacristan's, but betook them-

selves to an obscure inn at the entrance of the town. Two horses were quickly saddled, and, mounting, they rode away.

"It has been touch and go," said Andrew; "though I wonder where the imp found it, when we failed to do so, and why he came hither?"

Suddenly he remembered passing Louis in the courtyard, and he came to his own conclusions. How it all came to pass was only revealed to him long afterwards, but the greatest evil which can befall man or woman had settled into his young life—he had made for himself an enemy, one who would fasten himself upon him and track him wherever he went. Even now, with a sort of shudder, the evil face of the dwarf, bound and gagged, kept starting up before him. Happily the impression did not last very long, for he was full of joy at having obtained possession of the sword. It was still early morning when they reached the monastery; strong youth though he was, Andrew was very tired.

"I will take a couple of hours' rest," he said to William Stewart, "and then we must start afresh, and reach Poictiers with as little delay as possible."

"If the Maid is to save Orleans, the sooner the better," answered William, "for I heard the monks say the people are well-nigh starved to death, that they cannot hold out much longer. Indeed they would have yielded long ago except for Dunois; but he has the courage of ten men and will not hear of surrender."

Without any more ado Andrew went into the cell which William had occupied, laid himself down, and was instantly asleep. Regretfully, at the expiration of two hours, William Stewart felt himself obliged to wake him, for he knew only too well the importance

of their journey. As good a meal as the monastery could produce was ready for them, and after having partaken of it they bade farewell to the kindly monks who had guarded them, and went forth to do battle in the world.

When the parish priest of St. Catherine's entered the sacristy for early mass he noticed on the ground marks of muddy feet and certain signs of disorder. He noticed also that the sacristan, who was in attendance upon him, had a scared, troubled look on his face.

"Has anything happened?" he asked kindly, for he was a gentle man, greatly beloved by his flock.

"Anything happened!" repeated the sacristan; "I don't know, but I think the devil and his imps have been playing their tricks on me. Last night I was woke up twice by people wanting to get into the church. The first lot I refused, a big soldier and a dwarf, but the second time two monks came to me, saying they were from the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, and showing me a letter from Father Clement. I could not refuse them, so I brought them round and let them in by the low chapel. When I came this morning the door was shut, and there was no sign of them except the marks of their feet, as your Reverence can see."

"And things have been touched," said the priest; "look here!" and he pointed to a shelf upon which were certain antiquities, such as an ancient chalice and ciborium, adding: "The sword, the wonderful old sword is gone!"

Before the sacristan could answer him he uttered an exclamation:

"There is someone here, sir. Hark!"

They distinctly heard a sort of grunt. They looked

round and about, but the chest upon which the dwarf had climbed was high, and had, as we said, a frontal of carved oak with high emblematical designs. The hour for mass struck.

"I cannot wait now," said the priest, hurriedly finishing to robe himself, and, taking up the sacred elements, he went forth, followed by his servitor, the sacristan.

In half an hour the service was over; they returned, and were greeted by a far louder noise than before.

The priest was a tall, stout man, and, going to the other end of the sacristy, he raised himself on tiptoe and strove to see to the top of the chest. Finding this was impossible, and another groan greeting his ears, he said shortly:

"Fetch me a ladder."

The sacristan obeyed, and the priest, placing it against the cupboard, mounted. The sight he saw was piteous: a creature scarcely human, his face distorted and bloated, his eyes half-starting from his head with agony, utterly powerless, tied hand and foot with a monk's girdle. To take the gag out of his mouth, to call to the sacristan to bring a knife and cut the rope, was the work of a few minutes; but even then the dwarf could not move; his arm hung helpless by his side, and his whole body was stiffened. Fortunately the priest was a strong man; but nevertheless he had some difficulty in lifting the creature up and dropping him into the sacristan's arms.

"Ouff! What have we here?" said that person. He surmised instantly that it was the dwarf to whom he had refused entrance into the church the previous evening. "What will you do with him, sir? You cannot cast him out, and he has committed sacrilege. Will you have him thrown into prison?"

"No," said the priest; "we will make as little scandal as possible. Pick him up and take him to the presbytery. When he has properly recovered himself we will question him."

The dwarf was unable to speak; his tongue was parched and his throat sore; he rolled his eyes with something in them of the pathos of an animal. The sacristan did as he was bidden, and the priest followed him, but when they reached the street they found themselves in the midst of an uproar. Just opposite the church there was a tavern known by the name of La Belle Eloise; it was not a very reputable place, and the priest had had, on more than one occasion, to rebuke the host for the late hours he kept and the company he entertained. Now there were several groups of men and women in front of it.

"Go your way," said the priest; "I'll see what mischief is going on here;" and he crossed the road and went into their midst.

A big soldier, who was still not wholly recovered from what was evidently a severe drinking-bout, was standing leaning against the post of the door, weeping in the senile fashion so common to drunkards.

"Who has stolen my beautiful one, my jewel?" he was exclaiming, gesticulating with his hands.

The words were greeted by the crowd with shouts of laughter.

"Have you seen him? Do you know whom he means?" the people said one to another.

"Ah, I saw him!" answered one, "as ugly a dwarf as one could look upon—he was scarcely human,—but he was gorgeously attired, and he boasted last night that he was Prince Louis's fool and that he had a mighty

mission on hand. It seems that while the big fellow was in his cups the little one escaped and can't be found, and so now the other is bemoaning him."

"Ah, your Reverence!" said a man who was standing beside the priest, "it would be well for you to look into this affair; the whole country is overrun with thieves and robbers, and I misdoubt me that this fellow is of this sort. He was wandering about the town last night with an ugly dwarf, until he settled down to drink, and his companion forsook him."

Even while he was listening to the pros and cons of the crowd the priest had made his way up to the soldier and asked: "Where do you come from?"

"What business is that of yours, Sir Priest?" said the soldier.

"None at all, if you demeaned yourself with decency, but when you come into a quiet town and make disturbances, it is different. If you will not tell me your business, then I shall give orders for you to be arrested as accomplice in a sacrilegious robbery committed in the holy church of Saint Catherine."

The soldier started. "He's done it, then?" he exclaimed. He threw his head back with a laugh, and added: "I tell you he is the cleverest dwarf in Christendom!"

The priest was puzzled; how was he to act?

"Follow me," he said, and, taking the man by the arm, he led him through the crowd to a small house at the back of the church known as the presbytery.

CHAPTER X

ON THE RAMPARTS

ON bended knee, holding in his two hands the sword which he had had so much difficulty in procuring, Andrew Grahame presented it to the Maid. The king and the courtiers standing round bent forward to examine it. It was an ancient blade, but of what age or what country none could tell; from time immemorial it had lain in the sacristy of St. Catherine's church, no one heeding it. Joan had never seen it, only she said:

"My Voices told me that with that blade I should conquer. I thank you, Andrew Grahame!"

Messengers were daily coming from Orleans entreating for help, and during the past weeks Joan had not been idle. Her reputation had spread; no one doubted her mission now, and with the help of Jacques Cœur, the great Greek merchant, a new suit of fine steel armour had been made to fit her person. The ladies of the court, but more especially the Countess Yolande, Margaret, and Priscilla, had embroidered her standard. It was of white silk, dotted with fleur-de-lys; on one side was the Almighty, and on the other were inscribed the words, "Jesu Maria". She had gathered round her a body of priests, at the head of whom she placed her chaplain, who also carried a standard, and it was her will that these men should follow her wherever she went. Her charger was a snow-white steed. A religious halo environed her; she came and went throughout the town amidst the soldiers, she would not suffer profane lan-

guage in her presence. Before all things she insisted on a high standard of moral conduct.

The dissoluteness of manners which prevailed in the army caused her much sorrow, and she sought to amend them. She drove away all the camp-followers; she insisted that mass should be said daily.

"She would have Christian soldiers," she said, "to fight for so holy a cause, so Christ would give them victory."

The influence she won was immense. She made the men-at-arms confess their sins and take the sacrament, she would not allow a soldier to follow her who had not performed these religious duties, and, strange to tell, they obeyed her. She had waited at Poictiers until the sword she had demanded was delivered to her, and the next day for the first time she showed herself to the people in her new attire, at the head of a chosen squadron of horse, which had been placed under her immediate orders. John Daulon, her esquire, rode on one side of her, and on the other was Andrew Grahame, bearing her standard, for he had asked to have that honour, it being more agreeable to him to have a fixed duty. Two pages and a herald went before her, and so she rode out of Poictiers, a glistening, shimmering sight, with her lance in rest, and the people knelt as she passed on her way.

"It is no maid," said many, "but the image of Saint George when he slew the dragon!"

And verily she was slaying the dragon of vice, and ribaldry, and wrong living. In God's name she went forth to fight the visible foe and the invisible.

The queen and the court returned to Chinon, but the land was in such a dire state of disorder that it was

a question whether it would be possible for the ladies to remain there. This came to Joan's hearing, and she bade Andrew Grahame tell the queen that she had nothing to fear, that before long she would be able to enter her city of Orleans, and in the meantime, if she liked it best, she could go to Tours, that city of flowers, and there await the summons to attend the king's crowning at Rheims. She spoke with authority and no one doubted her.

From a mere handful of men, disorderly, without discipline, for the most part unarmed, there had gathered round Joan, from far and wide, warriors who knew what fighting meant. They had come to see, and, seeing, they had believed. The imaginations of all men were on fire; the word most familiar on every lip was "The Maid!" "The Maid!" Charles's army had thus grown; it was no longer a handful of dispirited, idle soldiers; a new enthusiasm, half-patriotic, half-religious, was awakened by the very sight of Joan. She was met at Blois by all the renowned men of war which France boasted, La Hire, Saintrailles, and many others. They were not so easy to deal with as the common soldiers; they conceived that it was her presence and her renown which might win some casual victories, but they had no idea of being ruled by her, and she, standing in their midst, told them they must obey, not her but her Voices. It was not Joan the Maid who spoke to them, she said humbly, she was but an interpreter chosen by God to give utterance to His will, even like Moses of old; and like the great captain of Israel she had to deal with rebellious children. They consulted together, and whilst they pretended to obey her they had recourse to their own plans and science. No marvel if she fretted, but she

bore herself bravely, and day by day the number of her followers increased so greatly that the captains began to think that they could do without the Maid. She had fulfilled her task, she had inspired the people, that was sufficient; they could do the rest. Was a woman to lead them? The spring had come, and a bitter cry from the people of Orleans rang through the land; they were starving, men, women, and children. Unless they were relieved at once they must yield.

"The Maid!" they cried. "Send us the Maid!"

And the Maid knelt daily in the Cathedral of Saint Nicholas, praying, and leading a simple life in the house of a worthy citizen. She might have dwelt in the old château where kings and queens before and after her held high state, but she would not.

"I am only a simple maid," she said, "and when the task which God has given me is done I shall go back to my father's house and keep his sheep."

In the meantime, in her shining armour, with her standard-bearer beside her and her faithful knight to guard her person, she attended councils; she argued, she who had never seen a battle, with warriors who had been in scores of fights; she went from place to place gathering provisions for the afflicted town which called for her.

"My Voices tell me that we are to go to Orleans," she said one day, standing before the king. "I am to march straight on from Blois by the right bank of the Loire."

"Then we will go," said Charles, and, satisfied, she departed, for she never lingered for idle gossip or vain discussion. There was no need for discussion with her; her Voices spoke and she obeyed, never doubting that

others would do likewise. But when she left the hall the captains looked one at another and laughed.

"We will take her at her word; she shall go to Orleans, but in our fashion, not after hers. She will never find it out. It is impossible to go by the right bank of the Loire, as she desires, because the English troops are far more numerous and better posted there than on the left side;" and this statement was accepted as conclusive by the captains.

It so happened that the little page Bertram, Andrew's especial friend, through whom he had reached Joan on the first occasion, was in the hall keeping the door when this discussion took place.

No one heeded him; he was only a page. But, strange to say, the boy, who was twelve years old and wise for his age, had become inspired with a passionate love and admiration for the wonderful Maid; he would follow Andrew about everywhere if only he might gaze upon her. Never had the churches in Blois been so full as they were now; pages and knights and men-at-arms were diligent in their attendance at the sacred offices of the church, and Bertram never missed being present at early mass and vespers.

The day following the council he was standing in the porch when Joan with Andrew Grahame and John Daulon came forth. He stepped quickly forward and knelt before her.

"Holy Maid," he said, "I would have speech with you."

Joan had seen the child often, his face was familiar to her, and she said gently:

"That is not difficult, any man may have speech with me. Bring him to the house, Andrew; and re-

member always, child, I will suffer no one to kneel to me."

As if he had been rebuked Bertram rose and took refuge beside Andrew, who chid him gently.

"You should have told me what you wanted."

"I want nothing," answered the boy, "except—"

"Except what?" said Andrew with a smile.

"To warn the Maid and to go with you—wherever that may be."

He had not time to say more, for they had reached the house where Joan lodged and she, looking over her shoulder, signed to him to follow her. The room they entered was of the plainest—wooden settles, a rough hewn table in the middle, that was all.

"Now, my lad, what is it?" she asked.

And then Bertram, without fear, told her all he had heard; how that the captains meant to deceive her and go by the left bank to Orleans. Her brow clouded and she heaved a deep sigh.

"I would it were all over, and that I were back under my father's roof again. The burden is well-nigh greater than I can bear, and yet it is but the beginning. I thank thee for the warning, child," she said. "Is there aught that I can do for thee?"

The boy flushed up.

"If you would but take me into your service as your page," he said.

"But you are in the king's service," said Joan.

"But he would yield me to you if you asked him," said Bertram; "there is naught he would not do at your request."

"Well, we will see," she said; "now begone!"

The lad obeyed, and Joan sat down upon one of the

stools and laid her head upon her hand in thought. Andrew and John Daulon stood watching her. Suddenly she looked up at them, her eyes were full of tears.

"I know what I have to do," she said; "my Voices tell me. Why should men make the accomplishment of God's will so hard?"

"To show you how you will overcome them by the will of God!" answered Andrew.

"Right!" she said, and instantly her face brightened. "We will start this very night with our own contingent, the escort which is mine, over which I have sole command. Go, my good friends, and tell my captains and men-at-arms that such is the will of God, but that they are to keep silence lest the captains should hinder us. Bid them come to me and we will consult together."

They came, and after a long consultation it was settled they should go down the river from Blois to Orleans, starting that very night, not heeding those who had rebelled against her will. They took a fair amount of provisions with them, leaving those who followed to bring the full convoy.

"If we can get into Orleans," she said, "we can easily come forth again and help those who come after."

And so it came to pass that on the 29th of April Joan sighted Orleans; and from the ramparts and the high towers the garrison saw that help was at hand, and, taking courage, they opened their gates, poured forth, and attacked the besiegers with unusual vigour, shouting:

"The Maid! The Maid has come!"

Already the English soldiers had grown to have an uneasy feeling concerning the miraculous Maid; her very name struck terror and dismay amongst them. They fought with a sense of fear, half-heartedly; and as the

day advanced, Joan, protected by a body of horse which had kept close to the river bank, was within a stone's-throw of the city of her desires. The English held their own; but as night fell they grew more fearful, and when, in the dim light of evening, the garrison once more sallied forth to the same cry, they fell back from the principal gates. Quick to see her opportunity, Joan gathered her troops together and made a rush into the town. She entered, and the gates were closed behind her; Orleans was relieved, for she had brought with her provisions enough to satisfy the starving population. It was as if an angel had come to their rescue. Dunois, who had been inclined to scoff at her, was obliged to yield to the general enthusiasm, and went forth to meet her. The crowd that pressed around her was so great that she had to mount her horse, and, escorted by the chevalier, she made her way slowly through the midst of the people who knelt in the streets she passed through. Before her rode Andrew with her famous banner; Bertram walked beside him carrying her helmet, for she loved it not, and, except in battle, would not wear it, but rode bareheaded. It was night now, and torches were lit in such number that, as they flared around her, Andrew had much ado to keep his banner from being scorched. So they conducted her to the principal church in the town, where she insisted on going, to return thanks to God, causing to be sung a great *Te Deum*; after which the people were fed, and Joan was lodged in the house of the most virtuous matron in the place. A splendid banquet was prepared for her, but she declined to accept it, and supped humbly on some slices of bread dipped in wine. When the town was quiet, and the revellers had retired to their quarters, for all knew

that the maid would suffer no disorder in the city in which she dwelt, then Andrew Grahame and his friend Dunois found themselves alone together.

"I am going to make a round of the ramparts," he said; "will you come with me?"

"Gladly," answered Andrew; and the two went forth together on that lovely April night, when the air was balmy, and the moon shone with a clear, refulgent light. They were silent, for the scene was a grand one—the murmur of the city which lay below them, with its gabled houses, its many-pointed towers and church spires, the dormer-windows in the roofs of the poor quarters, and here and there a lamp swinging across the narrow streets. Beyond the city walls the English camp belted them in, and to think that through it the Maid had passed, it was wonderful! The first to speak was Dunois.

"You have attached yourself to the Maid?" he said.

"Yes," said Andrew boldly, "and I will serve her unto death; and so will you when you know her."

"I will serve neither man nor woman," answered Dunois. "I have one mistress, and her name is France, La Belle France! beset now by these foreigners. I have sworn to rid her soil even of the impress of their feet."

"In that you are one with the Maid," anwered Andrew.

Dunois turned sharply upon him.

"I do not understand it," he said. "I do not like it. I know not whether it comes from God or from the devil. I can face an enemy on the battle-field; I can face him in fair duel, man to man; but when a woman comes between us, I am no longer master of the situation. The people have gone mad about her; did you see how they knelt, and prayed, and worshipped her?"

"It is not she who would have it so," said Andrew; "she will allow no man to kneel to her. Only a day or two ago she rebuked John Bertram, her page. "Kneel to God and His saints," she said; "I am only a poor maid."

"I do not understand it," said Dunois, "and I do not like it."

"And yet you must submit to it," answered Andrew. "If you speak to her she will tell you her mission is to relieve Orleans and to have the king crowned at Rheims. After that she will go back to her father's house. She has no ambition, she has no desire to shine before the world."

"It seems incredible," said Dunois, shrugging his great shoulders. "What do you think of it, Andrew, with your cold, northern mind?"

"Think?" answered Andrew; "from the first hour I set eyes upon her I have never thought at all. I just follow her and do as she bids me. I and John Daulon have enough to do to watch over and protect her. One of us is on guard by night and one by day, so that no whisper of slander should waylay her. She is as pure as the youngest child, and yet there are evil men and women abroad who would trouble her if they could. But her thoughts are always far away; she scarcely seems to belong to this earth except when she is accomplishing what she says her Voices have told her to do."

"Have you heard them?" asked Dunois, almost with a sneer.

Andrew started. "Be not profane," he said; "it will bring you ill-luck. As I told you, I never think now, I only obey, and where I do not understand I say simply, as she does: 'It is the will of God'."

"Well," said Dunois, "I suppose I must do likewise; but I greatly fear the end will be worse than the beginning. Is it likely that we knights, who have been beaten again and again in battle with the English, should be outdone by a common peasant girl?"

"Why not," repeated Andrew, "if it be the will of God?"

The moon shone out brilliantly at that moment, and Dunois pointed to the English tents which lay around, occupying many miles in circumference.

"Is it possible," he said, "that she should disperse our enemies and set us free?"

"I firmly believe she both can and will," answered Andrew, "and that before many days are over."

"You are mad!" said Dunois, almost angrily.

"At least you will not oppose her?" Andrew exclaimed eagerly.

"Why should I?" answered Dunois. "If she acts wisely, as she has done by entering Orleans on the right bank of the river, I will help her in all things; is she not fighting for France?"

"Therefore it is that she will do this thing," said Andrew; "you and others like you will help her."

Suddenly from behind a voice said:

"You are right, Andrew Grahame, I thank you."

They started and turned round; the Maid was before them.

"Sieur Dunois," she said, "you do not love me, but you will help, not me, but your mistress, France. So I thank you. I would not have any man do battle for me, but for our country." Then, as if the matter were settled, and before Dunois could answer her, she continued: "I could not rest, and so I came to look at these English, and to see how far their tents stretch.

They are very powerful!" she said; and as she spoke a sense of fear crept over her. She had cast aside her armour and was wrapped in a long military cloak, with a pointed hood drawn over her head. She threw it back as if it impeded her breathing, and Dunois saw by the moonlight a face so young, so girlish, with large, wide-open eyes and trembling lips. It was not the heroine or the warrior who stood before him, but a weak girl. A sense of shame and impatience came over him, and he spoke roughly to her.

"Yes, those are the English tents, and you must disperse them before you can raise the siege of Orleans."

The contemptuous tone stung her, and she answered:

"Not I, but God."

"Then I hope it will be soon," said Dunois, "for the city is large and it is crowded. The food you have brought in will last a day or two, and then the famine will begin again."

"Ah!" said Joan in her natural voice, "you do not know, Monsieur Dunois, that but for a little page we should not have been here to-night. The convoy of provisions is coming on leisurely from Blois. We must go forth to meet it, and so revictual the town."

"You mean to say that the army is behind you?"

"Yes," answered Joan, "the great captains, La Hire, Saintrailles, and others. They are coming up by the left bank. They would have kept us with them, but my Voices told me I must take the river on the right. They cannot hear my Voices; therefore they did not believe, and I came on alone with a few followers."

Dunois looked at her with surprise.

"You are bold," he said.

"Not bold, but obedient," she answered. "I have no

choice but to obey. In a few days I expect we shall see our people approach. Then we must open our gates and go forth to meet them. Will you be ready to do this?"

"I will," said Dunois.

She bowed her head. "I will go home now," she said, and, turning back the way she came, she disappeared.

"She is wonderful," said Dunois; "I do not understand her."

"Then do not try," answered Andrew. "There are mysteries which we cannot fathom, in the world and beyond it."

"True," answered the elder man. "Good-night!" and he too went his way, leaving Andrew alone.

CHAPTER XI

PRINCE LOUIS

PRINCE LOUIS had accompanied his mother to Chinon, where he fully expected Charlot would join him shortly, bringing the famous sword with him. As time went on he was somewhat puzzled at not receiving any news of him. Louis never dealt straightforwardly with anyone. He had faith in no one, which is the natural consequence of deceit, so he went about spying, putting questions, especially to the Princess Margaret and to Priscilla, for he knew very well they would be in communication with Andrew. But for some time he learnt nothing, until one day he ventured to ask his mother whether the sword Andrew had gone to find had been discovered, and she answered him:

"Surely it has. Have you not heard as much? Andrew has delivered it to the Maid, and has gone with her to Blois. It is a miracle! The king writes that it had lain for many centuries unnoticed in the church of Saint Catherine, and that when Andrew went to fetch it, being guided miraculously to the spot, he was attacked by an imp of Satan, who fought with him, but whom he succeeded in binding, and from whose hands he wrenched the sword and rode away."

"And what became of the devil?" said Louis.

"Ah, that I cannot say!" answered Queen Marie; "doubtless he disappeared as mysteriously as he appeared. Andrew did not wait to enquire after him."

Louis turned away.

"Charlot is well named a fool," he muttered to himself. "I guess Andrew did not use him over gently. Serve him right for letting himself be caught."

A few days later a man came to the castle, a soldier of fortune, and asked to see the prince. At first Louis hesitated; he was a great coward, and feared the approach of any stranger. He inherited from his father in an inordinate degree the terror of death, and at times would let no one come nigh him, certainly no stranger.

"Tell him to be gone," he said to the messenger, "unless he can give me his name and business."

"I asked him concerning both, Prince," answered the man, "but he said what he had to tell was for your ears alone."

Immediately it struck Louis that it was news of Charlot. Now he was specially desirous, as the plot had failed, that no one should suppose he had attempted to interfere with the accomplishment of Joan's desire.

"You know I will not see strangers," he said testily; "tell the man to be gone!"

The messenger turned to obey, but he found himself face to face with Philip, who roughly pushed him on one side and made his way to the prince, who, shrinking up in a corner of the room, called out:

"Begone! begone! I do not know you!"

The man quietly closed the door behind him, and advanced.

"I have come to you, Prince, from that poor devil Charlot, who is lying at the presbytery of the curé at Fierbois."

"Why did he go there?" said Louis angrily. "Do you think I will be troubled about his comings and goings? Get you gone!"

"He went by your command, on your commission."

"No, he never did, he never did!" said Louis angrily. "What have I to do with either him or you?"

The soldier, drunken lout as he often was, still had a certain sense of honour and humanity in his soul.

"He told me you sent him," he said, brushing his hand across his forehead as if puzzled.

"How can I know what he tells you?"

"But you were present in the courtyard at Poictiers!"

"I never was! I never saw you!" said Louis. "Begone!"

The soldier looked at him furiously.

"Am I to understand that you never offered Charlot a bag of gold in exchange for the sword with the five crosses?"

"No, never!" said Louis. "If you will not go I will call the archers in, and they will drive you out."

He was livid with terror.

The man looked at him as if he had been a wild beast.

"The Lord help me," he said, "if ever I serve you or your father again! I would sooner fight with the English; they at least do not lie!" and, turning on his heel without an obeisance, he left the room.

Louis stood still in the corner, biting his nails, and looking slantwise at the man as he disappeared. He waited a few seconds, then he sprang forward like a leopard ready to seize his prey, and throwing open the door, shouted:

"A traitor! a traitor! Throw him into the lowest dungeon till my father comes!"

Two guards rushed after the man and attempted to pinion him, but they found their master. He fought well. In a trice he had overthrown them, and was dashing headlong down the side of the mountain upon which the castle of Chinon stood. The cry of "Traitor! traitor!" was caught up by others, but the man ran well, reached the town, and was lost in the narrow streets and back alleys.

The Countess Yolande, hearing of the incident, asked Louis what it meant. The prince was looking a gray colour, as he ever did when his mind was particularly bent upon evil-doing.

"Who was the man," asked the countess, "who was with you and caused so much ado this morning?"

"I know him not," said Louis; "it is a shame that these *écorcheurs* should have free access to the castle. They are a bad set, and our lives are not safe."

"But he must have had something to say to you, Louis?" said the countess.

"Nothing," answered the prince, and he turned his back upon her.

When they left Poictiers the countess had remarked that Charlot was not with them, but she supposed that he had remained with the king, as was his custom, and she made no further enquiry. The king, on his side, thought he had gone with the women, and so his absence passed unnoticed. That it would be always so was improbable, but it suited Louis well at the time. His whole soul was taken up with plottings and imaginings, they were to him the very breath of life. To catch people, to torment them, to get them thrown into prison, was even now, in his youth, when he had scarcely reached man's estate, his delight. That it continued to be so is an historical fact; no king in French history has a blacker record and is more hated than Louis the Eleventh. Every evil instinct, every vile passion, throve in his perverted soul; his life was a terror to himself and others. He knew not what mercy meant, and when, in abject fear of death, he craved for mercy it was denied to him. No wonder if the tender girl who dwelt beneath the same roof with him, and was destined to be his wife, had a secret horror of him. He would fawn to her at times, but she never loved him less than when he loitered about her and sought with flattering words to win her favour. He had taken of late very much to hang about the queen and her ladies, and more than once he had said to his mother:

"When the war is over you must give me my betrothed to wife; I will not wait longer."

"She is too young," answered the queen. "We have charge of her; you must bide your time."

"I am well-nigh seventeen," he answered, "and many girls are married as young as Margaret. I will have it so!" And having little else to do—not caring to be

with the soldiers, or even with the knights and warriors who surrounded his father,—he was frequently in the women's rooms and was especially importunate in his attentions to Margaret. Priscilla he could not abide, nor Dame Morrison, and more than once he asked the countess to send them back to Scotland; but she would not.

"They are our guests," she said, "and to send them away would be to give great offence to the King and Queen of Scotland, who were both loth enough to part with their daughter at so young an age."

"Well, when we are married they shall go," said Louis angrily, "and others with them! I will not have these foreigners hanging about making mischief."

The countess, as much as she could, kept these things to herself, for she knew how little sympathy the two girls felt for her grandson, and at the present time the help they received from Scotland was of importance. She had a great liking for the two youths, Andrew Grahame and William Stewart, and she had hoped that Louis would have consorted with them; but she soon became aware that the straightforward, brave, Scotch lads could have nothing in common with one so crooked-minded and so cowardly as this future king of France. Some called him already the dauphin, but Joan and many others would not give him that title, because his father had not been crowned, and the King of Scotland had intimated to the countess that he would not suffer his daughter to wed Louis until his father was King of France, and Louis the dauphin and the acknowledged heir to the French throne. Indeed King James had written that "if these matters do not settle themselves before long we must have our daughter back.

Her mother pines for her, and the atmosphere of a court always at war without and within is not good for so young a maiden."

A few months sooner, Margaret would have been delighted at this, but now a new interest had come into her life. Except for a few personal discomforts the war had been of little importance to her and to Priscilla until the coming of the maid Joan, but now every incident was of interest to them; they were here, there, and everywhere, asking questions, desirous to know everything which transpired. They had seen the Maid, they had spoken to her, they had prayed with her, and they loved her, with that fresh enthusiastic affection which the young alone have to give. There was not a speck, not a flaw in it; their devotion was unbounded. They spoke of Joan, they dreamt of Joan, they spent their days and were ofttimes far into the night working for her. Her standards and the covers of her missals were embroidered by their little hands; her clothing was their care wherever a woman's fingers were needed. They had no other occupation, no other thought, and it occupied them completely.

"We have been great sinners," Margaret would say to Priscilla. "We have not prayed enough, and we have not fasted, therefore we have been impatient and careless of our learning and our duties. But now we will do as Joan does; we will pray and we will keep festival and fast, so shall success come to the arms of France, and we shall be ourselves the better."

And from henceforth there were no maidens so strict as these two in the observance of every duty. "They are models!" both the queen and the Countess Yolande

agreed. They ceased to laugh at Dame Morrison and were obedient to her behests, no longer playing her tricks, and hiding from her when she called them; no puritan maiden in the days to come was ever as straight-laced as Margaret of Scotland and Priscilla Grahame. They had taken a high ideal for their standard and they strove earnestly and patiently to attain to it.

When Andrew Grahame delivered the sword to Joan at Poictiers, and because of his position in her service followed her to Blois, William Stewart, still weak from his wound and not able to use his arm well, had not accompanied him, and it came to pass, to the great delight of the two girls, that he one day appeared at Chinon. They had not seen him since he was wounded in the Battle of the Herrings, and they found him greatly changed; from a lad he had become a man, with all a man's rough courtesy and sense of power. It seemed to him also that the princess and Priscilla had changed; they were no longer romping, playing girls, but thoughtful and steady, anxious to listen when he told them all that had taken place—how good Andrew had been to him, how he had saved his life after the battle! He told them also of the finding of the sword, and how Andrew had done battle for it with a creature, he knew not what it was, for he had not seen it, he had only heard it snarl, and, strange to tell, Andrew had not spoken of it since:

"It may have been the devil," he said, "for aught I know. All I can tell you is that Andrew bound him with the rope with which he was girded; but we were in such haste, and it was so dark, that I never thought of looking or questioning him concerning it. When we reached the monastery Andrew was so worn out that he slept, and the whole thing went out of my mind, in

the haste of our travelling, until now when I am telling you the story."

And thus it came to pass that with all the superstition of those days it was whispered and believed that Andrew had done battle with the Evil One, and had rescued from his clutches the miraculous sword with which Joan the Maid was to deliver France.

It is a well-known axiom that the world is governed by two powers, love and hatred; the question is, which is the more powerful? We will hope it is love, for if it were hatred, then the world would be but one great battle-field. It would be worse than with the wild animals of the forest, whose law of existence is self-defence. At Chinon it was well-nigh equally balanced; the Countess Yolande and her daughter, the Queen Marie, ruled by love, and in return they were loved, but beyond the precincts of their apartments, especially during the absence of the king—who, though he was by no means a loving husband, was easy and conciliating in character—there was continuous petty warfare. Those mixed up in it hardly realized where the feeling of continual discord came from. A tittle-tattling, quarrelsome atmosphere pervaded the whole establishment, and somehow, big and little alike shrank away from Prince Louis. His last mood was to be frightfully jealous of Lord William Stewart; he complained to his mother that he was always with the princess and Priscilla. He had met them on the terrace together—true, Dame Morrison was with them, but he did not choose it, he would not have it; his betrothed should speak with no one but himself. And so he spied upon the two girls as they went and came, making their lives miserable, and causing Margaret to shrink ever more and more away from him. The

queen and her mother grew very anxious, for if the marriage were broken off they knew that the principal lords on the Scotch side would withdraw their troops and retire from the kingdom, and that, at the present moment, would be disastrous. So they kept Priscilla and the princess with themselves as much as possible, and Lord William found himself somewhat lonely. Suddenly the news reached them: "The Maid has entered Orleans!" and without hesitation William Stewart mounted his horse and rode the same day to Tours.

"From thence I shall go on to Blois," he said to the Countess Yolande. "I have no doubt that troops will be sent from there. If the Maid has entered Orleans, it is sure others will follow in her steps. She could scarcely have taken food enough for the whole garrison, and there must be a convoy sent forward. I shall try and join it. I am fairly recovered now and tired of inaction."

"I think you do well," the countess answered. "If matters go as we desire, and the English retire from before Orleans, we shall probably betake ourselves to Tours; but that will depend entirely upon the turn the war takes. Farewell, and God be with you!"

Thus William had taken his leave; but so closely were they watched that he had no opportunity of speaking privately to either the princess or Priscilla. Louis glowered at him, and was evidently glad that he should go. And so he rode away, sad at heart he could not well tell why, but he had noticed that the Princess Margaret's face was pale, and she had lost much of the playful brightness which had distinguished her when she was a girl at home; Priscilla also looked serious

"If ever I get home I will tell King James to fetch his daughter home!" he decided in his own mind.

And so he departed, and rode on that lovely spring morning along the banks of the Loire, through that far-famed garden of France, with its vineyards, and its woods, and its rich pastures—a land to be loved, but which has nevertheless from the earliest times been again and again given over to war and rapine. After he was gone the Princess Margaret found Priscilla weeping in her room. She asked no questions; she had no need to do so. She knew that she was weeping for her friend, and she could have wept herself; but she did not, she only comforted her. Once she said gently:

"You will not leave me, Pris? Remember always I am a princess and have no friends except you, my playmate."

"I will remember it," said Priscilla, looking up at her through her tears, "and I will never leave you unless you send me away."

"That I shall never do," said Margaret, with the ghost of a smile, and, throwing their arms round each other's necks, they kissed, and so sealed their covenant.

CHAPTER XII

ORLEANS

WILLIAM STEWART was right; he arrived at Blois in time to join the rear of the army which, with the convoy of provisions, was making its way towards Orleans. The great captains were somewhat shame-

faced when they became aware how Joan had entered Orleans, and many of them began to change their mode of speaking. A murmur went round: possibly she was right, her Voices had evidently not lied to her, she was perhaps sent of God! But they set their teeth, and determined that what the Maid had done they would do also. The soldiers were in high spirits. True, the English army lay between Joan and them; but she was waiting, she would open the gates to them; they lost all doubt, all fear, and went merrily on their way. William Stewart had never seen Charles's army so well disposed and so well disciplined. The morning they left Blois they heard mass in the open air, and he was astounded at the devoutness of men who had been wont to scoff at all things appertaining to religion; to him, as to others, the change was miraculous. It was the first of May when they started; the sun was shining, the almond and peach trees were in full blossom, the land was almost bridal in its whiteness, the vineyards on the slopes of the hill-sides were just bursting into leaf, and the blue waters of the Loire, with the barges and skiffs on its bosom, flowed with a gentle murmur down to the sea. No wonder they were whole-hearted; there was no place for sadness in so beautiful a world. The land was theirs; the foreigner who would have wrenched it from them must be driven back. God himself was with France; He had sent them a deliverer; who then should be against them?

Morning after morning, Joan, as soon as she had heard mass, would walk on the ramparts with Dunois, John Daulon, and Andrew Grahame. They feared for her lest the English archers should perceive her and send a shaft at her, but *she* had no fear. She would

stand shading her eyes with her hand, looking out over the vast plain towards Blois, in expectation of the army she had left behind to follow her.

"They must be here in a day or two," she said, "and we must go forth to meet them and open a passage for them through the English army. It must be done with a rush. The English are heavy and will not be prepared; besides, they will have us in front and La Hire with his men behind. It must be so!"

And Dunois agreed that there was no other way. He would have had Joan remain in the city and himself carry the plan out, but she refused.

"I will go forth with you," she said, "or my men will lose heart, and the English, not seeing me, will gain by it;" and she was right.

What was strength to one side was weakness to the other. Throughout the Middle Ages, indeed one might well say almost into modern times, there was nothing which wielded so powerful an influence on nations and on individuals as the belief in witchcraft and sorcery. We have martyrs for religions of every class and denomination, but they are well-nigh equalled in number, possibly they may be exceeded, by those who fell a prey to this dire superstition; the rack, the pillory, fire and water, every imaginable cruelty that man, who is so cruel, could devise, was exercised against this unfortunate and, probably to a very great extent, innocent class.

Girls, women, children, young and old men, were sacrificed for witchcraft. If the stigma fell upon anyone, he or she became a pariah; their houses were pulled down over their heads, they were driven into the rivers, no city would receive them, they had no chance of justice or mercy! In all the great cities of Europe fires

were lit to consume them; "a witch" was the most opprobrious term that could be applied to anyone, and the most feared.

Joan at the present time was an angel to her own people, but to the English she was a foul sorceress, working by spell and witchcraft. The English soldiers had so far borne the brunt of that hard campaign with cheerful hearts. They had spent the winter outside Orleans in extreme discomfort; they had been in almost as starved a condition as the besieged; but with the spring the news of the miraculous Maid had reached them. She had caused a letter to be written to the Earl of Suffolk, telling him that she was commissioned by Heaven to drive him out of France. And, following upon this announcement, she had begun her work, she had entered Orleans with provisions! Surely that was a miracle? If she had come with double the number of men to fight for France it would not have availed her as much as the superstitious horror which environed her. In vain the English generals mocked at her, and spoke openly of the disgrace the dauphin incurred in allowing a low-born girl to fight for him. Their men answered that they could fight with earthly foes, but they could not fight against those possessed by the devil. Their imaginations were so excited, their fears so intense, that they began to see sights in the heavens: the moon and stars were not in their right order, there were sounds of rushing waters, the clouds seemed to carry figures of men and horses rushing through the air. The alarm spread among their allies, the Flemings, Burgundians, and Picards, who by degrees stole out of the camp and returned to their countries. This had happened in the night of the day when Joan and Dunois saw the first

convoy coming from Blois. Of course they could not tell all that was going on in the minds of their enemies —she in her innocence could not guess what they accused her of,—they only noticed that the enemies round and about them seemed to be less in number. Over the highest church steeple in Orleans Joan caused her miraculous standard to float, that her friends might know that she was ready to come to their help, and therefore fearlessly the army from Blois advanced. Causing the principal gate of the city to be opened, she passed out with Dunois and a brave troop of men to meet them. There was some skirmishing and a little bloodshed, but before nightfall the whole convoy with the provisions had entered Orleans, and the gates had closed upon them. Blois was the recruiting-ground, and from henceforth men came flocking in from there by day and by night. Armed bands ascended and descended the river, guarding the banks; indeed, it seemed as if there were no siege, for more than once Joan went forth beyond the ramparts to escort into the town troops coming from Blois or elsewhere. For her they did not come quickly enough. She was impatient, therefore Sieur Dunois, her knight John Daulon, and Andrew Grahame proposed riding to Blois and hurrying up the remains of the army. It was no longer difficult to do this; the English were so scared that they almost let the convoys pass unmolested through their ranks. It was on one of these occasions that Andrew met his friend William Stewart, and they returned to Orleans together. The English still occupied the famous bastion of La Tourneile, from which no effort had been made as yet to expel them; but before Dunois departed, the Maid of Orleans, as she was now called, mounted on the wall opposite the tower. Like a

prophetess of old she called to her enemies and bade them begone out of France, or woe and shame would befall them! An Englishman, Sir William Gladsdale, who commanded the tower, called her foul names, to which she answered that he would die there where he stood. Then she retired, and whilst Dunois was gone to gather the whole remnant of the French army together, there was a suspension of arms, and during this time Joan was no longer the warrior, but the maid: her religious duties occupied the greater part of her day; she sought by every means in her power to check the immoralities and the indecencies of the army; at given hours she would ride through the city on her white charger with her banner carried before her. The poor people crowded around her, and if they could not touch her, they were content to lay their hands upon her horse. So she lived in the odour of sanctity, and all men revered and worshipped her.

It has been told of her that when the church bells rang out she was always to be found in her room praying, for then, she said, the invisible Voices spoke to her more often than at other times, and her visions were clearer. When they departed, she would weep bitterly, a sort of fear would come over her as to what was going to happen, and when her friends asked her why she thus wept, she would answer them:

"Because the angels of paradise have forgotten to carry me away with them!"

She had a strange longing that the work she was called upon to do should be finished, and that she might be allowed to go back to her home and the simple life to which she was accustomed.

"I have," she would say, "two lives—Joan the Maid

of Orleans, sent to deliver France and crown the king at Rheims, and Joan the peasant girl, who kept her father's flocks!"

She did not know, it never entered her mind, that people should think evil of her. That the English hated her she knew, but it was a revelation to her when, seeing her friends Dunois and others returning with their convoy over the open plain, she rode forth to meet them, and heard herself accosted in vile language—shouted after: "There goes the witch!"

A momentary indignation seized her.

"Is it of me they are speaking?" she asked, turning to her squire, De Metz, who was riding behind her.

"Do not heed them," he said; "it suits them to malign you. They will not understand that God is with you and against them."

Without difficulty she brought the French army into Orleans, but Dunois informed her that Fastolf, the same man who had defeated the French before, at the battle of the Herrings, was once more approaching Orleans with provisions for the army. At times a great sadness and a great passion came over the Maid, because even her own generals would act without her command, according to their military knowledge, and she would assure them passionately that they needed no knowledge, that they had but to heed her Voices and they would be successful. She imagined that Dunois, though he spoke fair to her face, when alone with his friends laughed at her and her mission; and she had a great liking for Dunois. She thought she hated him, but in her soul she admired his bravery and his daring. Like Andrew, she was fascinated by his handsome face and his courtly ways, and it angered her beyond measure

that he should mock at her. She would have minded it less from any other than from him. Therefore, when he told her that Fastolf was approaching, she turned upon him with great passion and bade him beware lest he should deceive her.

"In God's name," she exclaimed, "let me know when he cometh, that I may deal with him!"

Dunois strove to soothe her, assuring her that she should be well warned.

"If you do not," she said, looking in his face, "and this man Fastolf pass before me without my knowing, I will cut off your head."

"You shall know in full time," answered Dunois quietly.

Indeed it was for her own sake that he frequently kept her in ignorance that a sortie was to take place; his man's nature could not take in the daring of the woman, for to him she ever remained a woman, notwithstanding her male attire, and he extended to her, whether she would or not, that protection which was her due. She felt this and resented it. Whether he believed in her or not is an unfathomed question; probably he could not have answered it himself. He knew that she was good and true, and would neither deceive herself nor others. He was himself a good Christian, as far as his lights went, and as far as it conformed to his warlike nature—a soldier of fortune, a scion of a royal race! He had much for and against him, but his name has come down to posterity as a great warrior, an inveterate hater of the English, against whom he never ceased to fight. It needed an arm and a will like his, united with the imaginings and the spiritual influence of Joan of Arc, to accomplish the task he had set himself, and he

never rested until he had succeeded, long after Joan had passed away. Whilst he remained with the Maid no harm happened to her; he extended over her the strength of his arm and his chivalrous worship. On the present occasion she was possessed by the fear that he would deceive her, and she had that feeling of intense depression and weariness which belongs essentially to those whose imaginings and whose spiritual nature are in the ascendant. So weary was she on this day that she did an unusual thing. She threw herself upon her bed and slept. How long she lay there she did not know, but suddenly she was awakened by a great and brilliant light shining around and about her. She sprang up, buckled on her armour, took her sacred banner in her hand, and went forth.

"To arms!" she cried. "To arms! My Voices have spoken; we must fight the English."

Both Andrew Grahame and William Steward ran forth at the sound of her voice, and asked her:

"Where and whom are we to fight? Is it Fastolf, or must we attack the bastilles?"

Then her voice dropped and a look of weariness came into her face.

"I know not," she said; "they did not tell me. Maybe I was in too great haste and did not listen long enough."

As she spoke she mounted her horse, which they had brought, and rode with her followers to one of the gates. There she was stopped, for they were carrying in some wounded.

"Ah," she exclaimed, "I can never see the blood of a Frenchman without my hair standing on end!"

She then learnt that a sortie had taken place and that

the French had been repulsed. At that same moment Dunois came riding up.

"Where are you going? What are you about to do?" he asked.

"To beat those who have beaten you," she answered.

"You shall have satisfaction," he replied with a smile. "Are you ready to take the lead?"

"I am—always ready!" she answered.

He had come up with a good escort, and he and she, with her faithful followers, placed themselves at the head of the troops. There was a strange excitement over the whole mass of warriors. The presence of the Maid always created enthusiasm, and with Dunois beside her she was invulnerable; so they went out by the great gates and fell upon the English and attacked the bastille of Saint Loup. For three hours the fight was desperate, no quarter was given, he that fell was slain. At the end of that time the bastille was carried, and Joan entered victorious at the head of her men. The next day was a feast day, and she did not fight, but when she walked the ramparts her ears were assailed with the foul language which the English threw at her. "Witch!" "Sorceress!" were the least infamous, and so wounded was she, so hurt in her inmost soul that they should think this evil of her, that she turned away weeping. That day she let it be known throughout Orleans that no man should follow her to battle on the morrow who had not confessed his sins, and to prove her own uprightness and freedom from sin she received the sacrament in public, surrounded by all those men who loved and revered her. William Stewart and Andrew were both there. Their indignation was great that the English should have so maltreated her, and

they at least were glad to show that they believed in her virtue and would maintain her honour. Alas, alas! the world is very wicked, and evil has ofttimes more power than good. She wept now, but later on she would weep tears of blood, even as the Christ did Who knew no sin.

Now she had work to do which filled her whole soul. Wherever she went, whatever she did, two men were never far distant—Andrew Grahame and John Daulon. They seemed to divine her moods and were ever ready to do her bidding. Other men disputed with her, checked her, but they never; their faith in her was so entire, their love for her so great. They watched at her door when she was sleeping, they would not suffer anyone to disturb her, and she realized this devotion—she never resented it as she did when Dunois resisted her will or made her do something which was not in her mind. To them she was all gentleness. She would eat the food they brought her; she would speak to them of their people, of their homes; she would even tell them of her own, of the wonderful fairy tree beneath which she had danced as a child and girl.

"And there I heard my Voices for the first time," she said. "Ah! they were sweeter then than they are now," she continued sadly, "for I heard naught else; but now human voices mingle with them and I do not understand so clearly or so well. And yet I love them; if ever they were to cease speaking to me I should die."

And the two young men would console her and tell her that would never be.

"Ah me!" she said, "I am very fearful! I heard them last night telling me to go to battle to reconquer the Tournelle; but I know that the governor is against

it, and La Hire and Saintrailles, and so I have not dared speak of it."

The three were standing together on the ramparts, and their eyes wandered towards this famous fortress, which had cost the French so much to lose, when a voice said behind her:

"What have you not dared to do, Joan?"

They all turned, and lo! it was Dunois, the great captain, who stood behind them. She started at his voice, and the colour came into her face.

"Ah, you too," she said sadly, "you too are against me!"

"No, I am not," he said, "only when you are unwise and overdaring."

"I am never unwise or overdaring," she said; "I only go where my Voices bid me go."

"And where do they bid you go now?" said Dunois.

"To Les Tournelles," she answered.

He looked at her. "It would indeed be a daring venture."

He knew it was powerfully garrisoned; he knew that the very pick of the English army held the fortress—if after all it were true, and that Joan was commissioned to take it! If she failed, they would not be worse off than they were now; and if they took it, if such a feat of arms were possible, then indeed the English of necessity would have to raise the siege of Orleans. His reason told him it was hazardous beyond measure; but his ambition, his soldier's pluck, made him long to attempt what seemed impossible.

"Have you told Gaucourt, the governor?" he asked.

"I have not dared," she answered; "and because I did not obey them my Voices are angry, and will no longer

speak to me. I have listened to men rather than to them. If they should forsake me, then indeed I am undone!" As she spoke thus sadly she buried her face in her hands and wept.

The three men, the great captain, the famed knight, and the youth who had yet to win his spurs, looked at each other. They were hurt for her sake, and would gladly have gone to the rescue had they dared.

"Weep not, Joan," said Dunois. "You can obey your Voices by speaking to the governor and telling him your will."

"True," she said, "I can so far obey, and I will do it."

With that she turned and entered the city, and as she went she spoke to the people, saying:

"Good citizens, will you help me? My Voices have told me that together, you and I, we shall take yonder fortress. They have bidden me do so, but the governor will not heed me, and yet I dare not disobey my Voices."

The townspeople shouted: "We will stand by you, holy Maid! Have no fear."

And the common soldiers, trooping out of the taverns and barracks, surrounded her, and so they made way for her until she reached the town-hall, where the governor and the chief captains were in council. Her courage and determination had grown stronger on the way; when she stood before them and explained her plan of attack she had lost all fear. From a military point of view it seemed an impossible feat, and they would not hearken to her; Dunois even, before his compeers, hesitated. All he said in her favour was:

"It seems foolhardy; but we have agreed to do what the Maid bids us. Therefore it must be one thing or

the other; we cannot be half-hearted. We go with her in all things, or we cast her off."

"That we dare not do," whispered the governor. "The people would slay us."

Joan caught the words, and said sarcastically:

"The people in their ignorance are wiser than you with your learning. You will not hear God's voice speaking to you, but they do."

By some means the crowd in the streets had become aware that Joan was being opposed, that the governor would not heed her. They raised cries and hootings, and some of them forced their way into the hall and threatened the captains, saying the Maid should have her way, and they would see to it and fight for her. And so violent were they that they threatened to put them to death on the spot if they would not do as they were bid. And so Joan carried the day, and it was agreed that her plan of battle should be adopted.

On the morrow one of the most frightful battles of those days, when battles were of frequent occurrence, took place. At the head of her men Joan fell upon the Tournelles on the land side, whilst the citizens attacked from the river by boats and by the bridge—which had been broken down, but which they had repaired with trunks of trees and planks as best they could. It was noon when the great assault took place, and the English, seeming to forget their superstitious terrors, fought with the greatest bravery, and drove their assailants back at the point of the sword. But the French renewed the attack again and again. Another assault was made, scaling-ladders were brought, but it was in vain; the French were slaughtered in the very breaches they themselves made in the walls, and many were hurled back

into the ditch or river. So fierce was the fight that the clouds of arrows shot by the English more than once cleared both the bank and the bridge of men. By instinct Dunois and the two young Scotsmen and John Daulon kept close to Joan, and would not suffer her to rush into the mêlée; but suddenly she threw them off, and, snatching her banner out of Andrew's hand, she caught hold of the scaling-ladder, mounted the wall, and was half-way up before anyone attempted to follow her. Dunois watched her as she reached almost to the top. Suddenly, through the din and noise there came a piteous cry—a woman's wail of pain,—and he saw her fall backwards with her banner in her hand. He caught her in his arms and quickly carried her to the rear. We are told that she, who was so brave and valiant, wept as the weakest woman might weep as they drew the arrow forth. They thought she wept because of the pain, but those nearest to her heard her whisper:

"It is because of my sin, because I lacked courage to obey, that I am thus punished. O, dear Voices, you have been silent long enough! will you not speak to me again and comfort me?" And as she prayed, the troubled look passed away from her face and a great beauty shone thereon. She sat up, raised her hand to impose silence, for over the din of battle, the shouting of men, the groans of the dying, there came to her once more the music of those Voices she loved so well, and the smile broke through the anguish, and, looking at Dunois, she said gently:

"Lift me up; I will go back into the battle."

He would have dissuaded her, but she answered him:

"Do not speak to me! My Voices, O my Voices!"

And they lifted her up, Dunois on the one side and

Andrew on the other, and so she climbed the ditch into which she had fallen.

"Unfurl my banner!" she said to Andrew, who had caught it from her hand as she fell.

He obeyed her, and she stepped forth boldly, calling out:

"*En avant*—Jesu Maria!"

The effect was magical. The English, who thought her dead, seeing her thus reappear, were convinced at once that she was more than mortal, and a panic spread among them. Some said that in the clouds above they saw Saint Michael on a white horse fighting for the French. Hotter and hotter grew the battle, fiercer and fiercer raged the slaughter; nobly, grandly, the English defended their post, Sir William Gladsdale and his knights; five hundred fell around their chief—a very holocaust. How it happened none could tell, but suddenly the great English captain was seen to fall headlong over the walls into the surging waters of the Loire; he sank never to rise again. Then there was a great silence; no more firing of guns, no flying of arrows through the air! The French stood aghast; what had happened? Then they realized that the English ammunition was spent, there was no powder or arrows left wherewith to fight. So the French took Les Tournelles, and marched in over the piles of dead heaped up on either side. No Englishman of note survived that day, but we are told that for every Englishman slain there were ten Frenchmen. It was a victory which cost them dear. No marvel Joan's face was sad as, notwithstanding her wounds, she rode back into Orleans over the bridge which had been for so many months a closed passage. She entered to outward appearance in triumph, but with

deep sadness at her heart. Gradually but surely the joy was dying out of her, and a presentiment of coming danger was overshadowing her. More than once Andrew heard her say to herself, looking at the dead and wounded:

"I have sinned; this is the expiation!"

There is something ineffably grand in the battles of olden days. These warriors were giants, and as the Earl of Suffolk and the famous Talbot, taking counsel with the few who remained to them, agreed that the siege of Orleans must be raised, they chose to do it grandly.

On the morrow the French saw the whole English army leave their towers and entrenchments and range themselves in battle array in the plain surrounding the city. Then they sent a herald summoning Joan to meet them, notwithstanding their diminished numbers, in the open field. They did not fear her, they said, witch and sorceress though she was, for they were Christian gentlemen!

Joan would gladly have answered them, but there were those who held her back. She was wounded, and faint from loss of blood, and once more her Voices were silent. Those who surrounded her strove to keep the sounds of battle away from her; they were more especially anxious that she should not hear the language and the evil names which were thrust upon her. At last, weary of waiting for their enemies to answer their challenge, the English burnt and blew up their works, and then marched on to Paris in perfect order, their colours proudly flying. It was the eighth day of May when the siege of Orleans was raised.

CHAPTER XIII

THE RENUNCIATION

"WE will take them the news ourselves," said Joan, a wan smile playing over her pale face. She was leaning with one hand on a table, the other arm was in a sling.

"You cannot ride to-day," said Dunois, somewhat roughly.

She turned and looked at him, and, tossing her head back, answered proudly:

"You would have me show myself a weakling, but I will not; my wound is of no account, and happily it is my left shoulder. You told me, I think," she said, addressing Lord William Stewart, "that the queen proposed leaving Chinon and joining the king at Blois. Does anyone know whether this has taken place?"

"I do," said the little page Bertram, stepping forward, "for I have a friend who is page to Princess Margaret, and he sent me word by one of the convoy that they were joining the king at Blois."

"That is good," said Joan; "so shall I kill two birds with one stone. I shall tell them the good news and return with my king to Orleans. And then there is but one stage farther, to Rheims, and I have finished. I shall go home to my own people."

Everyone looked at her in astonishment.

"That you will not do," said Saintrailles. "No one, man or woman, can stand where you are standing now, at the summit of renown, and let herself down to be a keeper of cattle."

Joan laughed.

"You think not?" she said. "Ah, my sweet milk-white cows and my dark roan with their brown eyes! They would follow me from field to field so faithfully; not as you men follow me, for a day or an hour, and mock at me behind my back and try to cheat me, only heeding me when you cannot do otherwise. Either I shall go home or I shall die; maybe I shall die!" and as she spoke her head sank on her bosom.

A great silence fell over those present; then suddenly she lifted her head.

"What matters it?" she said. "I am only a poor maid; surely I shall live long enough to do the work which has been set me to do. There, Bertram," she said to the page, "order my charger, and let who will accompany me!" and, bowing to the captains, she turned and left the room.

The men looked at one another.

"She is a great mystery," said La Hire; "a brave woman — none braver. But who is she, what is she?"

"If you judge her by her works," said Dunois, "she is a saint, and why should we judge her otherwise?" and having so spoken, he, too, left the room.

Upon those who remained, men belonging to the highest chivalry of France, a certain sense of uneasiness fell. They did not understand, therefore they did not believe. So it must ever be in this world—the finite striving to penetrate the mystery of the infinite. Who understood the Christ? Who believed in Him when He was living in their midst? Not the wise ones of the earth, but women, children, and fishermen! The great and the powerful took Him and scourged Him and

crucified Him—they did not understand! And so it was with Savonarola and Galileo, and with all those who have ever touched or striven to fathom the depths of things human or divine. There was no fault to find with Joan; but they did not understand. A cloud hung over her which would grow deeper and deeper until the day should dawn when, freed from the trammels of earth, she should ascend to regions beyond the skies, and from henceforth the world would look up, striving to see, catching only glimpses of that glory which was hers, won by the martyr's agony, the martyr's tears.

Down the great staircase of the château of Blois came the king and the queen, the Countess Yolande, and the whole court, as the white charger, bearing the heroine of the day, drew up at its base. Lightly Joan sprang to earth and bent her knee before the monarch, who raised her, speaking words of high-sounding gratitude, and, taking her hand, he led her up through the great hall, where a feast had been prepared to welcome her. There was to be a ball that night, and much rejoicing, but when she saw these preparations a cloud fell upon Joan's face.

"Gentle dauphin," she said, "it is no time for piping and dancing or feasting. I came to tell you that by the grace of God and the help of the Holy Virgin we have won back for you your good city of Orleans, and the English are flying before us; but my time is short, and my work is not yet done. We cannot linger. My Voices have told me that before the year is out I shall have ceased to live; therefore we must work while it is day. Gentle dauphin, we will go to Rheims, and you shall be crowned King of France, as it is your right to be."

"Nay, Joan, your enthusiasm carries you away. The raising of the siege of Orleans has not delivered us from the English; rather they are let loose and are swarming over the land," said Charles. "From here to Rheims is a long distance; we should have to fight every inch of the way."

"Nevertheless," said Joan, "we must go; it is my mission, and my Voices tell me so. I cannot disobey them. Of late I have done so too often; and see, I was wounded, and they would not speak with me or comfort me until I lay prone in great pain beneath the walls of Orleans. Shall I sin again?"

"Well, well," said Charles, "you take things too seriously; you must rest here a day or two, and then we will consult."

"There is no consulting," said Joan sombrely, and she leant upon the hilt of her sword; "I have no questions to ask and no orders to receive. The way is made plain to me. 'Go to Rheims!' whether by smooth paths or rough, through battle-fields or over the sunny plains of France; 'Go!' say my Voices;" and as she spake, the heavy tears fell from her eyes to the ground.

A little apart, but facing her, stood the Princess Margaret. Without warning, she ran forward, and, kneeling before the king, she raised her hands, and her young voice prayed:

"Listen to her, sire; surely she is right. Let us all go with her to Rheims!" and then there fell from the girl's lips such a flood of eloquence, such a pleading, such a setting-forth of all Joan had done and was doing for the cause, that those present, who had thought the king right and the going to Rheims impossible, were, as if by a miracle, persuaded that of necessity they must

do as Joan bade them. The Countess Yolande took Margaret in her arms.

"She is your daughter, sire," she said, addressing the king; "surely you will heed her?"

"I needs must," answered Charles; "you are all for Joan. Surely you will rest to-day, my leech shall see to your wound—that is urgent—and then on my royal word I promise you we will go whither you shall lead us."

Joan yielded once more. She laid aside her armour and went up to the women's tower, Margaret and Priscilla clinging to her. They had no fear of her; to them she was the sweetest girl friend they had ever known, and the halo of religion and piety which surrounded her and guided her every action impressed them deeply. The Countess Yolande tended her and saw that her wound was properly dressed, and Alain Chartier came to the queen's apartments in the afternoon, and recited a long poem, which he had composed, telling of the great fight before Orleans, and how the Maid was victorious.

"Ah, but it was a terrible battle!" she exclaimed; "the English fought like lions. It was the will of God that we should be victorious; for the English, not thinking that the battle would last so long, used their powder and their arrows so lavishly in the beginning that they spent them all, and so had to yield. I do not love them, but they are brave men and good soldiers; they never give in save at the last extremity!"

When they were alone together Joan spoke to the Countess Yolande:

"Is there no one who could persuade the king to don his armour and come forth with us at the head of his

army? The effect would, I am persuaded, be miraculous. The soldiers now are fighting for what seems to them a phantom king; let him but lead them once to battle, and the heart will come into them. They are not all Dunoises and La Hires, but there are good soldiers amongst them."

"I will speak to him," said the Countess Yolande. "I will also speak to one who has much influence over him. And though I have no reason to love her, nevertheless I think she will serve us at this crisis better than another, for the king must be roused, he must be made to understand that the fate of the country depends upon him."

"Just so," said Joan. "People talk of miracles when there is no miracle; only by following the natural course of events, being brave when bravery is necessary, just and true always, are victories really won. The English know that, and stand their ground. They never throw down their arms except some accident befall them or they are overpowered by numbers; they would die rather than yield. I knew I ought to take Les Tournelles, my Voices told me so; but it was a toss-up even at the last. If their ammunition had not failed them, we should never have entered their bastion."

"You have a great opinion of the English," said the Countess Yolande.

"Yes," she answered slowly, "but I do not love them, and I fear them greatly. I would not fall into their hands. Pray for me that that may never be!"

"I will," said the countess. "And now it were well if you lay down and slept."

"I am willing," said Joan, "for I am very weary; I am always weary of late!"

The countess conducted her to a room opening out of her own, and she bade the attendants keep guard over her that no noise might disturb her rest, and then she went upon her mission.

She caused herself to be conducted to the house of one, Agnes Sorrel, known as "*la dame de beauté*". She was a great patriot, and loved France, and mourned over the shame which had come upon her. On this footing of patriotism the two women met; but they were not friends. Only, the fair Agnes, the queen of beauty as she was called, had a great reverence for the Countess Yolande because of her wisdom, and she received her humbly, standing before her while she spoke, and listening attentively to her words, which so affected her that the tears poured down her face.

"It is no fault of mine," she said, "if the king idles his time and has no courage to fight the battles of his country. When he visits me I tell him that it is a disgrace, and more than once he has gone away from my house angry because of my sharp words; but, gracious Countess, since you have done me the honour of coming to me and trusting me with this mission, I will once more strive to rouse him to a sense of what responsibility and power mean. This I promise you!"

The duchess was consoled by these words, the effects of which were visible on the morrow. From that day forth Charles was a changed man. The reproaches of a woman shamed him. He had been brought up evilly between an imbecile father and a woman whose very name was a horror to the whole French nation, and has come down to posterity with the slur upon it: "the wicked Isabeau of Bavaria!" No marvel, therefore, if the son partook to a certain extent of the parents' vices,

but there was much that was good in Charles the Seventh, and he was especially susceptible to the influences of those who surrounded him. It so happened that at the present time they were good influences, not evil—Joan, the Countess Yolande, Marie of Anjou, and Agnes Sorrel. To the astonishment of the court, the following day Charles appeared for the first time in armour, reviewed his troops, and let it be known that he was going to conduct them to Orleans himself. But he would not yield to Joan's request to start at once for Rheims, and in this perhaps he was wise, for the English army still occupied the whole country round Orleans, and it was certain that sooner or later there must be another great battle, and Joan could not be spared. It was the opinion of all the officers that unless she were present the soldiers would be half-hearted. The English had thrown themselves into the town of Jargeau, a little distance from Orleans, the Earl of Suffolk being still commander-in-chief, and it was but a week after the taking of Orleans that Joan's banner was once more unfurled beneath its walls.

It was night, and there was silence over the whole land; the white tents of the besiegers shone forth in the moonlight, but the besieged city lay itself in darkness. From out one of the tents two men appeared. They were both of unusual height; the one was a full-grown man of splendid proportions, and carried himself in his loose undress with a certain majesty, the other was equally tall, but he was only a stripling, slender, and light of build.

"I thought," said the elder man, smiling, "to have cheated you for once, Andrew, but you are as alert as a watch-dog."

"I have need to be, my lord," answered Andrew. "It is not fitting that you, who have so many enemies, should wander out at night alone. I felt you step over me as I lay across the opening of your tent."

"And, starting up, you nearly overthrew me," said Dunois.

They had only advanced a few steps from the tent. Dunois paused and looked around him.

"I shall be glad when this is over," he said. "A battle we must have, and if we are victorious, which I doubt not we shall be, then the Maid will never rest till the king is crowned at Rheims. But I shall go my way and drive the English before me to Paris."

"You will not be at the crowning?" said Andrew.

"No, I will not," answered Dunois, and his voice dropped. Then he broke into a laugh. "What fools we men are!" he said, and, slapping Andrew on the shoulder, he added: "My lad, as long as you can, keep women out of your life."

"It is not very easy," answered Andrew; "they swarm about us. But it seems to me, Sieur Dunois, that women trouble you less than most men. You are always fighting; one seldom meets you in court circles."

"I have, nevertheless, met my fate," he answered.

Andrew started.

"Where?" he asked.

"Joan!" answered Dunois. "She has bewitched me."

"Nay, use not that word," said Andrew. "It will bring her ill-luck. Is it not enough that the English should so defame her? If she has bewitched you, it is by her bravery and her goodness."

"Just so," answered Dunois. "And if I could I

would lift her on my horse and ride away with her now to some desert land, where neither English nor French should touch her, and no evil could come nigh unto her. For I foresee evil, and yet I dare not stay to ward it off. She would not heed me even if I spoke to her and told her to beware. Yes, Andrew, you are my friend; young though you be, I trust you, and so I tell you I have loved the Maid ever since she fell wounded into my arms from the scaling-ladder against the walls of Les Tournelles. From that hour I have watched over her by night and by day, lest evil should befall her. I have no other thought. Therefore after this battle she must go her way and I must go mine, and you must take my place beside her. You will not save her from her fate, but you may help her to bear it, without casting a slur upon her name as I should do if I remained beside her, for I love her as a man loves his betrothed, and she is not my betrothed, and she never will be!"

From close behind him there came a voice:

"You are right, Sieur Dunois; she never will be!"

They both turned quickly and found themselves face to face with Joan. She was deadly white, and her armour glistened in the moonlight. Her eyes rested upon Dunois with a strange mixture of woman's pride and tenderness, whilst in his there was an expression of annoyance. Almost impatiently he said:

"You have heard what I said, Joan?"

"Yes, I have heard," she answered dreamily, "and it is well I did, for it explains many things to me."

"What does it explain?" he asked sharply.

"Why my Voices have been silent," she answered, "why I have been so sorely wounded, and why my heart

aches so. I stretch out my hand to feel my way where before I went straight onwards without thought. My Voices sometimes speak to me, but over and above them I hear your voice, and I follow your guidance."

"Then you love me, Joan?" he said eagerly, taking a step towards her.

"No," she answered, "I think not, I hope not. But you have crossed my path. I was warned—my Voices warned me—that if ever I listened to any voice but theirs I should die!"

"Not that, not that!" said Dunois. "I am going hence. You will neither see nor hear me again. I will fight this one battle more, and then we will say farewell, beside you, for ever."

"So be it," said Joan. "But I am doomed, the fiat has passed forth. We will fight this one battle together and then, without let or hindrance, I will conduct the king to Rheims and so finish my work. Maybe I shall win mercy; but I do not care to live if only I may die in battle. Do you know why I am here, Sieur Dunois, to-night? I laid me down to rest, and lo! I saw a vision of flames, and tortures, and hideous faces surrounding me, such sights as I have heard tell are to be seen on the market-places where they burn witches, and I started up and came forth into the open air, and as I came forth I heard you say: 'Joan has bewitched me!' Ah, my friend, why did you say that? Why did you throw at me that awful word? I have not bewitched you, I have rather scoffed at and hindered you;" and as she spoke she buried her face in her hands and wept bitterly.

"Joan, pardon me!" said Dunois; and, going up to her, he took her hands, raised them to his lips, and kissed

them. She wrenched them away with an agonizing scream.

"Lost! Lost!" she cried, and fled away in the darkness.

Within a stone's-throw of where Dunois and Andrew stood a dark mass rose from the ground. It might have been an animal, for it too rolled on, crying:

"The witch! Joan the witch!"

And the men lying beneath in the tents, roused from their slumbers, thought they had dreamt, and, shuddering, turned themselves. Both Andrew and Dunois sprang forward, but the thing rolled on before them down into the very ditch which surrounded the town, and so into the English lines, still shouting: "Joan the witch!"

As the shrieking voice died away, Dunois turned to Andrew.

"To-morrow, please God, I will take that vile fortress and drive the English before me, for surely the devil is let loose amongst them!"

And at early dawn on the morrow Dunois, with Joan, led the assault. The fighting was, as usual, desperate. The Earl of Suffolk found himself hand to hand with Dunois, and so heavily pressed that he was fain to surrender and suffered himself to be made prisoner. But, alas! the triumph was shadowed by a mishap. Joan had led her men as far away from Dunois as was possible, Andrew scaled the ladder with her standard before her, and as he planted it on the tower he looked backwards. The Maid was not to be seen; a second more and he saw her on her knees, another second and she was clambering up the scaling-ladder and stood breathless beside him.

"Another fall," she said, adding sadly, "but not the last!"

The fighting ceased, the day was theirs—Dunois's and Joan's.

CHAPTER XIV

AT RHEIMS

FROM every part of France men trooped to join King Charles's army; from north and south they came, of every class, great nobles and peasants. Where had they been all this long time when the king had prayed for men and there seemed to be none forthcoming? Now they sprang up, as it were, out of the earth, and the new-comers were even more enthusiastic concerning the Maid than those who had grown accustomed to her presence, and who, flushed with victory, were inclined to take the glory to themselves rather than yield it to a woman. At one time a change had come over Joan; she had hesitated, had complained that she was uncertain how she was to act. But now that had passed away; once more she spoke boldly, telling her king and the soldiers what they were to do.

"One more battle," she said, "and then we go to Rheims!"

Sir John Fastolf was advancing towards the village of Patay, not far distant from Orleans. With his keen eye he saw that the English were disheartened, that his troops were not in the mood, so to speak, to fight; and he tried to persuade the great Talbot, who in default

of the Earl of Suffolk had taken the command, that it were well to avoid a pitched battle.

"The French are more numerous than we are," he said. "Our men fear the Maid, but the French soldiers worship her; they will follow wherever she leads. Our men will fly before her."

But Talbot would not heed him.

"If they offer us battle we must give it them," he said; "we cannot turn our backs upon our foes."

Notwithstanding their numerical advantages the French soldiers themselves were by no means anxious to fight the English in the open plain. Behind walls, in skirmishing-parties, they were content to do so; but they feared to meet the English army in a great open plain, for they remembered Agincourt, Verneuil, and many other such battles, in which the strength and persistency of the English soldier had overcome them. Joan in the council-chamber held her own. When they said: "We had better wait for more horses," Joan looked them proudly in the face and answered:

"Have you good spurs? Ride on in the name of the Lord and conquer! The English are delivered over into my hands; you have but to smite them."

And so with a quick march and at full speed they overtook Talbot, who, hearing of their advance, strove to quit the open plain and shelter his troops in the village and behind thick hedges.

Dunois and Joan d'Arc rode side by side; they seemed both to have forgotten that night's interview, and were good comrades. So rapidly did the French move forward that they were in the midst of the English before ever the archers could fix their stakes. On came the main body of the French, falling so suddenly on the

English that they threw them into dire disorder. Never before had the French witnessed this, and their spirits rose and their confidence became stronger.

"I cannot see my brave men killed before my eyes for naught," said Sir John Fastolf, and he retreated from the field without striking a blow. Others did likewise; horsemen spurred from the field and sought refuge in flight. Only the brave Talbot kept his stand; he did not comprehend what defeat meant.

All his bravest captains gathered round him, the archers formed a circle to environ them, but they were all killed. Again and again he strove with his handful of men to cleave his way through the French army; his was a forlorn hope. Twelve hundred Englishmen were slaughtered round about him, but death did not touch him. At last he was brought to bay.

"I will yield to none but Dunois, the Bastard of Orleans, not to the Maid!" he shouted.

Dunois stepped forward to receive his noble adversary's sword. It was a great day for the French, the greatest day they had seen or were destined to see for years to come, and their exultation knew no bounds. Many other noble gentlemen were also made prisoners. After the battle, without waiting, the Maid of Orleans rode to the king, who, though he was on the spot, had taken no part in the fight.

"Now, gentle Dauphin," she said, "I claim the fulfilment of your promise. I fight no more battles. We go to Rheims!"

One and all rose against her—the danger was too great, the roads were impassable; but the Maid spoke up. "To take Orleans seemed impossible to you, and yet we relieved it!" she said. "Who reckoned upon capturing

Suffolk and Talbot, and yet they are in our hands! You said you would not fight the Battle of Patay, and yet you have both fought and won it! I tell you my guides are heavenly guides, and the powers entrusted to me know no limits—they are the powers from heaven!"

Having thus spoken, she left the council-room and withdrew to the queen's apartments.

"I will not leave you again," she said to the Countess Yolande, "until they send for me." Her face was flushed, her manner irritated. "They are obstinate; they will not heed my Voices, and I will not speak otherwise than I am ordered to do."

"You are right," answered the countess.

Whilst she was still speaking a page came into the room.

"A monk desires to see the Maid."

"Bid him enter," said the duchess.

A moment later Father Isambert entered. In a second Joan had risen and was on her knees before him.

"O my Father!" she cried, and burst into a flood of tears.

"My daughter!" he answered, and laid his hands on her head. "I know all—your struggle and your striving, and the opposition of those who ought to stand by you."

She lifted her tear-stained face, and from her lips there fell the words:

"Not all, my Father!"

"Then much," he added, "and I have come to help you. Rise and take courage!"

She obeyed as if she had been a child.

"Your greatest trouble is," said Father Isambert, "that the dauphin will not heed you. You are in haste to end your work, maybe in too great haste."

"Only so far as my Voices bid me," she answered. "'Sheathe your sword and fight no more,' they say to me, 'until the dauphin is crowned!' And he will not follow me."

"Yes he will!" said Father Isambert.

"And they call me witch and sorceress," said Joan; "even among my own people the curse is upon me; I shall die."

"Not yet," answered Father Isambert; "your time has not come yet, and we will prove to the world that you are neither witch nor sorceress!"

Thus he comforted her, and the Countess Yolande joined with him, and Margaret and Priscilla caressed her, until the spirit came back to her, and she said humbly:

"I have been faithless and unbelieving; may God and His angels forgive me!"

That night in the cathedral church of Orleans there was a great assembly; Father Isambert had summoned the king, his nobles, and the soldiers—as many as could find room therein—to listen to him, and from the pulpit he poured forth a torrent of eloquence—the whole court was present, the queen and the duchess and the young princess with all their women,—openly he scoffed at those who had scoffed at the Maid, telling them in the rough rude language of the times that they were blasphemers, pointing out to them how God had guided them as He did the Israelites of old out of Egypt, and had brought them victoriously through the ranks of their enemies. "And now," he exclaimed, "He bids you go and take the Promised Land, and ye will not!" It were too long to tell all the arguments he used. "Did the Israelites," he asked, "go peaceably on

their way? Did they not fight the Ammonites and the Moabites and the Jebusites? And do ye expect to sheathe your swords and walk through the land?" The effect of his sermon was beyond all expectation; the soldiers clamoured for the Maid to lead them on; they would take the king by force if he would not go of his own free-will, they said; and Charles, seeing the way the wind blew, accepted the inevitable, and solemnly swore that on the morrow he would start on his way to Rheims. And so for that one night there was peace over the town. But Joan did not sleep; before it was daylight she arose and opened the door of her chamber. There, as was his wont, Andrew Grahame was on guard. He and Lord William Stewart took it by turns, and it had been his turn on this special night. When he saw the Maid he whispered something in her ear; she bowed her head and passed out into the darkness, or rather into the gray dawn of a coming day. Andrew followed her. Crossing the now deserted streets, they reached the church; she knocked twice at one of the side-doors, which opened from within, and she entered, but Andrew remained without. Following Father Isambert to a side-altar, she knelt on the steps, the father standing over her; then, slowly and in a low voice, she made her confession and was absolved. As she rose, the clank of spurs sounded through the church, and a tall figure in full armour stood beside her.

"My children," said Father Isambert, "you have both come to me of your own free-wills and made your confession, and I have pronounced over you the divine pardon. You are guiltless of all wrong-thinking or wrong-doing, only you have each of you your separate work in life to accomplish, and you are likely to be a hindrance

one to the other, therefore in the name of God I bid you part for ever." As he ceased he raised the crucifix before their eyes, and they, looking at it, repeated after him:

"In weal or woe, we swear never to meet again in this world, so help us God and His saints!'

Then they both knelt, and the father administered to them the holy sacrament, to their great comfort, after which, standing still before the altar, they bowed one to the other, and they both went their way. At the church door Andrew was still waiting. Joan raised her eyes and scanned him sadly.

"How long will you serve me?" she asked.

"Always," he answered promptly.

"To the bitter end?" she asked.

"If there be a bitter end," he answered. "But why should you not triumph?"

She was silent. Suddenly she lifted up her head. The sun was rising in the east; the roseate hue lit up the sky and brought into relief the towers and turrets, the spires of the churches, and the quaint gabled roofs of the houses in the city. The light of morning shone through the darkness of the night; she caught the glint of it.

"You are right, Andrew," she answered, "we shall triumph. Hark! they have been silent so long, but I hear them now. My Voices!"

She stood in the porch, her figure illumined by a stray sunbeam, her head slightly bent forward as if to catch a distant sound. There was joy on her face, a celestial joy, and her voice rang out clear:

"'To Rheims! To Rheims!"

And as she went through the streets many soldiers came out and joined her, and so they marched to the

town-hall, where the king dwelt, and waited in the court-yard till the monarch, roused from his slumbers, came forth and was greeted with shouts of welcome. That day the army, numbering many thousand strong, left Orleans and marched on their first day's journey to Rheims. Joan with her white banner led the way, followed by Father Isambert with priests and acolytes.

It was nigh upon midsummer, and there should have been abundance of food even in the open fields; but, alas! war had devastated the land, the granaries were empty, the winter store was gone, and soldiers and armies had destroyed the new crops; therefore it was that as they advanced provisions failed the king's troops. The Burgundians, the allies of the English, held all the towns through which they had to pass; nevertheless the king had been joined by many good patriots and respectable burghers of the cities, who rode their own small horses and carried their own provisions. He was thus enabled to advance as far as Troyes. But there they came to a stand-still. The great mass of the army was starving, and starvation has an evil effect upon all men. The soldiers almost mutinied, and began to call the Maid bad names and treat her as a foul impostor. Even the Archbishop of Rheims spoke evil of her, and the gentlemen and noblemen were for turning back; but the Maid stood her ground, and though she was summoned before the council and accused of misleading the army, she answered her accusers with an earnest eloquence which effectually disarmed them.

"Only do as I bid you," she said, "and it will yet be well with us!"

For the first time she stood virtually alone. Dunois was not there to protect her, and she appealed to La

Hire and Saintrailles, who had never been very friendly to her; but on this occasion they heeded her, and agreed to storm the town of Troyes. They had lain five days idle beneath the walls, but on the sixth day they filled a ditch with bags of earth and faggots and prepared the scaling-ladders.

Joan's greatest friend was Father Isambert. Within the town there were many priests who favoured the king's cause, and he opened negotiations with them; indeed, he succeeded in entering the town, and by his persuasive eloquence he inclined the chief burghers to listen to him, and to listen to Father Isambert was to believe in him. One great hindrance he had to overcome; there was a superstitious terror concerning Joan. The English and the Burgundians had impregnated the whole city with the idea that she was possessed of an evil spirit, therefore the good people were sorely afraid of her.

"Is that all you have against her?" said the father; "then we will exorcise the devil. You all know full well that at the sign of the cross he will fly away or she will drop down dead. Have no fear!"

The garrison consisted of five hundred men, and Charles's army numbered eight or nine hundred, so, partly by persuasion, partly because they saw that long resistance was hopeless, it was agreed that Troyes should quietly surrender to Charles, and the garrison be allowed to depart with the honours of war. A strange story is told of how Joan, when she was about to enter the city at the head of her troops, was arrested by Father Isambert and a band of priests, and the father, stepping towards her, threw holy water over her and over the gates of the city, and made many signs of the

cross over her; after which the gates were thrown open and she was bidden to enter. But this proof of her innocence was no triumph for Joan; a great sadness came over her once more. It was a sore trial to her to be thus looked upon as belonging to the evil one, and Andrew, who rode beside her with her white banner, was also sad because she wept. As was her wont when she was not on the battle-field, she rode with her head uncovered, and little Bertram carried her helmet in front of her. Suddenly a strange thing happened. There appeared a great swarm of beautiful white butterflies, which fluttered around her and her banner. The people saw them and marvelled.

"She is an angel, and God is with her!" they shouted, and crowded round her, and so they accompanied her into the city.

"Truly God is with me!" she said devoutly, and once more the sorrow left her and a quiet joy took possession of her soul; it was as if her trouble had passed away.

Charles remained but a few days at Troyes, and then they marched straight on to Rheims. All the villages and towns on the road opened their gates to them; the citizens of Rheims expelled all the officers who were friends of England and of Burgundy, and welcomed King Charles, and so he made his entrance into Rheims escorted by Joan and a host of priests. Who shall divine the tumultuous thoughts which must have filled the Maid's heart as she rode into the great cathedral square and looked upon that sacred building which had been for so long the desire of her eyes and of her heart. In this, her hour of triumph, she was as simple as ever, and would not join in the festivities which were prepared for her, choosing rather to lodge with her father

and mother in a humble inn, which, by the orders of the king, had been hired for them; for he had sent to Domrémy to fetch the old people, that they might witness their daughter's triumph, and she had ridden forth to meet them, and walked back by their side through the town, humbly, as any girl might have done. They scarce knew whether she was their own Joan or not. And her mother grumbled:

"Why must you be clothed thus in man's clothing? It is not well, my child."

"It is but for a time, Mother," she said. "To-morrow, when the king is crowned, I will go home with you and wear my peasant's dress, and I will send my armour to the cathedral of Saint Denis, in token that from God I received it and to God I give it back when my work is done."

"That is well spoken," said her father, and they went together to the inn, and Joan supped with them and with her old friends; and William Stewart and Andrew Grahame were also with them, and they both marvelled at her sweetness and docility.

The following morning, before the city was astir, Joan, with her father and mother and her two friends, Andrew Grahame and William Stewart, entered the Cathedral of Rheims and heard early mass. She knew it was to be a great day—the greatest day in all her life,—and as she knelt she prayed that if it were God's will, when the day was ended He would take her to Himself. She saw with the clear eyes of perfect knowledge that if God did not take her there would be those who would lay hold of her and force her back into the world, to her own undoing.

"I have heard my Voices," she said, "and all day

long and all night long they have whispered to me: 'It is finished, it is finished, sheathe your sword, Joan!'"

It is now, when we tell this story, well-nigh five hundred years ago since a spectacle was seen the like of which the world had never witnessed before, and never will again. It was a glorious July day, the sun was at its full meridian height, lighting up that great monument of mediæval architecture, the Cathedral of Rheims, with its sculptured towers, its massive doors, its flying buttresses, and all the intricate architectural beauty which the minds and souls of men had conceived. The great square and all the adjacent streets were crowded with soldiers and men-at-arms, some on foot and some on horseback; there was a coming and a going, and a clanking of spurs and a clashing of swords. Suddenly the ranks opened and there appeared the king, in his royal robes, going to his anointing, and beside him a shining figure in glistening armour, holding aloft a snow-white standard embroidered on the one side with the *fleur-de-lys*, and on the other with the words, "Jesu Maria". A great silence fell upon the crowd, and the people fell on their knees as slowly the group advanced, and the nobles and the captains closed in behind them. The face of her who bore the standard was the face of an angel, rapt in ecstatic prayer. The crowd of people about her was as nothing to her; she did not so much as see them; she saw only the king and the great cathedral which was to be to her the end of all the trouble and the weariness beneath which she had groaned so long. Even as she moved forwards the prayer rose up from her soul: "If only my Voices and my angels would take me hence!" And, so thinking, she mounted the steps beside her king, and passed on through the long

nave up to the high altar, and there she stood motionless. All eyes were fixed on her, almost more than on the king. They marvelled at her, and many worshipped her. She had done what she had said she would do—she had brought her monarch half across France, through the very midst of his enemies, to cause him to be crowned King of France. Surely it was a miracle; surely she was sent by God. And as they watched her it seemed to some as if they heard the rustling of angels' wings round about her, and all the evil which had been said of her vanished out of their minds, for they recognized in her the handmaid of the Lord.

With all due pomp the ceremony of the coronation and anointing of the king took place, and when the archbishop raised his voice and proclaimed Charles the Seventh, by the grace of God and the will of the people, King of France, the sound of trumpets announced to the crowd that Joan's task was over, and that they had truly a legitimate monarch of their own, not a foreign weakling who had been foisted on them. Suddenly, to the surprise of all who stood around her, Joan threw herself at the king's feet, her banner trailing behind her, and, holding up her hands, she pleaded:

"Gentle king, now is accomplished the will of God, that you should have come hither to Rheims to receive your coronation, and to show forth to your people that you are verily their true king to whom the kingdom of France rightly belongs. I have finished the work which was given me to do, and so I pray you let me depart in peace."

But the king answered that it was not in his power to grant her request, that she must abide yet a while with him; and once more the ranks opened and the

king went forth, followed by Joan, who no longer held her head high, but walked behind the king with her arms crossed upon her bosom, over her good sword. Andrew carried her standard, and so she appeared to the people, who greeted both her and their king with shouts of enthusiasm and joy; and all day long and far into the night there was feasting. But Joan remained in the inn with her father and mother, and on the morrow once more she entreated the king to let her go home with them, but he would not. And she who loved him so well had not the heart to disobey him; therefore she remained, and the king made her family noble for ever, and decreed that Domrémy, the village of her birth, should be henceforth and for ever free from taxation. But Joan was not comforted.

CHAPTER XV

THE KING'S MESSAGE

IT was impossible for the queen and her court to remain in Orleans when the army and their defenders marched out of it. Dunois still lingered, but he was to take his departure for Normandy to stop the regent Bedford's advance, and then there would be no one in power save the governor. Therefore it was decided they should return to Chinon. The royal ladies loved the old fortress; it was more a home to them than any other spot on earth. Louis, soon to be the dauphin, had not accompanied his father; he was no more a fighting-man

than his sire, but since the late successes he had given himself airs and graces.

"You will remember your promise?" he said to Margaret. "As soon as I am Dauphin of France you will be my wife. I shall hold you to it."

The girl shrank away from him and took refuge beside the gentle Queen Marie, who comforted her.

"It will make no difference in your life," she said, "and it will be good for France that the people should see that King James trusts us. You will never leave me, my child. Other royal maidens have been wives much younger than you are. We cannot choose our husbands as other humbler maidens can; so if it should please God that the Maid be successful, and the king be crowned, you may well go through the ceremony of marriage with my son. Is it not so, Mother?" and she turned to the Countess Yolande.

The elder woman hesitated; her soul was full of pity for the girl; she drew her gently towards her.

"I do not see what else you can do," she answered. "It would bring great discredit upon us if you refuse to fulfil your father's treaty. It is a matter of nations, not individuals, and you belong to two nations. Who knows what misfortunes may result if you withdraw yourself? We have war within, we may have it from without; and you have seen enough, my child, to know what a terrible thing war is. You do not love my grandson. Well, I do not greatly love him myself; he is not lovable, but surely he will not harm you, and you will live much apart. I will not leave you, and between Marie and myself we can make life bearable for you. You are but a child still; a wife's burdens will not fall upon you yet. You will be a wife only in name, and who can tell what

your influence over Louis may bring about? The world thinks that the lives of queens and princesses are great lives, full of power. Alas! we have no power. We women are used as a means to an end. There are a few exceptions, very few, alas! of a woman who could hold her own. The day may come when things will be different. If I had had my will, now, do you think I should have needed a Joan to lead our armies to battle? But the king is given over to his own pleasures; he does not love us, and we have no power. Therefore, my child, we must lay hold on what we can. You come of a noble race, and you have brought us soldiers to fight for us; if you will not remain with us, then they too will depart, and we shall be undone."

"Then I will not go," said Margaret. "I at least love you and my dear Queen Marie, so I will not murmur, and what you bid me do I will do. Joan has taught us this much, that we must sacrifice ourselves, and that to be truly noble we must serve others."

So the matter was settled between them, and from that day forth it was marvellous to see the gentle patience with which Margaret treated the dauphin. She ceased to move away from him when he approached her, and humoured him in many things in which before she had thwarted him. She had grown very tall since she came to France, and the childish beauty had changed to the girl's face and figure. She was no longer round and plump, with rosy cheeks and laughing eyes. She had looked upon sad scenes, upon war and upon death, and something of the sunshine had gone out of her eyes, and in its place had come a deeper look, as if she were probing some of the secrets of life. It is not good for the young to be old before their time; it is not meant that

it should be so, and yet it comes to many—a refining element ripening the bud and causing it to blossom into a premature flower. Thus it was with Margaret of Scotland; she had in her a poet's and a saint's nature, and the two combined made of her what the white lily is in the garden. She grew rapidly, mentally and physically; no one thought of her now as of a child—she was the Princess Margaret of Scotland, soon to be the wife of their dauphin. The queen and the good Countess Yolande did all they could to make her feel what her position was and would be in the future. She never walked alone now, on state occasions, with Priscilla, but between these two good women, who held her by the hand, and so steadied her young steps. No marvel that she loved them and clung to them, and was content to link her life with theirs, not seeing whither she was going. The one element of brightness amidst these shadows was Priscilla. She was not weighted like the princess, except by her love for her, but she understood from the first that it was her work in life to help the princess bear her burden. "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ", and this is what Priscilla and Alain Chartier strove to do. The poet and the young girl were in league together to catch every glint of sunshine and bring it within the walls of Chinon Castle. Priscilla was not fragile, as the princess was, and she was older, just standing with "reluctant feet where the brook and river meet". Moreover, she mixed more with the women of the court than Margaret, owing to her high estate, did; and thus she heard all manner of gossip, which she would retail, and by this means bring smiles and almost laughter to her young mistress's lips. The poet would write and she would sing:

"All around the birds are flying
And softly singing,
So that every heart rejoices
As the song ascends on high.
The bright sun is shining
And violets are growing,
All fulfil their duties
As nature would have them do."

And Margaret would join with her in the refrain:

"And all around the birds are flying,
Gently singing, gently singing".

Messengers were despatched continually from the army to inform the queen of the king's progress, but the distance from Rheims to Chinon was great, and sometimes they were several days without news.

It was some time after the coronation that one morning the princess and Priscilla were walking on the terrace, when they recognized Lord William with two men-at-arms coming up the hillside. The dangers of the journey over a land infested, as France was, by foreign soldiers and marauders were great; messengers of trust had therefore to be chosen, and they were not many who thus cared to face an inglorious death; therefore Lord William Stewart had caused the king to be asked if he might be the bearer of news to Chinon? Since the taking of Orleans Lord William had lost much of his enthusiasm for the cause. Indeed, one might reckon that from the time he was wounded on the battle-field, where his father died, if it had not been for Andrew he would have sought permission to retire and be allowed to return to Scotland. He was a straightforward, bold youth, brought up with ideas of

honour and bravery which coincided but little with the then condition of France and her people; besides, he felt keenly the evil which had befallen his father.

"We Scots cannot fight with the French," he said; "if we go forward, they hold back, and so it is that such mishaps happen to us."

But Andrew had reasoned with him, and, moreover, there was some cause which he did not explain to himself, except that it might be loyalty to his king, which made him loth to leave Princess Margaret and Priscilla Grahame alone in a strange land.

"Andrew takes no care of them at all," he said; "he is wrapt up in the Maid, and therefore it behoves me to stand by them."

For this reason he sought and obtained the position of king's messenger, which, as we have said, was by no means free from danger, and required much tact and bravery, for it was an adventurous life—here to-day and there to-morrow,—and perforce he carried messages about his person which, if they were discovered, would have sufficed to hang him. But it suited Lord William. As he rode into Chinon, and saw the two maidens looking down upon him from the terrace, he raised his helmet and waved it to them, and Margaret said smilingly:

"Your knight has come back, Priscilla."

They made haste to inform the countess of the new arrival, but before Lord William could be ushered into their presence the news had spread throughout the town and castle, and the cry went up "Vive Charles Sept, Roi de France!" The rejoicings were great. Louis insisted upon a public acknowledgment of his new dignity of dauphin.

"I am of age," he said, "according to the law of France, and if my father died I should be king in my own right, and reign in his stead. You would be queen, sweet Margaret; now you will be dauphiness, second to none save the king, my father, and the queen, my mother!" and he cast an evil glance upon his grandmother, the Countess Yolande; there was no love lost between them, for the countess ofttimes reproved him for his surly temper, and was quick to perceive his cunning, deceitful ways; therefore he hated her, and resented the influence she exercised over the queen.

"My father is easily led by the women," he would say; "it will not be so with me. I know their guile; they cannot cast dust into my eyes."

And so on this auspicious day, when all hearts were glad, and everyone foresaw the dawn of better days for France, the burghers honoured the prince and paid their court to him as he rode through the streets of Chinon, and they acclaimed him Dauphin of France, but no one loved him. The women and children shrank away from him, murmuring:

"He has an evil face; he is as ugly as sin!"

After Lord William had delivered his message in public, the countess sent for him, desiring to hear particulars of the campaign. When the princess and Priscilla heard how Joan had been made to suffer, and the ignominy which had been put upon her, also of the patience and the courage with which she had borne it all, they wept.

"How can they doubt she is a saint?" exclaimed the princess.

Then William told of Joan's sweet docility to her

parents, of the glorious scene in the square at Rheims, and how she had walked with her standard close beside the king through the cathedral, and had stood on his right hand when he was crowned.

"But she was sad when she came forth," he added, "because the king will not suffer her to return with her father and mother to her home. She has thrice entreated him, weeping at his feet, but he will not let her leave him, so she has to yield, only she vows that her Voices are once more silent because she has disobeyed them."

"But if she has been forced to remain," said Margaret.

The countess laid her hand on the princess's shoulder: "My child," she said, "only one thing can make us conquerors in this world—to be strong to withstand—and Joan has yielded. It is deplorable!" she continued, tears filling her eyes; "but God is her judge, and surely He will help her out of her trouble."

To Margaret and Priscilla there was a sense of injustice in her having been forced, and their hearts ached, thinking how unhappy Joan must be. They knew her tender conscience, they knew how she loved her Voices, and how they comforted her, and she had disobeyed them; and so that night, when the day was ended and they were alone in their chamber, for the princess would not suffer Priscilla to depart from her, they whispered to each other:

"We will pray for her that her Voices may come back!" Others doubted, but they never did; they believed in Joan's visions and her Voices as they believed in God Himself. On the morrow they met Lord William

as they were returning from mass, and Margaret signed to him to walk beside them and tell them more about Joan, and he told them the miracle of the butterflies, how they had swarmed about her head and about her banner, and they were glad.

"The people could not doubt her then!" said Priscilla.

"No, for she is victorious everywhere," said William, "and every city opens its gates to her. It is wonderful; but, alas! the soldiers do not love her as they did. They fear her; they say she is growing sterner every day, that her rule is hard. They can neither swear nor drink, and are kept so strictly that life is no longer any joy to them."

"Can there be joy in evil living? She is right," said the princess. "If ever I am queen I shall do likewise. My soldiers shall be Christian knights, not thieves and robbers. It is that which has lost France; it is because of her sin that God has delivered France over to our enemies."

"Our enemies are not much better," said Lord William; "the army of the Regent Bedford is noted for its disorder."

The princess's face grew very sad. "Are the times so evil then?" she said. "If so, it were better to go out of the world rather than to live in it. Instead of being a queen, I would fain be a nun; what sayest thou, Priscilla?"

From under her long lashes Priscilla cast a glance at Lord William Stewart, and a faint flush crept over her face. He smiled, and was about to speak, but Priscilla was before him, and with a mischievous twinkle she answered:

"It would be an easy way to secure our salvation, Princess, but I fear me much it is not in my nature. I have no vocation for hiding myself behind convent walls. It seems to me the world is exceeding fair, and if there be sorrow in it, there is also joy."

"I used to think so," said Margaret with a sigh, "when I was in my own dear Scotland; but so many things have happened of late, and there is so much fighting and so much noise, peace seems to have forsaken us."

"Shall I take you back to Scotland?" said Lord William eagerly, speaking in a low voice. "I have often thought you were not fitted for this life, Princess. You have but to say the word and I will gather together a troop of faithful Scots, and we will carry you off and land you safely in your father's house."

"Nay, nay," said Margaret gently, "I did not mean that. I would not complain. I must do the will of God. It is not without reason that He has sent me to France; like Joan, I will fulfil my mission!"

Both Priscilla and Lord William Stewart noticed that as she ascended the hill of Chinon her breath seemed short and she panted. Dame Morrison had been ailing that morning and had remained in her room, and so they had gone quietly to mass with their Abigail alone, without form or ceremony, for they both loved the early morning air and the stillness which ere long would be broken with the warlike sounds, now so familiar to their ears.

"Shall you remain long at Chinon?" asked Priscilla of Lord William.

"I shall remain so long as the queen has no message

to send to the king; such are my orders, and I am glad of it, for you seem to have been left very unprotected in this old fortress, and we never know what may happen. The English might steal a march upon us and carry you all off out of sheer spite!"

"Ah, you must not say that to the princess!" said Priscilla. "You will frighten her."

"And you? Are you not frightened?" said Lord William.

"Not overmuch," she answered. "I dare not be, for I must keep up the princess's courage and tend her if she is sick. You see, that is my mission, Lord William. Fare you well!" She had fallen a little behind the princess, who had gone slowly on. She caught her up now and the two disappeared together into the castle.

Lord William turned away towards the turret at the farther end of the courtyard, where he was lodged.

"It is a shame," he muttered, "to have cast two children into such a turmoil as this. The queen can do naught for them, the Countess Yolande but little; surely *my mission* is to watch over them!"

At that moment he perceived Louis, the new-made dauphin, coming towards him.

"The cur!" he said. "And the princess is to be delivered over to him! Well, I am of opinion that she will take unto herself wings and fly away if they have not a care."

CHAPTER XVI

THE COUNTESS OF YOLANDE

SO ho, Sir Scot," called out the Dauphin Louis, "you are a very ladies' knight, and prefer the women's rooms, it seems to me, rather than the battle-field!"

There was such insult in the manner in which these words were spoken that the blood rushed to Lord William's face.

"His majesty, the King of France, has sent me hither, as I had the honour to tell your highness," he answered.

"And your friend, the gentle Andrew? You are both verily guardians of maids; but we will shortly release you from your duty here, seeing we reckon to wed the Princess Margaret now I am dauphin, according to our agreement with King James."

Lord William found nothing to answer; he stood with heightened colour before the prince, who, suddenly changing his tone, sidled up to him and, taking his arm, drew him across the courtyard, towards the pleasance, which lay but a little distance to the right.

"Have I hurt your feelings?" he said. "Pardon! but I have been most anxious for some time past to speak with you or your friend Andrew. I have had a loss, a great loss, which I cannot tell to any man except you two."

"If I can be of service to you, Prince," said Lord William, at the same time making an effort to disengage himself; but the prince clutched at him with his long fingers.

"It is of a particular matter that I would speak to you. Do you remember my dwarf, Charlot?"

"Surely I remember him," said Lord William, thinking in his own mind: "A murrain on the beast; he was an ugly cur!"

"I loved him," said Louis in a pathetic voice, glancing sideways at Lord William. "No one else cared for him, but he was my faithful companion."

William nodded his head but made no answer, thinking again to himself: "Like seeks like!"

"He is gone. I have lost him!" said the prince sadly.

"Now you speak of it," said Lord William, "I have noticed that he no longer hangs about the passages shrieking first one name and then another. Are you not well quit of him, your highness?"

"I told you I loved him," said Louis sternly. "Has he not sufficient evil to bear in his deformity that men should ill-use him?"

"Who has ill-used him, and where is he?" asked Lord William.

"Ah, where is he?" said Louis. "I have heard that he is at Fierbois. He is but a fool, and he went on a fool's errand. Do you remember how the Maid Joan insisted upon a sword in the church of Saint Catherine being found and brought to her. When Charlot heard of it he said: 'I will do it!' Forthwith he went and I have not seen him since. Poor fellow! Andrew Grahame found the sword, and you were with him, I have been told."

"I was," said Stewart; and suddenly he remembered the imp, or devil, whatever it might be, from which

Andrew had snatched the precious weapon. Louis was watching him; he saw the light flash across his face, but he kept silence.

"He shall speak of himself," he thought, and William, who had no guile, sold himself.

"I misdoubt me," he said, "but that he was the devil from whom Andrew rescued the sacred weapon. I heard a shriek and a scuffling, and Andrew said something about a devil's imp, but he held up the sword and we both hastened away. Andrew was well-nigh dead with journeying, and I was but just out of my sick-room. Nevertheless he hastened back to Blois, and I thought no more of asking him what the creature was like. It must have been your fool, Dauphin!"

Louis's face clouded. "And what became of him? Did he kill him?"

"Not that I know of," answered Lord William. "I heard him shriek, and then we fled. For aught I know he may be there still; but the priest must have found him when he came to say his early mass, unless he made good his escape!"

"Thank you!" said Louis, "I will make enquiries;" and, scowling on the young Scotsman, he turned and left him.

A few days later it was rumoured that Charlot had returned, and that from henceforth he was to occupy a closet opening out of the dauphin's apartment. No one had seen him come, and a sort of mystery had hung over the whole proceeding, but the following morning he was seen with his cap and bells and his particoloured dress, standing at the entrance to the prince's tower. One of the guards greeted him with:

"Ay, Master Charlot, you have taken a long journey. Where may you have been?"

"Where you are never likely to go," answered Charlot, tossing his head.

"And where may that be?" asked the guard.

"In Holy Land," replied the fool.

The man gave a long whistle.

"Nay, nay, I did not think that was in your line any more than mine."

"I'm converted!" answered Charlot. "Here comes my master. We are going to mass; I'll pray for your soul."

At that moment Louis appeared. He was looking as sleek and sly as ever. There was no youth about him; he was scarce seventeen years old, and he might have been forty. He looked from one side to the other.

"Gossiping, Charlot?" he said severely.

The dwarf uncovered. "Not I, your highness," he answered. "He," and he pointed over his shoulder to the guard who was fast retreating, "asked where I had been and whither I was going? I told him I had been where he would never go—in Holy Land,—and that now we were going to mass like good Christians!"

A grim smile played on Louis's lips, and he moved towards the chapel, the fool following with his jingling bells. Margaret and Priscilla heard them coming, looked up, and saw the dwarf.

"Ah me, he has come to life again!" murmured Margaret.

They both hated the fool, and had been thankful to be delivered of him, but evidently he was restored to favour

and they would have to endure him. Lord William was startled at his appearance, but neither then nor afterwards did he ever ask a question concerning him; in fact, when he could, he ignored his existence. To his surprise, Louis, instead of turning a cold shoulder upon him as he expected, rather courted him, and even took him into his confidence.

"You see," he said to him one day, "you were right; he was at Fierbois, and the poor fellow had found the sword in the sacristy and was hiding with it when he heard you come with your friend. He was for starting at once to bring it to Blois, and it was a terrible blow to him having the glory snatched from him. Besides, Andrew was rough with him; his bones are not like other men's, and so, it seems, he broke a rib or two for him. The priest found him and treated him right well. When I sent to enquire after him he was still there, for he had no other place to go to."

"I am glad," said Lord William coldly, "that he escaped with so little injury. I scarce think Andrew can have beaten him heavily; it is not in his nature to strike those weaker than himself."

"He thought he was the devil," said Louis; "so it is excusable. Shall you be returning to the camp?"

"Yes," answered William, "I was to return with news of her majesty and any message you might have to send."

"And when shall you be taking your departure?" asked Louis.

"To-morrow I shall go on to Orleans and see the governor there. The king will not have lingered at Rheims; Joan would not have let him. I must find out

where I can join the army; Andrew will probably have sent a messenger to Orleans. The country where the army is at present is devastated, and they have little food; the king may probably return to the Beauce because it is more fertile."

"No, he will not," said Louis; "I have my own private information. He will go on to Paris."

"Ah!" said William, "your highness knows better than I."

The following day Andrew took his leave, carrying letters from the queen and the Countess Yolande.

"I shall return as soon as I can," he said to Priscilla, as they stood together in the ante-room after he had left the queen's presence, "for I think you are left in a very exposed position. You have no one to defend you, and if the English were to throw themselves upon the French, terrible things might happen."

"They will not do that," answered Priscilla, "for Count Dunois bars the way;" but she was sorry to see William go, and told him so. "For," she said, "Dame Morrison is no good at all as far as cheering the princess goes. She hates the country; she repeats daily how much she desires to be back in Scotland. She does not believe in our Joan; she says it is uncanny, that no girl can be a saint who goes clothed as she does in man's attire, and that she is sure she will come to a bad end. Dame Morrison is so straight-laced; it is foolish to think that Joan could go in women's clothes amongst so many men on the battle-field; only I do wish she had not gone against her Voices and remained with the king."

"She could not help it," answered Lord William;

"anyhow they would have forced her. Farewell, Priscilla; take good care of the princess. I am inclined to wish, like Dame Morrison, that she were back in Scotland!"

"I do, a hundred times a day," said Priscilla. "Not that I do not love France; it is a beautiful country, and the countess and the queen are very sweet, but I am afraid for the princess!" She came close up to Lord William, and said in a low voice: "Would it be so very hard with all those brave Scottish soldiers who brought us over to carry us back?"

"It seems impossible," said Lord William, "and we might greatly displeasure King James. If the princess would but express a wish, we should have something to work upon; we could not act without her full consent."

"And that she will never give," said Priscilla; "the Countess Yolande has too great a hold upon her."

"Then we must do the best we can for her," said Lord William. "As soon as I have carried the king's messages I will strive to return hither; but the war is not nearly over. Paris has still to be taken, and Bedford has still to be driven out of Normandy. What has been done is enormous. It is not a year since Joan made herself known, and I am much mistaken if she does not show herself soon beneath the walls of Paris. Farewell, Priscilla—I was going to say, my little playmate, but we have ceased to be boy and girl, and are, in very truth, fighting the stern battles of life."

"You are," said Priscilla with a sigh; "but I seem to be doing nothing."

"Except taking care of and comforting me," said the Princess Margaret, suddenly appearing. "She is very good to me, Lord William; I could not live without her." All at once they heard a gliding footstep, and before they knew where they were the curtain at the farther end was drawn aside, and the dauphin, with Charlot, stood in the opening.

"Truly, as I said before, Lord William, you are a squire of dames, or rather of maids!" he said. His face was evil, and the tone of his voice was sharp.

Lord William turned upon him: "I have a right to take leave of my king's daughter," he said, "for she was given into my father's charge, and it is likely before long I shall return to Scotland, and shall report to his majesty of the well- or ill-being of the princess!"

Louis's sallow face grew sallower. "Does the princess complain?" he said at last.

It was Princess Margaret who answered: "I make no complaint except that I would have my friends treated with more courtesy than you ofttimes mete out to them, Louis."

"Where is Dame Morrison?" asked the dauphin; "it is not seemly that two maidens should receive a youth alone."

"The ante-room is open to everyone," said Priscilla, "and we have just left the queen's apartments. I was talking to Lord William. He has been my friend from childhood upwards; we have played together."

"And so you play on," said Louis sarcastically.

"Play on!" shrieked the dwarf.

Lord William made a step forward, with his hand

upon the hilt of his sword as if he were about to draw it. Louis shrank back.

"I will call the guard!" he said.

"You will do no such thing," said Priscilla boldly, placing herself between him and Lord William, whilst Margaret, with an expressive sign, held up her hand.

"Go, I pray of you—go!" she said.

"I cannot!" answered Lord William, his face flushed with anger.

"What is happening here? Are you children quarrelling?" said a woman's voice in calm, cool tones.

A sigh of relief escaped Margaret as she sprang to the Countess Yolande's side. Louis was about to speak, but his grandmother silenced him.

"I will hear you afterwards," she said. "Lord William, you have taken leave of us; I think it were as well for you to depart for Orleans at once."

The young man still hesitated.

"Must I speak twice?" said the Countess Yolande. "Go in all kindness!" and she held out her hand to him.

At this mark of favour he stooped and raised it to his lips, and, turning to the dauphin, he said: "Farewell for the present, Prince; we shall meet again at a more propitious time and place!" His hand was still on the hilt of his sword as he left the room.

"Wherever you are there is quarrelling, Louis!" said the Countess Yolande. "Will there never be peace in this household? You have no right to intrude into these apartments without my orders."

"That Scotsman has less," said Louis; "I found him here!"



B181

"SHE CAUGHT HIM BY THE HANDS AND FORCED HIM TO HIS KNEES"

"With me," said Priscilla. "He was passing from your presence, Countess, when I met him." She blushed deeply. "And we stopped to speak together as old friends. The Princess Margaret heard us, and came out also to speak with us. We meant no harm!"

"We meant no harm!" sneered the fool, shaking his bells. The sound of his voice and his whole appearance irritated the countess. She touched a silver bell, and instantly the captain of the guard entered the room.

"I desire," she said, "as mistress of this castle, that you accompany the dauphin to his tower, and that for a day and a night you keep guard over him."

Livid with rage, Louis sprang upon her; but she was a strong woman, and he was of but a puny build. She caught him by the hands and forced him on his knees.

"You understand, I am mistress here. I have a parchment which makes me so in your father's absence; therefore you must obey me either willingly or by force. Rise and go!"

Cowed as a cur, Louis rose to his feet. "Do not touch me," he cried, looking at the captain. "He will hurt me with his great hands; I will walk alone. Come, Charlot." He moved towards the entrance, followed by the captain; there he turned round, and from his thin lips there issued a hissing sound: "I will be revenged!"

The countess gave a sharp laugh as he disappeared: "I have no doubt he will, but at least they will not meet at present," she said. Then, turning to the trembling girls, she added gently: "Let this be a lesson to you both; you must be more careful. We live such a simple life that we forget the etiquette of courts, and you forget that you are no longer children but women,

upon whom all eyes are turned, as it must ever be on those who are of high estate. It is our curse; we cannot move, or think, or act as women of lower degree are free to do. There are spies everywhere, even, as you see, in our own household, of our own kin. Poor children," she said, stroking their sunny hair, "it seems hard to lay a check upon you, but it must be even so. The prince is of a jealous temperament, and he will give us much trouble if you are not careful. I hope for the present he is silenced, and Lord William will not return for some time to come, therefore we will do our best to make him forget what has annoyed him—if he ever does forget," she added to herself. "Now come," she said, taking both their hands, "and after supper Alain Chartier will sing us one of his sweetest love-songs, and so we shall forget that war and fighting are the order of the day within and without." She spoke the last words sadly, and, passing an arm round the neck of each of the girls, she led them tenderly into her own retiring-room.

Thank God for the noble women who have come and gone, and striven to make the world less evil, and life more fair! They were dark days when the Countess Yolande lived, but she stands forth a noble figure, striving to encourage the weak and strengthen the strong, and so her name has come down to us as one of those who "did what they could".

CHAPTER XVII

IN HIDING

FOR a moment there was a flash of light through Joan's life. Town after town surrendered to her, her march was triumphant, the Burgundians needed but to see Joan's white banner for them to open their gates to receive her. It was not so, however, in towns held by a purely English garrison; they could not understand the preaching of Father Isambert, and as for Joan, there was but one opinion of her amongst them—she was a witch, and if they could catch her they would burn her. The rage for burning witches was rampant in England at this time, and lasted well-nigh a century or more. Even the French captains were harsh to her in spite of her successes, because they were jealous that so much of the glory went to her and not to them. Again and again she knelt at Charles's feet and besought him to let her go home.

"We will take Paris together, Joan!" he said; and the dissensions between the Regent Bedford and the Duke of Burgundy encouraged this hope. Charles advanced on Paris, and kept up between himself and Bedford a continuous warfare. More than once, however, Joan, when asked what her Voices said to her, answered: "They are silent!" And more than once Andrew Grahame found her sitting in her tent, a great sadness on her face.

"They will not speak to me," she said. "How would you have them do so? They have bidden me depart, and yet I stay."

She had just uttered these words one evening when there was a fierce sound of fighting in the camp beyond. The question had been, the previous day, of assaulting Paris, for they were lying beneath her very ramparts. The king and the captains had asked Joan whether they should do so, and she had told them that her Voices were silent. Nevertheless they had agreed that the assault should take place, and she had headed the attack and had been the first to scale the walls. But, alas! her white banner had lost its charm; she was wounded and thrown back into the ditch. There she lay for some minutes as if dead, for the English were firing their culverins and cannons, and their arrows were darkening the air. Andrew had seen her fall, but had lost sight of her, even as her soldiers had done, who, immediately losing heart, had fallen back; but suddenly she was on her feet again and in their midst. Andrew made a rush forward, caught the standard from her hand, and with a small body of men, ashamed to see the Maid going where they would not, gathered together and made a stand. It was in vain. Seeing how hopeless it was, her companions forced her back, and in great confusion fled, obliging her to do likewise. It was the evening of this day that found Joan, sad and alone, in her tent. The greater part of the army continued their flight until it reached St. Denis, where Charles, who never took part in any battle, was awaiting them. But she, weary and dispirited, pitched her tent with a few hundred men in the neighbourhood of a small village. As we have said, she was wounded, but her heart was sorer than her flesh, and when she heard a noise she looked up at Andrew hopelessly.

"What are they doing?" she said; "are they murdering each other?"

"Alas," said Andrew, "there are many amongst the common soldiers who are drunk, and doubtless they are fighting!"

A sudden rage seized her. "That is why we are undone," she said. "They drink and they fight, and their lives are evil, and then they marvel that God does not give them the victory!" and forthwith, before he could hinder her, she dashed out into the darkness and came straight into the midst of the brawling soldiers. "Avaunt!" she said; "are you not ashamed of yourselves? Down upon your knees and ask God's pardon for your sins!" And, raising her sword, she beat them with the flat of it. It was the sword of the five crosses which she loved so well. Suddenly, so great was the strength she used, it snapped in her hand as if it had been tinder. Then her rage melted away like snow. She stooped and picked up the broken blade. "See what ye have done!" she said, her voice filled with tears. But the men she had beaten shouted to her:

"You are a false prophetess; you said we should sleep in Paris this night!"

"And so you would," answered Joan, "if you had fought as I fought!" and, smarting from her wound, with a keener pang within, she went back to her tent.

Next morning, when they sought her, she was not to be found.

In the abbey of Saint Denis a woman knelt over against a pillar facing the great altar; above her hung a shining suit of armour. Long she knelt, and long she prayed. It was still so early that the first mass

had but just been said, and the priest at a side-altar had only vaguely seen the figure of a woman kneeling; he had paid no heed to her. When the mass was over she rose, cast one look at the armour, glimmering in the dimness, and then went forth. She wore the long black peasant's cloak and hood. The autumn morning, for it was mid-September, was somewhat cold and cheerless, and she shivered as she walked across to a humble inn which lay at the corner of a street giving on to the cathedral place. The proprietor had just taken down the shutters when she entered and seated herself at one of the wooden tables; he looked at her.

"Have you been journeying all night?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered, "and I am weary. Give me a glass of wine and a lump of bread, and then, if you have a room to spare, I will rest me for an hour or two."

"A young woman like you ought not to travel at this hour, with the country in its present state. The Maid has been beaten and the soldiers are let loose—such soldiers, too! Men from the south, who are given to rapine and murder."

"I know," answered Joan wearily, for it was the Maid. "Give me what I asked of you;" and she threw a piece of money on the table.

He took it up, tossed it on the tip of his fingers, and, satisfied that the coin was good, obeyed her. After the manner of the French peasant women she dipped her bread in wine and ate it piece by piece; she was evidently starving. The innkeeper watched her and he noticed that she kept one arm wrapped in her cloak. When she had finished she looked up at him with her heavy eyes, saying:

"And the room. I must sleep."

At that same moment a big woman in short petticoats and black bodice, with her linen chemise drawn up at the throat and the sleeves turned back to the elbows, came into the cabaret. She had a good-natured face, her fair hair tucked away under a high Norman cap.

"Whom have you there?" she asked her husband.

"A woman who says she wants a room to sleep in."

"Going to bed when the cock crows?" answered his wife; and she came quickly forward, her wooden sabots clattering on the brick pavement. She stood with her elbows akimbo opposite Joan, who looked up at her so pleadingly that, as if by magic, the woman changed her tone. "*Mon enfant*," she said, "why are you abroad at such an hour?"

"Of necessity, believe me, *chère mère*," answered Joan. "If I had my will I would go to bed with the chickens and rise with the cock crowing, but as I cannot I must snatch my sleep when it comes to me." She rose, adding, with the intonation of a child: "Take me to bed!" As she spoke she stretched herself, and in so doing she must have moved her injured arm, for she uttered a faint cry.

"Are you hurt?" asked the woman.

"Oh no," said Joan, "it is nothing!"

"Come, then, you shall go to bed, *pauvre enfant*; it is time too. There come those rascals!" and as she spoke a troop of soldiers, still half-drunk, entered the cabaret.

Joan literally fled, and the woman followed her. Opening a door she invited her to enter a small but spotlessly clean room.

"There, you will not hear them here, my child!" she said. "Ah! these are times; one knows not what to think of them. There is the Maid; she took Orleans, she gained great battles, and now she can do nothing. And the king takes his ease and leaves her to fight his battles with such men as those!"

"What do people say of the Maid?" asked Joan in a trembling voice, turning her back on the woman so that she might not see her face.

"Oh, people are tiring of her!" was the answer. "They say she is no prophetess at all. The English say she is a witch, and if they catch her they will burn her."

Joan shuddered.

"Poor thing! poor thing!" she murmured. "Good-night, *ma mère*, or rather good-morrow. At least we will pray for her, for she has done good service to France!"

"That is true!" was the quick retort. "I love her; but then you see I am a Norman woman, and these Parisians, and the southern folk with whom King Charles has recruited his army, are mere butterflies. As long as she was successful they worshipped Joan, but now she has had one or two failures they are ready to cast her off."

"Poor thing! poor thing!" repeated Joan again, and this time she signed herself with the sign of the cross, and climbing into the big high bed she laid her head upon the pillow with a gentle sigh. The woman threw a thick coverlet over her, for the morning was chilly, and as she drew the heavy cloth curtain round the bed she said kindly:

"Sleep, *ma mie*, I will take care no one disturbs you!"

But Joan hardly heard the last words; she slept.

Nature had given way at last, and peace had fallen upon that tired brain and heart. The woman crept out of the room, locked the door after her, and put the key in her pocket.

"She is good for some hours," she said, and went back into the cabaret.

A viler set of cut-throats it would have been difficult to find than the men who unceremoniously had crowded into the cabaret and seated themselves on the wooden benches before the tables.

"Give us drink, man, drink, and whatever food you have!" were the words which fell from more than one mouth at the same time. "We're drenched to the skin, and we're half-dead from starvation."

"A soldier's lot is not enviable in these times," said another.

Père Jean bellowed up a flight of attic stairs:

"Quick, Pierre, get up, you lazy hound! Good, good, my masters, I will give you wine, *petit bleu*!"

"*Petit bleu!*" repeated the men; "we'll have none of your *petit bleu* watery wine. Give us good, honest Normandy cider."

"You're right," said Père Jean. "Pierre, Pierre!" and rushing about he filled great, brown pitchers with the sweet-scented cider, put them on the table, with big, pewter mugs, or anything he could lay his hands on, Pierre and Mère Constance following his example as quickly as they could. There was a moment's silence while the men drained their cups and tore lumps of bread from the great loaves which, from some hidden recess, Constance had brought forth and put before them.

"Not too fast!" she said, standing with her arms akimbo. "I have given you all I have, and the bakers will not be open for another hour — or two, maybe. When I heard there was fighting I made double provision yesterday, as good luck would have it."

"You did well," answered a tall, lean man. "But we've been deceived. That Joan is a false woman, like all her sex. She swore that we should be in Paris last night, and here we are outside its walls. Prophetess, indeed! she is no more a prophetess than you are." And he buried his face once more in his pewter mug and drank deep.

"You owe her a grudge," said his neighbour, "because when you said as much to her she slapped you on the back with the flat of her sword, and told you that if you had fought as she had we should have been in Paris."

"She broke her sword on his back," called out a tall youth.

"Yes, her sword with the five crosses. It will bring her bad luck," said another.

"Have you heard the news?" called out a burly fellow from the farther corner of the cabaret. "They say she's gone. She was always up betimes, by daylight, but this morning she did not appear, and that Scotch fellow, her standard-bearer, after calling, went into her tent, and came back declaring it was empty."

The faces of the men fell.

"She has threatened to throw us over long ago," said the first man who had spoken. "She has perhaps kept her word. Well, if her luck has left her, it is best she should go."

"You're an ungrateful rascal!" said the other man.

"When you were sick and wounded she tended you; but she would stand no cursing or swearing in the camp, and she would have us go to mass."

"That's the grudge I owe her; it is priest's work, not hers."

This conversation was carried on intermittently while the men drank great bowls of cider. It was strong Normandy cider, and went quickly to the brains of these half-starved, tired soldiers, so that by degrees they grew quarrelsome, and, as was perhaps natural, seeing she was at that time the beginning and the end of all things, they quarrelled about Joan. Some would have it that she was an impostor; others—and the greater number—that she could not well be false, for they had fought with her many a long day, had entered Rheims with her, and had seen the butterflies crowding round her standard. As fiercely as some inveighed against her, others defended her.

"If she be gone, who will lead us?" shouted the tall youth who had spoken once before. "She was always on the top of the ladder; she took her luck with us all, food or no food; but in this last assault she was wounded, and fell into the ditch. I saw the Scotsman help her up. But she was not to be outdone; she went forward when we fled, and would have gone to her death if they had not dragged her back. We are cowards to malign her!"

"Coward yourself!" cried the tall, thin man, and he dashed a bowl of cider into the young soldier's face. Then, scarcely knowing why or wherefore, there arose a great tumult. The host and Pierre threw themselves into the midst and tried to separate the com-

batants. Constance shrank, terrified, into the passage. The sound of the fighting reached Joan where she lay; she started up and listened. Her face grew white. "Have they found me?" she thought. Instinctively she cowered behind the curtains of the bed.

"Jesu, Maria!" she said, crossing herself, "have mercy upon me! If they find me they will surely slay me." She who had faced the greatest dangers on the battle-field was nothing but a frightened girl at this hour. Suddenly there was a lull. In the midst of the brawling and the shouting and the blows which fell indiscriminately a young man carrying a standard entered.

"Shame on you!" he cried. "Are you men or beasts? What would the Maid say if she could see you? Happily she is gone, gone where you will not find her; but she has left her standard, under which you have fought so many glorious battles." As he spoke he unfolded the great white silk standard, which the hands of the queen and the Princess Margaret had so cunningly woven, and it floated in the foul atmosphere of that dingy cabaret, with its soft silken folds drooping as if in sorrow.

Several of the men were struck with remorse, and, falling on their knees, began muttering an "Ave Maria".

"Better come and hear mass," said Andrew, throwing the door wide open; and these men of the south, impressionable as children, staggered to their feet, and, hardly conscious of what they did, followed Andrew across the place to the grand old cathedral which had seen the crownings and the burials of so many of their kings. They all went, some two-score men, for those who hesitated were ashamed, and followed their companions up the steps and entered the still sombre cathedral, that

great Gothic pile, with its countless pillars, intermingling arches, nave and aisles, seeming in the far end to blend into one great mass. Andrew never knew in after-times how he came to do this thing. He stepped out in front of the men, holding aloft his standard. On he went to the steps of the high altar; there he stopped, for suddenly there broke forth a mingled sound—something between a groan and a shout of triumph—as the men faced a pillar and saw hanging therefrom the armour and the helmet of their girl-leader. On their knees they fell, tears coursing down their rugged faces. At that same moment the priest, preceded by his acolytes, carrying the cross, came from the sacristy to the altar. As he approached he marvelled also as to who all these men might be; then he saw the armour; but he had his sacred office to fulfil, and no curiosity, great as it might be, could come between it and him. He said his mass, and when it was over he came and stood by Andrew and his men.

"What does it mean?" he asked.

"It is the Maid's armour," said Andrew, "and she has gone and left us; we know not where to find her."

"Then ye have sinned," said the priest, "for she was a holy Maid; Father Isambert has told me so."

"We have sinned," said the men. There was a moment's silence.

"What will ye do now?" asked the priest.

The men of the south are far more emotional, and are more superstitiously religious than the men of the north. What appertains to the south is always fiery and passionate, quick to blame, quick to slay, quick to pardon.

Those who had spoken hardest of Joan were now the most penitent. The tall, dark, lean man rose.

"We must find her," he said, "if we hunt the world over!" Then, pointing to Andrew, he continued: "He must know where she is."

"This morning I went into her tent, took her standard and brought it hither to lay it upon the shrine of Saint Denis until she should claim it," Andrew answered, and with bowed head he gave it into the hands of the priest, who, preceded by his acolytes and followed by that troop of ruffian soldiers, carried it to the shrine of the saint and laid it thereon. As he did so, once more groans were heard and tears were seen to pour down the rugged faces, and the question rose in Andrew's heart: "Is her labour ended?" He turned and walked down the church, his hands crossed upon his bosom, with that strange feeling of emptiness which a mother feels when her child is taken from her. Then from those around him there arose the almost bitter question: "Where shall we go? what shall we do?"

"To the king," said Andrew.

"To the king," they answered, and marched through the narrow streets to the house where the king lodged.

To say that consternation overwhelmed every class, indeed every man, to whom the news of the departure of the Maid was announced, is to give but a faint idea of what the general feeling really was. Charles gave orders that the whole town and country round was to be searched, and that when she was found Joan was to be brought before him. And all the while she lay sleeping in that little back room in that mean inn. When the noise had ceased she had crept back into bed and had

fallen asleep again. Once or twice Mère Constance came and looked at her, and marvelled.

"It is a wonderful sleep!" she muttered to herself. "It is a sin to wake one who slumbers so peacefully; so let her rest until she wakes of herself."

And all day long Joan slept, until suddenly it seemed to her that she heard Andrew's voice, and she awoke with a start.

"Ah me!" she sighed, "if my angels had but taken me sleeping, so should I have awoke in heaven and not upon this fighting earth." She sat up and saw by the dim light which came through the lattice window that the day was waning. She rose and strove to open the door, but, finding it was locked, she knocked gently. Constance had been listening and heard her. The woman had an instinct that there was some secrecy about this stranger; she came instantly, and seeing her up, asked her:

"Are you for going away?"

Joan looked at her; there was trouble in her face. "Are there many people in the town to-night?" she asked.

"Yes, it is full," answered the woman. "They are seeking for the Maid Joan, who has disappeared."

"Ah!" murmured Joan, turning her back slightly so that her face might not be seen. "Have they no clue to her whereabouts?" she asked.

"None," answered the woman. "Miraculously her armour was found hanging in the cathedral. Some think her angels have carried her away. The soldiers have been bad to her of late and have not believed in her, and they say her Voices have been silent. She fell

yesterday, and was wounded. She lost the fight, and when she returned she beat the men, calling them cowards.

"They may have killed her," said Joan.

"*Nenni*, they would not have dared, for she was either of God or the devil, and men fear both."

Joan smiled. "Good mother, will you keep me here this night? I have a long journey before me, and it is scarcely fitting I should travel at this hour and under such circumstances."

"Surely, my daughter, rest. I will bring you your soup here, for the public room is invaded by a rough lot; all day they have been in and out till we scarce know whether we stand on our heads or on our heels, and are nearly worn to death,"

"But you have your reward," said Joan; "you must have made your harvest."

"So, so," answered the woman cunningly.

Joan took out a gold piece. "I will pay for my room and my lodging with that," she said, as she laid it in her palm.

"Good!" answered the woman. "I will give you of my best;" and, well satisfied, she left the room.

Again, as she opened the door, it struck Joan that she heard Andrew's voice, but she dared not go out. "They would tear me to pieces if I fell into their hands," she thought; "it is better they should think I have departed." Then suddenly there came over her one of those deep fits of despair to which she was subject.

"Oh, my dear Voices," she prayed, joining her hands together and looking upwards, "will you not speak to me? Will you not comfort me? I have laid my armour

on one side, I have humbled myself and become a little maid again; will you not pardon and speak to me?" As the last words fell from her lips there came over her face a look of ecstasy and delight, she raised her head and bent forward as one who listens, and the cloud of trouble and distress passed away. She did not move, she uttered no sound—and there was no sound! And yet she listened, for she heard what no one else heard. The trance was broken by the opening of the door once more, and the entrance of the hostess bearing a steaming plate of soup. She put it on a small table.

"There, my child," she said; "and here is bread, and I will fetch you good cider. Eat and drink; so you will be stronger for your journey."

"*Grand merci!*" said Joan, and, coming to the table, she took up the bread and signed it, as the peasants do to this very day, with the sign of the cross, then she broke it and ate.

CHAPTER XVIII

PLESSIS-LES-TOURS

A TORRENTIAL rain was pouring down and the atmosphere was thick with mist, as so often happens in a country intersected by rivers. And the city of Tours lies low, with three rivers running through, round, and about it—the Loire, the Cher, and the Indre,—whilst it is almost belted in with high hills. The castle of Plessis-les-Tours is perhaps about three miles out of

Tours. Its sombre towers and turrets rose out of a damp, marshy ground. In summer its verdure, its vast parks and surrounding meadows, were delightful, but in the autumn they were not always healthy. But the dauphin loved the place, and to humour him the Countess Yolande and the Queen Marie had come hither in the summer. Now it was November, and they were still there; travelling was not so easy in those days as in these, and a court with all its paraphernalia, poor though it might be, was difficult to move from one place to another. It had been a lovely October—St. Luke's and St. Martin's summers had succeeded each other,—only within the last week or two had the heavy rains stripped the trees of their leaves and given to the country that air of desolation which precedes winter.

Two travellers had entered the town that morning; they had descended into the city from the heights of St. Symphorien, had crossed the wooden bridge which spanned the Loire, and had gone, as it were on a pilgrimage, into the great cathedral. There they had stayed a long time in prayer, and afterwards had betaken themselves to a little inn. Their clothes were damp and travel-stained, and they each carried a wallet slung across their shoulders. A wood fire was burning on the hearth as in the common room, and in the glow thereof they stood and dried themselves. The younger man kept his hood over his head and was very silent. After a time the eldest asked the host for food—soup, bread, and wine, the usual fare. When they had partaken of it they rose, paid the cost, went out, and directed their steps towards the river. It was very swollen, as it always is during these torrential rains

"You will have a bad walk," said the elder; "but it will not take you long, and I dare not go with you."

"Oh no," the other answered, "we agreed about that long ago! I thank you for all the care and courtesy you have given me during our long journey. Now we must part."

"I shall not be far away," said the eldest one, "and if you are successful in carrying out the plan we have agreed upon I shall probably come to Plessis-les-Tours until I join the king at Bourges. Farewell!"

"Farewell!" repeated his companion.

They shook hands like good comrades. He returned to the city, and the younger lad went in the opposite direction.

Wherever they might be in those days, life, for the women of the court, differed but little. They kept their own apartments; they seldom went abroad; their fingers were ever busy at their embroidery. A few, but very few, had learnt the art of illumination—among these Margaret of Scotland distinguished herself. The duchess and her daughter, with the two maidens, Princess Margaret and Priscilla, occupied a fairly large room in the daytime, and on this afternoon they sat each at her embroidery frame, whilst Alain Chartier touched the lute and sang for them. A lovely greyhound lay at Margaret's feet, its head between its outstretched paws. Sometimes it would look up at its mistress and whine, and then Margaret would stop in her work, stroke its head, and speak gently to it for sympathy. Crimson curtains hung across the entrance to keep out the draught, and great faggots, resting on high dogs, gave

both light and warmth to the room, which was hung with tapestries. The curtain was lifted, and Bertram, the page, now grown tall and slender, no longer a child, entered. He had fallen sick from exposure on the battle-fields, and had been sent back to be nursed, and the women petted and made much of him; but he would have naught to say to any of them save to the royal ladies. He was a great favourite with Margaret and Priscilla, to whom he would talk by the hour concerning Joan and her heroic deeds.

"Madam," he said now, going up and bowing before the queen, "there is a peasant outside who says he has a missive for you, but he will present it to no one but yourself."

"A traveller in such weather as this, and at such a time?" answered the queen.

"Yes," said Bertram, "and the guard would not let him pass. You know, madam, the dauphin's orders are strict. He lives in mortal terror of strangers entering the castle."

"What is the man like, Bertram?" asked the countess.

He turned quickly towards her, his face slightly flushed: "I could not see his face, madam," he said; then hesitating, he added: "but I heard his voice."

There was something in his manner and in the look of his eyes which struck the countess and her daughter.

"If he has a missive for me," said the queen, "bring him hither. It may be from the king; he ofttimes employs strange messengers."

"So I observed to the guard," said the boy, "but he would not heed me."

"And he is waiting outside in the cold and rain,"

said the Countess Yolande. "Go quickly and bring him in." As she spoke she drew a ring from her finger, gave it to Bertram, and said: "Show that to the guard; it will suffice."

The boy went. Ten minutes may have elapsed, during which time the royal ladies had ceased work and Alain Chartier had let his lute fall on his knees; then they heard steps; at the same moment the curtain was once more lifted, and a youth entered quickly and knelt at Queen Marie's feet; his hood had fallen back, showing a white, wan face which told a tale of ineffable weariness. As he knelt, the water streamed from his clothes; his short brown hair clung straight over his white brow; an expression of pathetic sorrow was outlined in every feature. Instinctively those present surrounded him as if to protect him. Alain Chartier rose, and hastily closed and bolted the doors.

"Joan, my child!" exclaimed the countess, "where have you been all these months?"

"In the highways and hedges, by mountains and rivers," she answered.

"Alone?" said the duchess.

"No," answered Joan, "there was one who would not leave me. But I may not tell his name; he has sworn me to secrecy. He has been as a brother to me."

"And he has left you now?" said the duchess.

"Listen!" said Joan, rising. "I am of all creatures the most miserable. I have done my work, and the world will not believe me. My Voices bid me fight no more, my sword is broken, I have hung my armour up before God's altar, and yet they would drag me forth! Save me, only you can save me! They will not seek for me

here; they will not think that I would throw myself into your midst. My father, my mother, my sisters, and my brothers would betray me for greed or glory's sake, but you will not, for you believe in my mission, and you believe in God and His saints! So I have come all this long way—a wanderer on the face of the earth—to seek your protection." Suddenly her voice changed, and there came into it a note of terror. "I shall die if I disobey my Voices," she said, "not a natural death, not the death a maid would wish to die, but a death by fire. So it has been revealed to me. France had been saved long ago if her leaders had but heeded me!"

Her mantle had fallen from her shoulders and she stood in a gray blouse reaching to her knees, loose hose, and sabots on her feet. As she ceased speaking a deep silence fell upon all present. They looked at her. This, then, was the conqueror of Orleans and Patay, the girl to whom Charles the Seventh owed his crown? Suddenly Margaret of Scotland sprang forward and surrounded her with her arms.

"You mean that we must hide you," she said, "and that no man must know where you are to be found until this war is ended?"

"Yes, that is what I mean," said Joan. "In God's name, hide me! You good women," she continued, stretching out her arms to the queen and the countess, "you wisest of mothers, have pity on a maid!"

Tears were flowing down all their faces.

"How can we do it?" said the queen. "We are watched and guarded ourselves."

"Not overmuch," said Margaret, "and in this castle there are strange nooks and corners, secret staircases

leading up to unused chambers in the turrets. It were easy to hide her there. Dear Mother, we will do it for God's sake!" and she crossed over to Queen Marie, holding out her hands beseechingly.

No nature was more easily influenced than Marie of Anjou's; in that she differed from her mother, who was strong and self-reliant.

"Mother, can we do it?" she asked, turning to the countess.

"If Joan will not make herself known, then we must," was the answer. "Margaret says rightly; there are hiding-places here," she was about to add "and dungeons!" but she would not. "What say you, our poet and counsellor, for such verily you are; we have none other."

"I say the Princess Margaret is right," said Alain Chartier; "it can be done."

At that moment they heard steps coming up the stone staircase.

"It is Louis!" exclaimed the queen.

Quick as lightning Alain Chartier took Joan by the arm and ran with her through a side-door into outer darkness.

"To your frames, girls," said the queen. They obeyed instantly just in time, for there came a knock at the great door. "Enter!" said the queen. Bernard unbolted the door, and Louis, with a frown on his face and his fool at his heels, strode into the room.

"They told me—" he began, but Margaret, lifting up her head, looked at him and smiled:

"Louis," she said, "you have not been to see us all day long; it is not kind of you. And the rain has never

stopped, and it has been so dreary. We have seen no one but a stupid peasant, who said he had a message for the queen, and it turned out to be—"

"Well, who?" asked Louis sharply.

"That I cannot tell you, but he wanted the queen to ask you to take him into your service. He says he was wounded at Patay."

"And what have you done with him?"

"The queen gave him some money—a few coins—and sent him away. See how he has wet the floor with his clothes."

"I did not meet him," said Louis.

"Naturally; we sent him away by the back passage," answered Margaret. "Now come and sit by me, Louis, and you, Master Charlot, there is Alain Chartier's lute, I have heard tell you are a good musician."

"I never touched a lute in my life," answered the dwarf.

"Then Priscilla will show you how," said the princess, and at a sign from Margaret, Priscilla took the lute and touched the strings. In truth she was no mean player, and Alain Chartier thought much of her performance. On the present occasion she quite understood that Margaret meant her to detain the prince and amuse him; so she exerted herself and played very sweetly, and Margaret sang with a voice which, as yet untrained, was still full of natural music. Louis had been mortally dull all day in his own apartments with his confessor, his dwarf, and two or three companions as evil-minded as himself, who encouraged him in his rebellious feelings towards his father, and talked to him of the time when he would be king, and fawned upon him until

he himself was sickened by it, for he was no fool. The warmth, the light, the sweet girl-faces thawed him.

"Get thee gone, Charlot, with thine ugly face!" he said, bestowing a kick and a cuff upon his companion. "The ladies do not love thee; get thee gone!"

The dwarf rose, his head sunk between his shoulders, and stood for a second looking round the room.

"They will beguile thee, hapless Prince. Beware, beware!" and with something between a shriek and a laugh he dashed out of the room.

It is marvellous how cunning we grow when we fear persons with whom we are nevertheless obliged to live. These two girls, Princess Margaret and Priscilla, knew full well that if they had seemed to rejoice at the departure of the dwarf, or had abused him, they would have turned Louis against them. So Margaret said:

"You should not have driven him forth so roughly, Louis, for our sakes. We can bear with him when you are present, though he is not so agreeable to us when we are alone. But that is only because we are girls."

"Of course you have your fancies," said Louis, "and, Princess, I am glad to humour you."

"Thank you!" answered Margaret. "Would it pleasure you to play a game of chess with me?"

"I am not good at games," said Louis, "but to-night, as you smile on me, I may be in luck."

Margaret signed to Priscilla, who quickly brought a table and the board and the roughly-cut figures which made up the game, invented to charm the hours of his sick grandsire, and Margaret and Louis played together. But the princess was careful that Louis should win, and so he was in high good-humour until the supper-bell

rang, and then he rose, and, taking Margaret's hand, he said:

"We will walk into the hall together, my betrothed." And Margaret suffered him, and he forgot about the peasant, and they all parted good friends. When the ladies were once more alone the Countess Yolande patted Margaret on the cheek.

"You will make a man of him yet," she said; but Margaret burst into tears.

What cannot women do when they choose? So it came to pass that through the long winter months Joan of Orleans lived under the same roof with the royal women of France, and was served by Margaret of Scotland and Priscilla Grahame. Many a happy hour those three passed together in the bare turret chamber where she was lodged. They none of them questioned what the future was likely to be; the present sufficed them. The king had gone to Bourges, when the Duke of Burgundy, returning from Normandy, had entered Paris as regent for the Duke of Bedford. What the next move would be many wondered, but for the present Charles's principal occupation was to procure money, of which he had not sufficient even to pay his soldiers. The consequence was that there was much disorder in the army. An attempt was made by the Count of Savoy to bring the Duke of Burgundy to terms with Charles, but it was of no avail. And whilst Joan was in hiding, another woman arose and said she too had had visions; but her visions were not of a spiritual kind, but of the earth, earthy. She prophesied of gold, and treasures, and wealth untold, and some listened to her and some mocked at her. Joan, in her hiding-place,

heard of it and smiled; all the world marvelled as to where Joan might be, and the king offered a reward to anyone who would find her and bring her to him. Priscilla told her this and she wept.

"Why will he not let me rest in peace?" she said. "My mission is finished; it was finished when my liege lord was crowned at Rheims."

"But he cannot understand it, nor others either," said Margaret; "he must go on fighting until he is king of all France, not of a little corner of it as he is now. Oh, Joan, don't you think you could help him?"

"My Voices do not tell me to go," she answered, and turned away.

It was strange to think that she was there and no one knew it. No light was ever seen in that top turret; her food was brought her by Bertram, sometimes by the princess herself—even Dame Morrison was not in the secret. This was the easier because she was ailing all the winter with pains and ague, which she said were owing to the marshy land, so that the girls were left entirely to the queen and the Countess Yolande, and when they went forth it was in company. So the days and weeks went by, and Joan, much as she loved her companions, began to feel the close imprisonment. She who had been accustomed to ride in the open air throughout a whole day, panted for the fresh breezes and the exercise of riding or of walking. She would pace up and down her room, "to unstiffen her limbs," she said. She could not venture forth even into the courtyards and gardens, for there were guards everywhere. She had asked for a distaff and a spinning-wheel, and with difficulty the queen had procured them

for her, and she wove and spun during those long hours. But gradually, little by little, the longing grew upon her to go forth once more, and after the New Year, when she heard that the king was thinking that when spring came he would once more move back to the Seine, she with difficulty restrained herself from joining him.

"If only my Voices would bid me go!" she said to Margaret; "but without them I dare not!"

We all know how, when we greatly desire a thing, we seek to attain it at any cost. Though the still small voice within us may bid us go forward, we linger and, like Lot's wife, we look back! It had grown to be thus with Joan, and so intense was her desire that she prayed by day and by night that her Voices would bid her join the king. The Countess Yolande saw the struggle going on, and she did not know how to advise her; to her practical mind the whole thing was so wonderful. She believed in the girl, at least she believed that without God and without the will of God she could not have done the great deeds she had done; she believed that she was sent to deliver France, but whether she dreamt of these Voices or whether they were of her imagination she could not decide. At this present time France was at a stand-still, what fighting took place was of a desultory sort; the French were more often beaten than not. If, therefore, Joan could arise and help them by the prestige of her name it was surely desirable. She went so far as to say so to her once.

"See," she said, "the king has made you noble, and all your family; your little village, which you love, is exempt from taxes, it is not like any other village in France. Surely if you can help the king you should

still do so. I understand that you were weary and sick and worn when you came to us, but, now you are rested, you are well and strong. Think over it, my child."

"I will!" she answered. "Let us all pray that God will decide for us."

One day, by chance, or rather by forgetfulness, she went to the casement of her room, leant forward, and looked down. The castle was surrounded by a ditch and a wall. She saw no human being; all was still, for it was the supper-hour and, except the men on guard, everyone was assembled in the great hall. But if she did not see, she was seen; a pair of elfish eyes discerned her. For some days Charlot had suspected that there was a secret in that turret. There was no access to it save from the queen's apartments, where he had no right to go. He had noticed once or twice that the casement was open, and again that it was shut; also he had seen Bertram leaving the kitchen with a savoury pie in his hand, and when he had asked him for whom it was, he answered:

"For Dame Morrison; she is sick."

"Pasties are not good for sick people," he had replied; "you lie!" But Bertram had run off. Another time he saw him with a flagon of wine; but this time he did not speak to him, but set himself to watch the turret. And thus it came to pass that on this evening he saw Joan; the moon shone full upon her face. He almost shrieked with delight.

"The king's reward will be mine!" he said. "I will tell no man. Ah, friend Charlot, thou wilt be a rich man yet!" He capered with delight.

The following morning, when Louis awoke and expected the dwarf to appear as usual by his bedside, Charlot was nowhere to be found.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BITTER END

IT was late, an hour before midnight, the drawbridge was up, when about a dozen men came to the edge of the moat and shouted:

"Lower the bridge in the king's name!"

"We cannot," was the answer. "The dauphin will not allow anyone to enter until morning."

Then another voice rang out: "I, Charles, King of France, order you to lower the bridge and admit me into my castle of Plessis-les-Tours!"

A moment's consultation and the working of the bridge began. In a few seconds it was made fast, and the king, riding foremost, crossed it, entered the castle, and the bridge was drawn up again. The noise had roused many of the inmates, amongst others the ever-wakeful Louis. He did not venture forth, but stood shivering in the centre of his room, bidding the man who served him go and see what had happened. He had been irritable and nervous ever since Charlot's departure, and when the valet came running back and announced that it was the king himself who had come, his terror was piteous.

"What have I done?" he cried. "He has come to

make me prisoner and throw me into the dungeon!" and he stood wringing his hands and weeping.

"Nay," said his valet, "the king is well disposed towards your highness; go and meet him as a son should!" He clothed the prince hastily, and Louis went down into the courtyard where the king had dismounted.

"My father," he said, "to what do we owe the honour of this visit?"

"That I will tell you to-morrow, my son," was the king's answer. "In the meantime I have given orders that no man or woman shall be permitted to leave the castle, and I have placed my own guards upon the bridge."

"Does some danger menace us?" asked Louis.

"Not that I know of," answered his father. "We will sup and go to bed, for we have had a long ride and are weary." As he spoke he entered the great hall, where the cooks and serving-men were busy preparing supper.

"Would you wish her majesty the queen and the Countess Yolande to be apprised of your arrival?" asked the master of the household.

"To-morrow will be soon enough," answered the king with a strange smile; "but make sure their apartments are well guarded. They are not to leave them."

To Louis's surprise he suddenly perceived Charlot.

"Where dost thou spring from?" he asked.

"That also thou shalt know to-morrow," said the king; "if he has spoken truly he shall be rewarded; if not, he shall be hanged."

"Ah, thou has been spying, and hast betrayed someone!" hissed Louis in his ear. He gave him a backward

kick which sent him sprawling on the ground, and then he walked on beside his father. The fool whimpered, and strove to get up; a soldier gave him his hand.

"Never mind the kick," he said, "thou canst afford to laugh at him; thou wilt have thy pockets full of gold to-morrow—if the king have any!"

"Surely he will not deceive me; he will have enough to pay me?" whimpered the dwarf.

"That remains to be seen," answered the soldier, grinning.

The women's tower was situated at the extremity of the wing farthest away from the main building, and at this hour they were sleeping, so that the noise did not reach them well, and what they did hear did not surprise them; there was often a coming and a going, and a changing of the guards. But the following morning the queen's tire-woman came to her earlier than usual and was somewhat flustered.

"Has your majesty heard that the king arrived late last night, and that he has taken over the command of the castle, and forbidden that anyone shall either enter or go forth?"

The queen's face grew deadly pale. "What can it mean?" she said, and without waiting for the answer she went in to her mother and told her.

"Then there has been a traitor amongst us," said the countess, "and the king has heard that Joan is here. She must be warned!" and, hastily dressing herself, she threw a cloak about her and hurriedly climbed the stairs to Joan's room. She knocked lightly at the door. Joan was sleeping, but she had been accustomed to sleep with one ear open. She sprang up, crossed the room to the

door, and stood there. She was too wary to speak or to open. The countess heard her.

"Joan!" she said.

Instantly she opened. "Madam," she said, "can aught have happened to you?"

The countess entered, pushed the door to, and laid her hands on Joan's shoulder. "The call has come; the King is here!"

A flash of light broke on Joan's face. "I knew it!" she said; "my Voices spoke to me last night. I have waited for the call and it has come. Take me to him!"

"It is well," said the countess. "Clothe yourself and join me in my room; we will go together."

The coming of the king had excited great surprise; the soldiers and the men-at-arms wondered what it meant. In his own mind Charles was cogitating how he should play his part. Should he act the master over Joan and force her to follow him, or should he play the gracious monarch? Should he be angry against the queen and the Countess Yolande, for having thus deceived him, and then graciously pardon them? Whilst he was still ruminating, seated at a table in his own room before betaking himself to the hall, he heard steps, and suddenly there was a great cry:

"Joan! Joan the Maid!" and unceremoniously the door was thrown open, and, clad in the plain serge dress, with the short petticoats and sabots, of the peasant women, Joan stood before him. In a second she was kneeling at his feet:

"Sire, my beloved Sire," she murmured, "pardon me!"

"Ah, Joan," he answered, "why hast thou thus dealt with us? We should do well to punish thee."

"I could not do otherwise," she replied; "my Voices had ceased to speak, the soldiers had ceased to love me, and my sword was broke. What would you have had me do? But my heart has pined for you, my beloved lord and master. And now you have found me, and the call has come, I will do as you bid me—ay, though I go to my death!"

The king held out his hand and raised her.

"We owe thee too much not to pardon thee, Joan!" he said. "We have found thee, and now thou must abide with us. We will give thee another sword and another suit of armour, until we have fetched thine from St. Denis, where it still hangs. Faithless one, thou and I will ride together again and conquer!"

All the spring of life came back to Joan. "I have no standard," she said, "and my standard-bearer has departed from me."

"Andrew Grahame, the Scotsman?" said the king. "We left him in Bourges; he joined us there. We will send for him, and he will ask for nothing better than to come."

"How did you find me?" said Joan.

"How did we find thee?" exclaimed Charles. He laughed aloud, and his courtiers standing round him laughed also, and, coming forward, one and all shook Joan by the hand like good comrades as they were.

"We have missed you, Joan," said La Hire, "and we have fallen into evil ways, forgetting to go to mass, and many other things which you bade us do."



B181

"THE KING HELD OUT HIS HAND AND RAISED HER"

"I am sorry," said Joan; "but that is no answer to my question. How did you find me?"

"The dwarf Charlot spied thee," answered Charles. "He knew I had offered a reward to whoever should bring thee to me, and he has ridden for dear life and is back here with me—all for love of gold!"

"And you have paid him?" said Joan.

"With what?" asked Charles; "we have not a gold livre amongst us. He will have to wait for his pay, as others have to do."

"Ah, but you will pay me, Sire!" shrieked Charlot, pushing his way through the crowd.

"All in good time," answered Charles. "And now send for a smith and bid him make a new suit of armour for Joan. We will bide here three days, and then she must ride away with us."

A little in the background he saw a group of women, and said hastily: "Make way for the queen, the Countess Yolande, and my sweet Margaret! Traitors—all of them!" he added, laughing, "whom I should send into the dungeons, only I am so well pleased to have outwitted them that I must fain pardon them." He stepped forward and took the queen's hand. He did not love her—some said he hated her,—but he knew her to be a virtuous woman, and she was his wife, and so he was courteous to her. He neglected her, he did her many a wrong, but she, womanlike, pardoned him. It was the way in those days; a woman was of little account, ay, even though she were a queen, unless, like the Countess Yolande, she had more spirit than a man. He greeted the countess after a different fashion: he frowned upon her.

"Joan had never been so well hidden but for you, Countess," he said.

"Yes, she would," said Margaret, stepping forward; "I thought of the turret for her!"

Now Charles loved Margaret better than he did his own children.

"Fie on thee!" he said; "I trusted thee, Margot."

Quick tears filled the girl's eyes. "Ah, but she could not fight; her Voices would not let her."

"And will they let you now?" said Charles, turning to Joan.

"They spoke to me last night and bade me go," answered Joan, "but there was no joy in their voices as there used to be. I have wrestled to win my own way—so help me, God!"

"So help us, God!" said Charles boldly. "Now we will all break bread together. Send messengers to the right and to the left and gather our army round us. In a week we will march on Paris."

He led the way into the great hall, and they all followed him. Joan and Margaret sat side by side, but they ate sparingly, and before the meal was over they rose and left the table together. Charles made a sign to one of his captains:

"She is in your charge," he said, "beware how you lose sight of her!"

In the course of the following week soldiers poured in on every side. The barracks in Tours were full, the private houses were full, they camped out in tents all round and about Plessis-les-Tours, and through their midst went Joan—the Joan of old, in her new armour, never alone, always accompanied by La Hire, Saint-

railles, or others of the great captains. Sometimes even the king would ride with her, and the soldiers crowded round her horse and greeted her as they would have greeted a comrade after a long absence. All these months they had felt the want of her, and her presence brought a new spirit amongst them. Lord William Stewart and Andrew Grahame had arrived and taken up their post beside her, the white standard was unfolded and floated on the tower of Plessis-les-Tours beside the royal standard. Spring had come, a fresh green hue tinged the trees and hedges, and everyone knew that soon, in this favoured clime, they would burst forth into bud and flower; so hope revived. The Tourangeaux are proverbially devout, they appreciate a religious sentiment; had not St. Martin dwelt in their midst? The huge gateway of the monastery of Marmoutier still testifies to his great charity; over its portal is sculptured a knight on horseback rending asunder his cloak and giving it to the beggar at his feet. So when the people saw the Maid come daily in with her troop of soldiers from Plessis-les-Tours and, making her way into the cathedral, devoutly hear mass, they almost worshipped the ground she trod on. There was one thing only lacking, and that was money, and even that came to them, for the great merchant and banker, Jacques Cœur, who had been absent in the East all the winter, when the king was at Bourges, returned in the very nick of time, found his way to Tours, and when he had seen the Maid, though he knew her story well, offered the king on loan a large subsidy which would enable him to pay his soldiers and provision his army. And so it was that for many a long day there had not

been such great contentment as there was at this time at the château of Plessis-les-Tours; and the dauphin, seeing this, went to his father and said, as Jacob of old:

"Give me Margaret of Scotland to wife as thou didst promise me. Thou art king and I am dauphin. She is old enough to be my bride; we are both young, but what matters it? She has been with us now a long time, and it were well the compact should be sealed. She loves my mother and she loves the Countess Yolande; you have but to speak the word and she will obey."

Charles hesitated a little, but on the following day he did speak to the countess, and she, against all his expectations, agreed with this. Indeed she was anxious to keep the child with them, for she loved her.

"I will speak to her," she said, "myself;" and she did.

At first Margaret was startled, and Dame Morrison was horrified.

"The child is not yet fifteen," she said.

"But we are on the eve of a great success," said the Duchess Yolande, "and it were well that when the king enters Paris the dauphin and his wife should be in the procession." She herself fully believed now that in a few months Charles would have driven the Burgundians and the English out of the country. "If this marriage takes place it will go far to reassure the people and satisfy King James." And so tenderly did she deal with Margaret, so persuasively, that the girl, to whom the idea had always been familiar, fell in with her desire, and on a May day, with as much pomp as circumstances

would permit, the Dauphin Louis and the Princess Margaret of Scotland were married in the cathedral of Tours—a tender bride, a spring flower herself—and there were great rejoicings. Lord William Stewart and Andrew Grahame were by no means pleased, but they had no word to say in the matter; only Andrew obtained a promise from Joan that she would ask the king to ratify, by writing, Priscilla's engagement as chief lady to the princess, and that no one save the king should have a right to dismiss her from that office. This the king did readily; but when he told the dauphin of it he was displeased.

"The Dauphiness of France," he said, "should have French ladies about her. And is that old scarecrow, Dame Morrison, to remain also?" he asked.

"I understand," said the king, "that her husband is very ailing, and desires to go back to Scotland as soon as he can. Of course, so long as the princess was in her charge she could not leave her, but now I have no doubt she will be glad of the occasion."

And it was even as he said. The Morrisons obtained a free pass from the Duke of Bedford through France, and, very shortly after the marriage of the princess, they returned to Scotland. King James and his queen were glad to receive her and to hear of their little daughter, although the account Dame Morrison gave of Margaret was not overgood. She could not say she was unhappy, because she so loved the queen and the Countess Yolande. The dauphin so far had behaved himself becomingly towards Margaret, and she herself wrote cheerily to her mother. "It is not all sunshine," she said; "but, as Joan tells me, we must take the light and

the shadows and be content. This I shall strive to do. I have grown accustomed to the life here, and should not have cared to change it for another. There are so many whom I love, and doubtless in time I shall grow to love my husband." Alas! she did not know the evil spirit which possessed the dauphin, and how before long he would make her life a torment to her. We have ofttimes great ills to bear in this world, great sorrows, and are bowed even to the ground; but by patience we overcome, we lift ourselves up again, and our burdens are lightened. For Margaret there was no great sorrow, only a continual vexation, a wear and tear of the heart-strings which never ceased. She had been comparatively free before, but now she was worse than a prisoner. Her every action, her comings and her goings, were spied upon; she lived under her husband's rule. Sometimes Louis would decree that for days together she should not see Priscilla, and nothing either his mother or grandmother could say would move him. Margaret would be condemned to sit alone in her room, with women of low birth and uncongenial temper to keep her company. But all this came gradually, he was more circumspect at first. During the days after the marriage festival the king petted and spoiled her, and everyone made much of the young dauphiness; she did not guess what would follow. At last the day came when, all things being ready, Joan, with banner and lance, marched with the van of the army towards Paris. Everything seemed to predict success. The winter had passed away and the May sunshine flooded the land; the hearts of all men expanded. Surely this was the last stand, and the foreigner must be driven out of the land. Truly they were right, the end

was nigh. But what an end! A little skirmishing, and Joan threw herself into Compiègne. She remembered Orleans, and how she had driven the English back and forced them to raise the siege. But they were not Englishmen at this time who attacked Compiègne, but the people of Duke Philip of Burgundy, and Joan anticipated but slight resistance. She would make a sortie, as she had done before, and drive them back. Once and again she threw open the gates and seized some of the principal positions held by the Burgundians. It was the twenty-fifth of May, a day never to be forgotten. The Burgundians had assembled in force from every quarter round Compiègne. She could not know their number or their strength, but with a chosen band of men she went forth that morning, took their chief position, and slew a great number of men. Enraged, the Burgundians massed themselves together and came riding down upon her, driving her soldiers back. She, with Lord William, Andrew, and some others, were in the rear when her soldiers took fright and made a rush for the city. With a mere handful of brave men she faced round to keep the pursuers back. A few days previously she had possessed herself of a long sword, taken from a Burgundian, and so, fighting and retreating, with her face to the enemy, she reached the town ditch. She was close upon the drawbridge when a huge giant seized her and dragged her from her horse. Still she defended herself with her long sword, and Andrew thrust out to the right and to the left, even as did Lord William. Thus they reached the drawbridge, and crossed it, fighting still. Her two defenders were wounded, and faint with loss of blood. Those behind them, cowards

that they were, had rushed through the gate and saved themselves. Suddenly there was a crash, the gate was closed. At that moment Andrew fell, sorely wounded.

"Yield thee, Joan!" cried the Count de Vendôme. "You are undone!" And he laid his hand upon her and stood before her, covering her with his own person to prevent her from being slain, so she yielded herself to him. He carried her off in triumph, and from far and near men came to look upon the Maid. The wonderful news spread rapidly through the Burgundian and English camps, and the *Te Deum* was sung as if for a great victory. Joan's day was over, and she knew it as she sat in her enemy's tent. She did not weep; she showed no signs of being undone. Lord William had been taken prisoner with her, and was allowed to remain beside her for a season.

"I hoped against hope," she said to him in a low voice; "but my Voices told me: 'Go, if you will go, but you will go to your death. You will not deliver France yourself, but your death will compass it.' And even so it will be," she said, "though I shall not see it; but I am content."

Duke Philip of Burgundy came to her, and they conversed long together, and he believed in her. "I will do what I can for you," he said; and he persuaded the Count de Vendôme to sell Joan to John of Luxembourg.

"It is her only chance," he said. "He will carry her away to his castle in Picardy, and there she will be forgotten, for a time, at least. If not, the English will lay hold of her, or the Church will claim her; and she

will be treated as a witch and sorceress, and then who will deliver her?"

It was done as he said, and Joan was carried away and hidden in Picardy. But there was a secret power which dominated Europe at this time and long after; it called itself the Church, but it was no church, and good Catholics hated it. It bore a name before which the strongest man trembled, and it grew and it grew like a fungus, casting its roots out in every direction. Its torture-chambers were in the bowels of the earth, from whence the cries of its victims could not ascend. Of all horrors, in ancient and modern times, nothing can ever equal the Inquisition. It belonged to no religion and to no people—a disgrace to humanity, a curse which darkened and shamed the Church, who dared not repudiate it. Its ministers went about masked, laying hands upon the guilty and innocent alike, and when they were once in its power, it never slackened its hold. It was in vain that the Duke of Burgundy and John of Luxembourg sought to hide Joan when men like Friar Martin rose and claimed her in the name of the Church. From castle to castle, from prison to prison, they hurried her, until at last she fell into the hands of her persecutors, English and Burgundians, and the Church delivered her over to the Inquisition. To the Church she loved, and to whom she had been for ever faithful, she was faithful to the last. From her God and her king she never swerved in her allegiance. Even as her Christ was judged and scourged, and taken from judgment-hall to judgment-hall, so was Joan; and as He died with pardon on His lips—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"—so she died in the midst of

smoke and flames, embracing her crucifix, with the word "Jesus!" on her lips. Those who witnessed her death agony turned away weeping, saying: "We have killed a saint!"

CHAPTER XX

LOST AND FOUND

TO say there was consternation and sorrow throughout France is to give but a faint idea of the general feeling which pervaded the whole country at the news of Joan's capture. The Duchess Yolande, the queen, and Margaret knelt to the king, entreating him to intervene, to ransom her at any price! Why he was unable to do so is a mystery which no one has ever solved. As long as the Duke of Burgundy and John of Luxembourg had possession of her he knew that, beyond imprisonment, no harm would happen to her; but when she was handed over to the English, virtually to the Inquisition, his power ceased. Money could not redeem her then, and Charles's own position was so uncertain and so difficult that he had no power. The world has wondered at and blamed him without measure, and assuredly he was to blame. He was never a brave man, a coward from first to last, or rather a thing than which there is nothing worse for a man to be—a weak man!

Never did the grandeur of Joan's character stand out so markedly as when, before her judges, she defended the man who had forsaken her.

"Speak of me," said the noble enthusiast, "but sully

not the fame of the king. He is good and kind; he is a Christian—the best in France!" Such was the girl's judgment of her king.

The day after that disastrous closing of the gates of Compiègne the crushed body of the dwarf was found against the bars. He had been battered to death, but with his long hands he was still clinging to the iron grating, and men said it was he who had done the deed and closed the gate, why or wherefore none knew, save that he hated Joan and all who loved her!

Nothing was heard of either Lord William Stewart or Andrew Grahame. The latter had been seen to fall, and was probably cast away amongst the dead, but William Stewart had escaped from the hands of his captors and had wandered to and fro, first in one disguise and then another, seeking to help the Maid, and not until after her death did he appear before the queen. The court was in deep mourning. Margaret and Priscilla grieved for Joan as for a sister; they felt acutely her sufferings and her sorrows, and more than once had striven to have messages conveyed to her. Their tears flowed incessantly.

"She is a blessed saint," said Margaret; "she wears a crown which will never fade or perish. Mark me, Priscilla," and there was something prophetic in her voice, "in years to come the world will know her for what she was—a saint, an angel, a queen of women,—and France will be proud of her! Let us strive to forget the misery of this dying, and only think of the glory of this martyrdom, which will shine as a halo for ever and ever round her head!"

And so those two ever spoke of her as if she were still

living; they loved her dead as much as, or more than, when she was on earth. Her spirit was ever present with them. Who can say it was not?

> "We see but dimly through the mists and vapours;
> Amid these earthly damps,
> What seem to us but sad funereal tapers
> May be heaven's distant lamps."

Margaret, young as she was, must have felt this, for she too was to ripen early and to pass through that "portal which we call death", but which is verily "but a suburb of the life elysium". William Stewart sheathed his sword; he would fight no more, but remained in the dauphiness's household. Sometimes he would absent himself for many weeks, and then Priscilla and Margaret knew that he was seeking his friend Andrew. He did not often speak of him; it was a subject too painful to them all. But once he said:

"I do not believe he is dead; he is a prisoner somewhere. I saw the man who dragged Joan from her horse and struck down Andrew; I had seen his face before, and if I were to come across him again I should know him from amidst a hundred men."

"And you never have?" asked Margaret.

"No, I never have," he answered; "but I am seeking for him always!"

It came to pass one day, two or three years later, when France had thrown off the yoke of England and Burgundy, for we are told that after Joan's death the English had no success with their arms in France, that William found himself on the sea-coast. He had wandered all round the castles of Picardy, and at last had

come to the fortified town of Le Crotoy, not far from the battle-field of Crécy. It lay on a bleak quicksand coast, where, in the rough winter weather, many ships were wrecked, for in those days there were no light-houses to warn mariners away as there are now. The population was essentially a fisher population, and as Lord William stood upon the shore he saw a party of men hauling in their nets, amongst whom was a great giant. As he approached, the man turned and looked at him. Instantly Lord William recognized in him the man he had sought so long; but he had grown wary, and only by degrees approached the group and spoke to the men. It had been a miserable winter, and now, with the spring storms, there was but little fish to be caught, and what they could get they could not sell, for there was no one to buy of them. The few soldiers who garrisoned the walls of Le Crotoy were half-starved themselves; and as for the prisoners confined in the dungeons of the castle, they were lucky if they got a dry crust and a jug of water in the twenty-four hours.

"The Count John of Luxembourg would do well to let them loose, for they are scarecrows!" was the general verdict.

"Have you many prisoners in yonder fortress?" asked Lord William of the fisherman.

"About a dozen," answered the man he had noticed "Why do you ask?"

"Why do I ask?" replied Lord William. "Are we not all in the same ship? Have we not all friends missing?"

The man looked at him curiously. "Are you seeking someone?" he asked.

"Maybe I am, maybe I am not," answered William carelessly; and he turned on his heel and went towards the town.

The man watched him. There was a great breadth of sand between the shore and the walls, so that he kept him well in sight. After a few minutes he threw down his net and strode after him.

"Ho there!" he called out when he was within a hundred yards of him.

A smile flickered over Lord William's face as he turned. "What would you of me?" he asked.

The man came up to him. "Listen," he said; "I am an old soldier, and I know many things. You are an Englishman?"

"No, I am not," answered Lord William. "I am a Scotsman!"

"Better still!" the man replied. "I know another Scotsman."

"They are not scarce," answered Lord William. "We have fought for France."

"Maybe you are looking for a friend?"

"And if I am, what then?" said Lord William.

"Did he happen to fall at Compiègne?" asked the man.

William hesitated for a moment, then he said: "Why do you want to know? Why do you question me?"

"Because I am a poor man, and everything is good for bartering in these days. One of your countrymen lies in yonder castle. He did me an evil turn once upon a time, and I have paid him his score. I might have left him to die on the battle-field, but I did not. I made him prisoner and I sold him, and now I will sell him again; so shall I make good what he robbed me of."

"Poor wretch! Do you know his name?" asked Lord William. There was a glow at his heart, for at last he saw a ray of hope.

"Do we ever know the names of our prisoners?" retorted the man. "We know their faces; we know their numbers. But the jailer is my friend, and he knows that I am interested in the man. He does not belong to the common herd, and I have marvelled why his friends have not ransomed him before now. He would have been dead long ago if I had not kept him alive—a fish here, a lump of bread there. He has fared better than his fellows! I might send him in a long bill!"

"I can do nothing for you until I know the man's name," answered Lord William, and he moved on.

"If you saw him, would you know him?" asked the fisherman.

"Assuredly I should!" was the quick answer.

"Then give me a gold piece now, and meet me to-night at the castle gate. What will you give me if he be the man you seek?"

"I will give you twenty livres," said Lord William.

"Make it thirty."

"Well, then, thirty!"

"You will put it down in writing?"

"If you choose; but I am a knight and a gentleman."

"That is of no account," answered the man roughly. "Come on!" and he led the way to a little inn just within the walls. There, over a jug of cider, a treaty was signed by which William Stewart agreed to pay thirty livres to the man Philip if he delivered over to him alive the body of Andrew Grahame.

That same night there was a pathetic meeting, and the two friends clasped hands once more. The erst stalwart young Scotsman, Andrew Grahame, was but a mere shadow of his former self; his face had grown old and bleached through the darkness in which he had lived so long, and the scantiness of his food. Lord William paid the money to Philip, and much more besides to the jailer and subordinates. But he made no reckoning of it; he had kept a large sum of money sewn in his clothes for many a long year, waiting for this day. By easy stages they reached Paris, which was now in the possession of King Charles, and the light and the freedom did much to restore Andrew's strength, for he was still but a very young man, and youth has such a reserve of strength.

"Do not let us speak of the past," he said to Lord William; "it is too horrible. Do you know who the man is from whom you bought me?"

"I saw him when he felled you down at Compiègne," answered Lord William, "and I remembered him."

Then Andrew told him he was that Philip whom Louis had sent with the dwarf to get possession of Joan's sword of the five crosses.

"I cheated him," he said, "and he owed me a grudge. He had seen me at the French court and knew me well. He made me a prisoner at Compiègne, and since then he has never lost sight of me; he has bartered me from one noble to another in hopes of a ransom. It was he and the dwarf who, with some hired men, swung the gate to, and so compassed Joan's end. He told me the dwarf was crushed to death; it had been well if the same fate had overtaken him!"

In due time the two friends reached Paris, and who

shall tell the love and gladness which greeted them? Priscilla had never murmured, though her sorrow had been deep, for she had faith in Lord William. If Andrew were still living, he would surely find him! Neither she nor Margaret was a child now; they were women who had passed through fiery trials and had come forth truer and braver than if the world had always smiled upon them. The princess was very fragile, but she possessed her father's gifts, and under the teaching of Alain Chartier she became a sweet songstress. Many of her verses have come down to us, tender and loving; the thoughts and words of one who ripened early because she was not destined to dwell long upon our earth. She yearned for love and tenderness, and Louis, her husband, denied it to her, and so she faded as the flowers fade that have no sun. Priscilla, for love of her, had learned tact and how to humour Louis. Ofttimes he was on the point of sending her away from the court; but she bent to his will and so effaced herself that for many weeks together he would forget her. Love teaches us all things, but most of all to forget self and to serve others. Lord William loved Priscilla, and she knew it; for when he brought Andrew back to her, and she in her gratitude held out her hands to him, saying, with tears in her eyes: "What can I say to you? How can I thank you?" he answered her:

"There is but one guerdon a woman can give a man, and that is herself. Will you be my wife, Priscilla?"

And she answered him: "When the Princess Margaret no longer needs me, then I will!"

And so it was agreed between them, and together they sought to make the princess's life as easy to her as

they could. It was a labour of love, and brought its own reward; for the princess clung to them, and by her sweetness made them feel it a privilege to tend and care for her. It came to an end at last, only too soon for them, and when they had laid her to rest they fulfilled their plighted troth and went home together.

Andrew Grahame had long before joined Count Dunois. Between those two there was a great bond of sympathy, though they never spoke thereof. They lived with one purpose ever in view—to avenge the Maid,—and Dunois never ceased fighting the English until, under the feeble government of Henry the Sixth, and during the long Wars of the Roses, France was lost to England and restored to her rightful king, Charles the Seventh.

"If God gives you a girl-child, call her Joan!" Andrew wrote to his sister.

And she answered him: "I should have done so without your telling. Is it not the name of a saint?"

FINIS

Blackie & Son's Story Books for Girls

KATHARINE TYNAN

A Girl of Galway.

With 8 full-page Illustrations by JOHN H. BACON. 6s.

When Bertha Grace is on the threshold of young womanhood, she goes to stay with her grandfather in Ireland, with the trust from her mother of reconciling him and his son, Bertha's father. Bertha finds her grandfather a recluse and a miser, and in the hands of an underling, who is his evil genius. How she keeps faith with her mother and finds her own fate, through many strange adventures, is the subject of the story.

"Full of the poetic charm we are accustomed to find in the works of that gifted writer."—*World.*

The Handsome Brandons.

Illustrated by G. D. HAMMOND, R.I.

3s. 6d. *New Edition.*

A delightful story of an ancient Irish family. Every one of the nine young Brandons was handsome, and every one was spirited and lovable. The shadows in the picture hang ominously over Castle Angry and its inmate, the vindictive Sir Rupert de Lacy. The story ends happily for "The Handsome Brandons" with the re-establishment of the family fortunes.

"A really excellent piece of work, . . the literary quality of Miss Tynan's work is its chief distinction"—*Spectator*

CAROLINE AUSTIN

Cousin Geoffrey and I.

With 6 full-page Illustrations by W. PARKINSON. 3s.

The only daughter of a country gentleman finds herself unprovided for at her father's death, and for some time lives as a dependant upon her kinsman. Life is saved from being unbearable to her by her young cousin Geoffrey, who at length meets with a serious accident for which she is held responsible. She makes a brave attempt to earn her own livelihood, until a startling event brings her cousin Geoffrey and herself together again.

"Miss Austin's story is bright, clever, and well developed."—*Saturday Review.*

ELLINOR DAVENPORT ADAMS

A Queen among Girls.

With 6 Illustrations by HAROLD COPPING.

Cloth, 3*s.* 6*d.*

Augusta Pembroke is the head of her school, the favourite of her teachers and fellow-pupils, who are attracted by her fearless and independent nature and her queenly bearing. She dreams of a distinguished professional career; but the course of her life is changed suddenly by pity for her timid little brother Adrian, the victim of his guardian-uncle's harshness. The story describes the daring means adopted by Augusta for Adrian's relief.

"An interesting and well-written narrative, in which humour and a keen eye for character unite to produce a book happily adapted for modern maidens."—*Globe.*

A Girl of To-Day.

With 6 page Illustrations by G. D. HAMMOND, R.I. 3*s.* 6*d.*

"What are Altruists?" humbly asks a small boy. "They are only people who try to help others," replies the Girl of To-Day. To help their poorer neighbours, the boys and girls of Woodend band themselves together into the *Society of Altruists*. That they have plenty of fun is seen in the shopping expedition and in the successful Christmas entertainment.

"It is a spirited story. The characters are true to nature and carefully developed Such a book as this is exactly what is needed to give a school-girl an interest in the development of character."—*Educational Times*

FRANCES ARMSTRONG

A Girl's Loyalty.

With 6 Illustrations by JOHN H. BACON. Cloth, 3*s.* 6*d.* *New Edition.*

When she was still but a child, Helen Grant received from her grandfather, on his death-bed, a secret message. The brief words remained fast in her memory, and dominated her whole career. She was loyal to her trust, however, and to her friends in the hour of their need. For the girl was possessed of that quick courage which leaps up in a shy nature when evil-doers have to be unmasked, and wrongs made right.

"The one book for girls that stands out this year is Miss Frances Armstrong's *A Girl's Loyalty.*"—*Review of Reviews.*

MRS. HERBERT MARTIN

The Two Dorothys:

A Tale for Girls. Illustrated. 2*s.* 6*d.*

In this story the shy, dreamy, unselfish Dorothy Heriot comes to live with her great-aunt, the other Dorothy. This old lady is kind enough, but her discipline is unsympathetic. But the younger Dorothy's loving, unselfish nature wins upon the proud old lady, and the end is happiness.

"Will not only interest and please all girls, but will also stimulate and encourage to better and higher things, youthful hopes and ambitions."—*The Lady.*

ETHEL F. HEDDLE

Strangers in the Land.

Illustrated by HAROLD COPPING. *6s.*

Two old maiden ladies and their charming young friend, Elspeth Macdonald, voyage to the beautiful island of Java on a quest that involves a story of uncommon interest. In the course of a series of exciting adventures, Elspeth unwittingly makes a discovery which seriously affects her friends. Towards the close the narrative is darkened by tragedy, but a flood of sunshine is thrown on the final chapter by the happy ending of a pleasant love-story.

"Apart from providing the best of entertainment this book is noteworthy as stimulating high ideals of life and action, and renewing faith in lofty and chivalrous sentiment as a factor in human service." *Dundee Advertiser*

An Original Girl.

With 8 full-page Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. *6s.*

Christobel Beauchamp makes her living by typewriting in an office till chance throws her across the path of Lady Anne Pudeaux, her grandmother. Her mother had made a *mésalliance* by marrying an actor. Lady Anne desires to adopt Christobel, but the girl prefers to help her father. The story tells how the poor actor at last receives his "call", and ends with the promise of good fortune for Christobel and her devoted lover.

"A very clever, well-constructed tale is this, and we wish it success."
—*British Weekly*

A Mystery of St. Rule's.

With 8 Illustrations by G. DEMAIN HAMMOND, R.I. *6s.*

"The author has been amazingly successful in keeping her secret almost to the end. Yet the mystery [illegible] golden diamond of great value is so skilfully handled that several [illegible] persons seem all but hopelessly identified with the disappearance of the gem. Cleverly, however, as this aspect of the story has been managed, it has other sources of strength."—*Scotsman*

"The chief interest . . . lies in the fascinating young adventuress, who finds a temporary nest in the old professor's family, and wins all hearts in St. Rule's by her beauty and her sweetness."—*Morning Leader.*

SARAH DOUDNEY

Under False Colours.

With 6 Illustrations. *3s. 6d.*

A story which will attract readers of all ages and of either sex. The incidents of the plot, arising from the thoughtless indulgence of a deceptive freak, are exceedingly natural, and the keen interest of the narrative is sustained from beginning to end. *Under False Colours* is a book which will rivet the attention, amuse the fancy, and touch the heart.

"This is a charming story, abounding in delicate touches of sentiment and pathos. Its plot is skilfully contrived. It will be read with a warm interest by every girl who takes it up."—*Scotsman.*

ROSA MULHOLLAND (LADY GILBERT)

Cynthia's Bonnet Shop.

With 8 Illustrations by G. DEMAIN HAMMOND, R.I. 5*s.*

Cynthia, one of three charming lively sisters of an impoverished Connaught family, desires to make money for the sake of her delicate mother. Cynthia and her star-struck sister Befind go to London, the former to open a bonnet shop, which becomes a great success, and the other to pursue the study of astronomy. How both girls find new interests in life, more important even than bonnet shop or star-gazing, is described with mingled humour and pathos.

"Just of the kind to please and fascinate a host of girl readers"
—*Liverpool Mercury.*

The Girls of Banshee Castle.

With 6 Illustrations by JOHN H. BACON. 3*s.* 6*d.* *New Edition.*

Three girls, with an old governess, migrate from Kensington to the West of Ireland. Belonging as they do to "the ould family", the girls are made heartily welcome in the cabins of the peasantry, where they learn many weird and curious tales from the folk-lore of the district. An interesting plot runs through the narrative, but the charm of the story lies in its happy mingling of Irish humour and pathos.

"Is told with grace, and brightened by a knowledge of Irish folk-lore, making it a perfect present for a girl in her teens"—*Youth.*

Giannetta:

A Girl's Story of Herself. With 6 full-page Illustrations by LOCKHART BOGLE. 3*s.*

The story of a changeling who is suddenly transferred to the position of a rich English heiress. She develops into a good and accomplished woman, and has gained too much love and devotion to be a sufferer by the surrender of her estates.

ANNIE E. ARMSTRONG

Three Bright Girls.

With 6 full-page Illustrations by W. PARKINSON. 3*s.* 6*d.*

By a sudden turn of fortune's wheel the three heroines are brought down from a household of lavish comfort to meet the incessant cares and worries of those who have to eke out a very limited income. The charm of the story lies in the cheery helpfulness of spirit developed in the girls by their changed circumstances.

"Ever bright and cheerful, they influence other lives, and at last they come out of their trials with honour to themselves and benefits to all about them"
—*Teachers' Aid.*

ELIZA F. POLLARD

For the Red Rose.

With 4 Illustrations by JAMES DURDEN. *2s. 6d.*

A gipsy finds a little girl in the forest of Wimbourne, after the sacking of the castle by the Yorkists. He carries her to the camp and she is adopted by the tribe. The story tells how, when some years later Margaret of Anjou and her son are wrecked on the coast of England, the gipsy girl follows the fortunes of the exiled queen, and by what curious chain of events her own origin is discovered.

"This is a good story, and of special interest to lovers of historical romance"
—*Court Circular*

The Doctor's Niece.

With 6 Illustrations by SYDNEY COWELL. *3s. 6d.*

The scene of this charming story is laid in Brittany at the end of the eighteenth century. The heroine is educated considerably above her station. When she is about sixteen she becomes companion to a little girl at a neighbouring château. Her charge mysteriously disappears during a peasant rebellion, and she goes out into the woods to find her. The result of the adventure is that Rosette discovers her mother, who proves to be the rightful owner of the château, and the tale ends happily.

"Full of mystery, adventure, and a winning simplicity"—*Bookman.*

The King's Signet:

The Story of a Huguenot Family. With 6 Illustrations by G. DEMAIN HAMMOND, R.I. *3s. 6d.*

This story relates the adventures of a noble Huguenot family, driven out of their château by the [illegible] after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. A friend of the family, [illegible] Malot, who is also a Huguenot, but a protégée of Madame de Maintenon, possesses a talisman, by means of which she saves many lives; but this brings trouble upon her, and she has to leave France. The adventures lead to the battle of the Boyne, and to the happy reunion of the scattered family in Ireland.

"A stirring tale of the persecution of the Huguenots clearly and touchingly told."
—*Guardian.*

BESSIE MARCHANT

Three Girls on a Ranch:

A Story of New Mexico. Illustrated. *2s. 6d.*

The Lovell family emigrate from England to New Mexico. Mr. Lovell is delicate and unfit for farming, but the three eldest girls take upon themselves the burden of working the ranch. They have adventures of a perilous kind, and the story of their mishaps and how they overcame them is throughout both exciting and stimulating.

"A story with a fresh, bright theme, well handled."—*Nottingham Guardian.*

E. EVERETT-GREEN

Little Lady Clare. Illustrated. *2s. 6d.*

The little Lady Clare inherits the responsibilities of an ancestry and a family feud, but the estates and title of her father fall to the hated branch of the family. The child, however, works out for herself the problem of the divided house, which is at last united again in a romantic manner.

"Reminds us in its quaintness and tender pathos of Mrs Ewing's delightful tales. The characters are very real and lifelike. Is quite one of the best stories Miss Green has yet given us." *Literary World.*

SARAH TYTLER

A Loyal Little Maid. With 4 page Illustrations by PAUL HARDY. *2s. 6d.*

This pretty story is founded on a romantic episode of Mar's rebellion. A little girl has information which concerns the safety of her father in hiding, and this she firmly refuses to divulge to a king's officer. She is lodged in the Tolbooth, where she finds a boy champion, whom in future years she rescues in Paris from the *lettre de cachet* which would bury him in the Bastille.

"Has evidently been a pleasure to write, and makes very enjoyable reading."
—*Literature.*

–Girl Neighbours. With 6 Illustrations. *3s.*

A story for girls, told in that quaint, delightful fashion which has made Miss Tytler's books so popular and attractive. The introduction of the two young ladies from London, who represent the modern institutions of professional nursing and schools of cookery, is very happily effected.

"One of the most effective and quietly humorous of Miss Sarah Tytler's stories Very healthy, very agreeable, and very well written." – *The Spectator.*

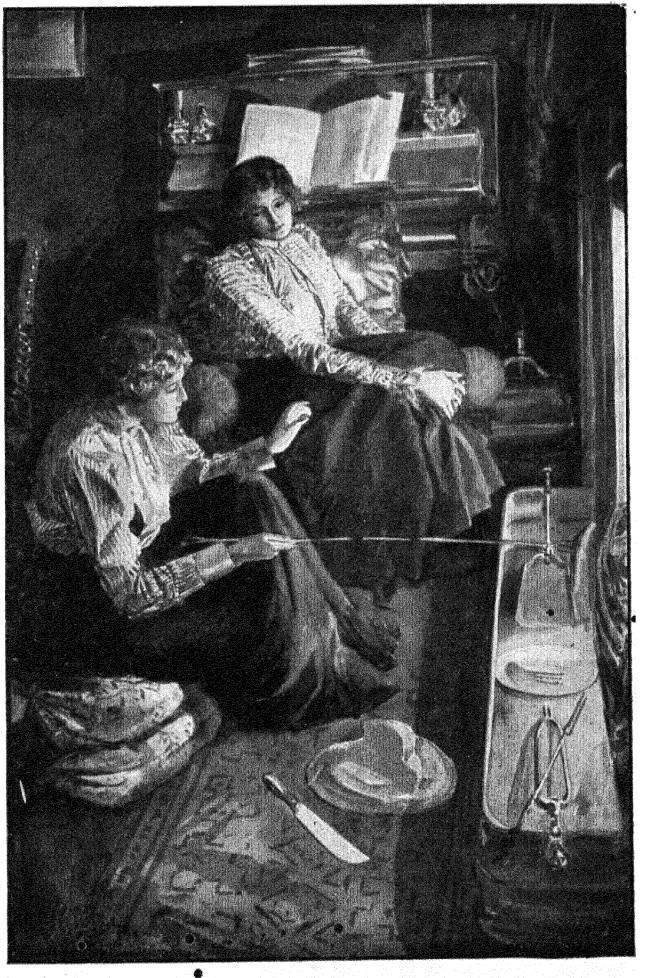
ALICE CORKRAN

Margery Merton's Girlhood. With 6 full-page Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. *2s. 6d.*

The experiences of an orphan girl who in infancy is left by her father—an officer in India—to the care of an elderly aunt residing near Paris. The accounts of the various persons who have an after influence on the story are singularly vivid.

"*Margery Merton's Girlhood* is a piece of true literature, as dainty as it is delicate, and as sweet as it is simple."—*Woman's World.*

From THE FOUR MISS WHITTINGTONS



By Geraldine Mockler

(See page 23)

From CYNTHIA'S BONNET SHOP



BY ROSA MULHOLLAND

(See page 20)

GERALDINE MOCKLER

The Four Miss Whittingtons:

A Story for Girls. With 8 full-page Illustrations by CHARLES M. SHELDON. 5*s.*

This story tells how four sisters, left alone in the world, went to London to seek their fortunes. They had between them £400, and this they resolved to spend on training themselves for the different careers for which they were severally most fitted. On their limited means this was hard work, but their courageous experiment was on the whole very successful.

"A story of endeavour, industry, and independence of spirit."—*World.*

ALICE STRONACH

A Newnham Friendship.

With 6 full-page Illustrations by HAROLD COPPING. 3*s.* 6*d.*

A sympathetic description of life at Newnham College. After the tripos excitements, some of the students leave their dream-world of study and talk of "cocoas" and debates and athletics to begin their work in the real world. Men students play their part in the story, and in the closing chapters it is suggested that marriage has its place in a girl graduate's life.

"Foremost among all the gift-books suitable for school-girls this season stands Miss Alice Stronach's *A Newnham Friendship*."—*Daily Graphic.*

BESSIE MARCHANT

A Heroine of the Sea.

Illustrated by A. M'LELLAN. 3*s.* 6*d.*

Maudie's home was on the wild westerly shore of Vancouver Island, and she earned her living by fishing in the Inlet, heartily despising all merely feminine occupations, and not even knowing that she was beautiful. Then changes come, and Maudie awakes to the charm of a domestic life. Clouds gather about the home, and many troubles intervene before the mystery is at last happily cleared away.

"A genuine tale of adventure for girls, and girls will thoroughly enjoy it"—*Academy*

Three Girls on a Ranch:

A Story of New Mexico. With 4 page Illustrations by W. E. WEBSTER. 2*s.* 6*d.*

The Lovell family emigrate from England to New Mexico, where they settle on a ranch. Mr. Lovell is delicate and unfit for farming, but the three eldest girls take upon themselves the burden of working the ranch. They have adventures of a perilous kind, and the story of their mishaps and how they overcame them is throughout both exciting and stimulating.

"A story with a fresh, bright theme, well handled."—*Nottingham Guardian.*

"A rousing book for young people."—*Queen.*

MRS. HENRY CLARKE

The Fairclough Family.

With 6 Illustrations by G. D. HAMMOND, R.I.

Cloth, 3*s.* 6*d.*

It was matter for amazement when Ronald Hammersley fell in love with Kathy Fairclough, who was considered a blue-stocking, instead of with her younger sister Nell, whom Mrs. Hammersley had chosen for him. Why Mrs. Hammersley desired her wealthy stepson to marry one of Dr. Fairclough's penniless daughters was a secret. How the secret became known, and nearly wrecked the happiness of Kathy and Ronald, is told in the story. But all ends well, and to the sound of marriage bells.

"One of those stories which all girls enjoy"—*World.*

J. M. CALLWELL

A Little Irish Girl.

Illustrated by H. COPPING. 2*s.* 6*d.*

An orphaned family inherit a small property on the coast of Clare. The two youngest members of the party have some thrilling adventures in their western home. They encounter seals, smugglers, and a ghost, and lastly, by most startling means, they succeed in restoring their eldest brother to his rightful place as heir to the ancestral estates.

"Sure to prove of thrilling interest to both boys and girls"—*Literary World.*

E. EVERETT-GREEN

Miriam's Ambition.

With Illustrations. 2*s.* 6*d.*

Miriam's ambition is to make someone happy, and her endeavour carries with it a train of incident, solving a mystery which had thrown a shadow over several lives. A charming foil to her grave elder sister is to be found in Miss Babs, a small coquette of five, whose humorous child-talk is so attractive.

"Miss Everett Green's children are real British boys and girls, not small men and women. Babs . . . a charming little one"—*Liverpool Mercury.*

ELLINOR DAVENPORT ADAMS

Those Twins!

With a Frontispiece and 28 Illustrations by S. B. PEARCE. 2*s.* 6*d.*

Two little rogues are the twins, Horatio and Tommy; but loyal-hearted and generous to boot and determined to resist the stern decree of their aunt that they shall forsake the company of their scapegrace grown-up cousin Algy. So they deliberately set to work to "reform" the scapegrace; and succeed so well that he wins back the love of his aunt.

Blackie & Son's Illustrated Books for Children

CHARLES ROBINSON—WALTER JERROLD

The Big Book of Nursery Rhymes.

Selected and edited by WALTER JERROLD. With nearly 400 Illustrations in Colour or Black-and-White by CHARLES ROBINSON. Large 4to, cloth elegant, gilt edges, *7s. 6d.* net.

This beautiful volume, in which Mr. Charles Robinson has interpreted with delightful humour and rare artistic skill the old familiar rhymes of the nursery, will be an unfailing source of pleasure to children of all ages. The pictures are bold, clear, and direct, as befits a book intended in the first place for little folk, but they exhibit at the same time a power of draughtsmanship that will give the volume a permanent artistic value.

"This is a really magnificent gift-book for quite little children."
—*Saturday Review.*

JOHN HASSALL—CLIFTON BINGHAM

Six and Twenty Boys and Girls.

Pictures by JOHN HASSALL; Verses by CLIFTON BINGHAM. 25 pages in full colour, and 24 pages of letterpress. Picture boards, 9 inches by 11¼ inches, cloth back, *3s. 6d.*; also cloth elegant, *5s.*

Most of us know some at least of the little girls and boys portrayed by Mr. Hassall in this amusing picture-book. As depicted with Mr. Hassall's inimitable skill, and described in humorous verse by Mr. Bingham, they may challenge comparison with the classic Struwwelpeter. Each picture is not only attractive and amusing in itself, but furnishes a hint of virtues to be imitated or faults to be avoided.

"A most original picture-book."—*World.*

MRS. PERCY DEARMER

Roundabout Rhymes.

With 20 full-page Illustrations in colour by Mrs. PERCY DEARMER. Imperial 8vo, cloth extra, *2s. 6d.*

A charming volume of verses and colour pictures for little folk—rhymes and pictures about most of the everyday events of nursery life.

"The best verses written for children since Stevenson's *Child's Garden.*"
—*The Guardian.*

STEWART ORR—JOHN BRYMER

Gammon and Spinach.

Pictures by STEWART ORR. Verses by JOHN BRYMER. Cover design and 24 pages in Full Colour. Picture boards, cloth back, 6*s.*

In *Gammon and Spinach* Mr. Stewart Orr has produced a picture-book unique of its kind. Nothing could be more droll than the situations in which he represents the frog, the pig, the mouse, the elephant, and the other well-known characters who appear in his pages. Little folk will find in these pictures a source of endless delight, and the artistic skill which they display will have a special appeal to children of an older growth.

"Merry and handsome enough to make thousands of friends among little folk, what with its original verses and its amusing pictures."—*Literary World*

"The book should attain a wide popularity in the nursery."—*Morning Post.*

Two Merry Mariners.

Pictures by STEWART ORR; Verses by JOHN BRYMER. Cover design and 24 pages in full colour. Picture boards, cloth back, 6*s.*

This delightful volume tells in picture and verse how Dick and his friend the Hare sailed to the Downy Isle, the adventures they met with in that strange country, their encounter with the Dragon, and their remarkable voyage home. Mr. Orr exhibits in these designs a rare combination of humorous invention with brilliant draughtsmanship and command of colour, and the author supports him with a series of racy verses.

"The illustrations are masterpieces of drollery."—*Manchester Courier.*

"The verses are very funny and original."—*World.*

FRED SMITH

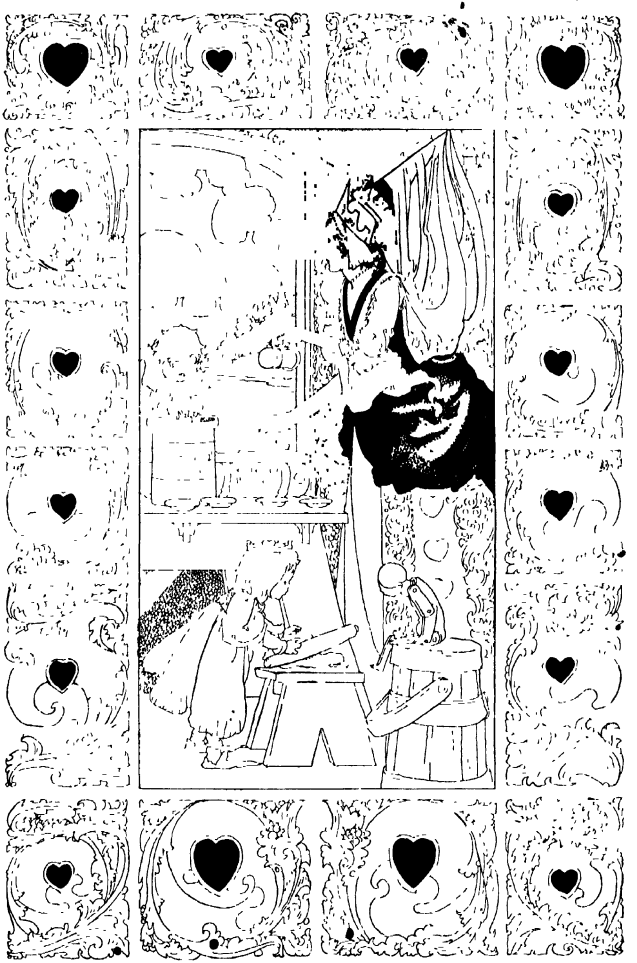
The Animal Book.

A Natural History for Little Folk. With a Coloured Frontispiece and 34 full-page Illustrations by F. SPECHT. Crown quarto, 11¼ inches by 9½ inches, picture boards, cloth back, 2*s.* 6*d.*

This book consists of a series of bright and instructive sketches of the better-known wild beasts, describing their appearance, character and habits, and the position they hold in the animal kingdom. The text is printed in a large, clear type, and is admirably illustrated with powerful, realistic pictures of the various creatures in their native state by that eminent animal artist F. Specht.

"A work of the greatest value to the young."—*Eastern Morning News.*

From THE BIG BOOK OF NURSERY RHYMES



BY CHARLES ROBINSON—WALTER JERROLD

(See page 25)

From MY BOOK OF TRUE STORIES

(See page 31)



SIR PHILIP SIDNEY AND THE DYING SOLDIER

(Reduced from a Colour Illustration)

H. B. NEILSON—CLIFTON BINGHAM

The Animals' Academy.

With 24 full-page Colour Illustrations and many Black-and-White Vignettes. Picture-boards, cloth back, 3*s.* 6*d.*; cloth, 5*s.*

In *The Animals' Academy* Mr. Neilson and Mr. Bingham have again combined their forces, and have turned out a picture-book which for fun and variety will be difficult to equal. In bright, musical, "catchy" verse Mr. Bingham tells of the many amusing events that take place at a school in which the elephant is master and other well-known animals are the scholars, and Mr. Neilson illustrates the story as only he can illustrate animal frolics.

"A humorous, clever and delightful book. The pictures of the dressed-up animals will captivate little c[illegible] quickly.

H. B. NEILSON—JOHN BRYMER

Games and Gambols.

Illustrated by HARRY B. NEILSON; with Verses by JOHN BRYMER. 26 pages in colour, and 24 pages of letterpress. Picture boards, 9 inches by 11¼ inches, cloth back, 2*s.* 6*d.*; also cloth elegant, 3*s.* 6*d.*

Mr. Neilson surpasses himself in these irresistible colour pictures representing the animal world at play. The great test match between the Lions and the Kangaroos, Mrs. Mouse's Ping-Pong Party, Mr. Bruin playing Golf, Towser's Bicycle Tour, and the Kittens *v.* Bunnies Football Match, are a few among the many droll subjects illustrated in this amusing and original series.

"Mr. Neilson has a positive genius for making animals comic."—*Academy.*

"Children will revel in his work."—*Daily Graphic.*

S. R. PRAEGER

How They Went to School.

With 24 full-page pictures in full colour. Picture-boards, cloth back, 2*s.* 6*d.*; cloth extra, 3*s.* 6*d.*

A pretty picture-book for the little ones, full of quiet humour and shrewd observation of child life. The book tells in picture and story how Hal and Kitty, two tiny scholars, set out on their way to school, and the various adventures that happen to them on the road.

"Quite the most charming book we have yet seen."—*Daily News.*

OUR DARLING'S FIRST BOOK.

Bright Pictures and Easy Lessons for Little Folk.

Quarto, 10⅛ inches by 7¾ inches, picture boards, 1*s.*; cloth, gilt edges, 2*s.*

An interesting and instructive picture lesson-book for very little folk. Beginning with an illustrated alphabet of large letters, the little reader goes forward by easy stages to word-making, reading, counting, writing, and finally to the most popular nursery rhymes and tales.

"The very perfection of a child's alphabet and spelling-book."—*St. James's Budget.*

ELLINOR DAVENPORT ADAMS

Those Twins!

With a Frontispiece and 28 Illustrations by S. B. PEARSE. Cloth elegant, 2*s.* 6*d.*

Two little rogues are the twins, Horatio and Tommy; but loyal-hearted and generous to boot, and determined to resist the stern decree of their aunt that they shall forsake the company of their scapegrace grown-up cousin Algy. So they deliberately set to work to "reform" the scapegrace; and succeed so well that he wins back the love of his aunt, and delights the twins by earning a V.C. in South Africa.

"A merry story for young and old."—*World.*

A. B. ROMNEY

Little Village Folk.

With 37 Illustrations by ROBERT HOPE. 2*s.* 6*d.*

A series of delightful stories of Irish village children. Miss Romney opens up a new field in these beautiful little tales, which have the twofold charm of humour and poetic feeling.

"A story-book that will be welcomed wherever it makes its way."—*Literary World.*

MY NEW STORY-BOOK

Stories, Verses, and Pictures for the Little Ones.

290 pages, of which 48 are in colour. Cloth, 2*s.* 6*d.*

A treasury of entertainment for the nursery. The contents are extremely varied both as regards the text and the illustrations, and carefully designed to meet the tastes of the little ones. The many bright colour pictures will be in themselves a never-failing source of delight.

"A fascinating little volume, well filled with stories and quaint and pretty illustrations."—*Guardian.*

STORIES BY GEORGE MAC DONALD

(NEW AND UNIFORM EDITION)

A Rough Shaking.

With 12 page Illustrations by W. PARKINSON. Crown 8vo, cloth elegant, 3*s.* 6*d.*

Clare, the hero of the story, is a boy whose mother is killed at his side by the fall of a church during an earthquake. The kindly clergyman and his wife, who adopt him, die while he is still very young, and he is thrown upon the world a second time. The narrative of his wanderings is full of interest and novelty, the boy's unswerving honesty and his passion for children and animals leading him into all sorts of adventures. He works on a farm, supports a baby in an old deserted house, finds employment in a menagerie, becomes a bank clerk, is kidnapped, and ultimately discovers his father on board the ship to which he has been conveyed.

At the Back of the North Wind.

With 75 Illustrations by ARTHUR HUGHES, and a Frontispiece by LAURENCE HOUSMAN. Crown 8vo, cloth elegant, 3*s.* 6*d.*

"In *At the Back of the North Wind* we stand with one foot in fairyland and one on common earth The story is thoroughly original, full of fancy and pathos"—*The Times.*

Ranald Bannerman's Boyhood.

With 36 Illustrations by ARTHUR HUGHES. Crown 8vo, cloth elegant, 3*s.* 6*d.*

"Dr Mac Donald has a real understanding of boy nature, and he has in consequence written a capital story, [illegible] their stand-point, with a true ring all through which ensures its success"—*[illegible]*

The Princess and the Goblin.

With 30 Illustrations by ARTHUR HUGHES, and a Frontispiece by LAURENCE HOUSMAN. Crown 8vo, cloth elegant, 3*s.* 6*d.*

In the sphere of fantasy George Mac Donald has very few equals, and his rare touch of many aspects of life invariably gives to his stories a deeper meaning of the highest value. His *Princess and Goblin* exemplifies both gifts. A fine thread of allegory runs through the narrative of the adventures of the young miner, who, amongst other marvellous experiences, finds his way into the caverns of the gnomes, and achieves a final victory over them.

The Princess and Curdie.

With Frontispiece and 30 Illustrations by HELEN STRATTON. Crown 8vo, cloth elegant, 3*s.* 6*d.*

A sequel to *The Princess and the Goblin*, tracing the history of the young miner and the princess after the return of the latter to her father's court, where more terrible foes have to be encountered than the grotesque earth-dwellers.

NEW "GRADUATED" SERIES

With coloured frontispiece and black-and-white illustrations

NO child of six or seven should have any difficulty in reading and understanding *unaided* the pretty stories in the 6*d.* series. In the 9*d.* series the language used is slightly more advanced, but is well within the capacity of children of seven and upwards, while the 1*s.* series is designed for little folk of somewhat greater attainments. If the stories are read *to* and not *by* children, it will be found that the 6*d.* 9*d.* and 1*s.* series are equally suitable for little folk of all ages.

"GRADUATED" STORIES AT A SHILLING

Holidays at Sunnycroft. By ANNIE S. SWAN. *New Edition.*
At Lathom's Siege. By SARAH TYTLER.
Fleckie. By BESSIE MARCHANT.
Elsie Wins. By ELLINOR DAVENPORT ADAMS.
Bears and Dacoits. By G. A. HENTY.
Crusoes of the Frozen North. By Dr. GORDON STABLES.
A Saxon Maid. By ELIZA F. POLLARD.
Uncle Bob. By MEREDITH FLETCHER.
Jack of Both Sides. By FLORENCE COOMBE.
Do Your Duty! By G. A. HENTY.
Terry. By ROSA MULHOLLAND (Lady Gilbert).

"GRADUATED" STORIES AT NINEPENCE

Gipsy Dick. By Mrs. HENRY CLARKE.
Two to One. By FLORENCE COOMBE.
Cherrythorpe Fair. By MABEL MACKNESS.
Little Greycoat. By ELLINOR DAVENPORT ADAMS.
Tommy's Trek. By BESSIE MARCHANT.
That Boy Jim. By Mrs. HENRY CLARKE.
The Adventures of Carlo. By KATHARINE TYNAN.
The Shoeblack's Cat. By W. L. ROOPER.
Three Troublesome Monkeys. By A. B. ROMNEY.
The Little Red Purse. By JENNIE CHAPPELL.

"GRADUATED" STORIES AT SIXPENCE

Hi-Tum, Ti-Tum, and Scrub. By JENNIE CHAPPELL.
Edie's Adventures. By GERALDINE MOCKLER.
Two Little Crusoes. By A. B. ROMNEY.
The Lost Doll. By JENNIE CHAPPELL.
Bunny and Furry. By GERALDINE MOCKLER.
Bravest of All. By MABEL MACKNESS.
Winnie's White Frock. By JENNIE CHAPPELL.
Lost Toby. By M. S. HAYCRAFT.
A Boy Cousin. By GERALDINE MOCKLER.
Travels of Fuzz and Buzz. By GERALDINE MOCKLER.
Teddy's Adventures. By Mrs. HENRY CLARKE.

NEW CHILDREN'S PICTURE-BOOKS

Grimm's Fairy Tales

In this beautiful series of picture-books the best of these fairy tales are given. The text is printed on good paper in a large and clear type, and the many illustrations in colour and in black-and-white are by Miss HELEN STRATTON.

HALF-CROWN SERIES

Picture-boards, 13½ *inches by* 10 *inches*

Grimm's Fairy Tales

This handsome volume contains a large selection of the most popular stories by the brothers Grimm. The cover and no fewer than thirty pages are in full colour. **Also in cloth, 3s. 6d.**

ONE SHILLING SERIES

Picture-boards, 13½ *inches by* 10 *inches*

Hansel and Grettel | **Cherryblossom**
Roland and Maybird

Besides the title story each volume contains several of the most popular of *Grimm's Fairy Tales.*

Historical Picture-Books

This novel series comprises those stories in English History that will interest and amuse little children. The tales are told in such a manner as to attract children, dates and anything that might even in the slightest way suggest the lesson-book being carefully avoided.

ONE SHILLING SERIES

Picture-boards. Quarto, 10⅛ *inches by* 7¾ *inches*

My Book of True Stories

This book contains over thirty full-page drawings and a large number of smaller illustrations by Mr. T. H. Robinson. The cover and about twenty pages are in colour. **Also in cloth, gilt edges, 2s.**

SIXPENNY SERIES

Picture-boards. Quarto, 10⅛ *inches by* 7¾ *inches*

True Stories of Olden Days
True Stories of Great Deeds
My Book of Noble Deeds

Each book contains seven or eight pages in colour and many black-and-white illustrations. The text is printed in bold type.

Scripture Picture-Books

This excellent series includes several books of New Testament stories simply told. The illustrations are by eminent artists, and the text, which, besides incidents in the life of Christ, includes most of the Parables, has been specially written by Mrs. L. Haskell, one of the most popular authors of stories for little folk.

ONE SHILLING SERIES

Picture boards. Quarto, 10⅛ inches by 7¾ inches.

Stories from the Life of Christ

This interesting volume contains over thirty full-page drawings, and a large number of smaller illustrations. The cover and no fewer than twenty pages are in colour. Also in cloth, gilt edges, 2s.

SIXPENNY SERIES

Picture boards. Quarto, 10⅛ inches by 7¾ inches

Glad Tidings | **The Good Shepherd**
Gentle Jesus

Each book contains an average of six full-page illustrations, many vignettes, and eight pages in colour. The text is printed in bold type.

Animal Picture-Books

This is certainly the best series of Animal Picture-books published at the price. The pictures, which are all drawn by eminent artists, will form an endless source of pleasure to little folks. The text is written in very simple language.

ONE SHILLING SERIES

Picture-boards. Quarto, 10⅛ inches by 7¾ inches

A Picture-Book of Animals | **Faithful Friends**

These bright and attractive volumes contain over thirty full-page drawings, and a number of smaller illustrations. The cover and about twenty pages are in colour. Also in cloth, gilt edges, 2s.

SIXPENNY SERIES

Picture-boards. Quarto, 10⅛ inches by 7¾ inches

Talks about Animals | **Bow-wow Picture-Book**
Animals of All Lands | **Cats and Kits**
My Book of Animals | **Friends at the Farm**

Each contains seven or eight pages in colour and many black-and-white illustrations. The covers, also in colour, are very attractive.