

It was a prayer mighty in its faith; unfaltering in its hope; angelic in its tender charity. When it was over the dying man was sobbing like a passion-weary child, his hand clasped in that of the sweet saint beside him.

'Send Father Louis here; he will see him now,' she whispered to the attendant.

As the man left the room the professor followed him, gropingly, like one dazzled after long darkness.

The calm, pure eyes of the kneeling Sister had not turned to the stranger in the shadowy room, but worn, changed, spiritualised into higher beauty as she was, the professor had recognised Sister Angela at the first glance. She was the woman he had loved in the long ago.

Two days afterward a bulky package was received at 'La Misericorde,' directed to Sister Angela. She read the accompanying letter with amazement:—

'My Dear Madam.—I trust you will not consider this an intrusion of a forgotten past upon the noble duties of the present. I was a reluctant visitor at your hospital last Thursday, summoned there by the unfortunate youth whose dying arraignment of me and my misapprehended teachings I can never forget. I recognised you at his bedside, and in the light of your life-work I saw mine. Years ago I made you an offering which you wisely refused; it was, as I see now, beneath your acceptance. To-day I venture to make you another. The package I send you is a work upon which I have expended all the powers of my ripened years. It is an attack upon that Christian faith which makes lives like yours possible.

'With that death-bed scene before me, I dare not give it to the world. I lay it at your feet. Do with it what you will.

Faithfully and respectfully yours,

LAMBERT LESTER.'

There were tears in Sister Angela's eyes as she gazed at the bulk of closely written manuscript. She knew enough of Lambert Lester's career to understand what this 'offering' was to him.

Then in a little brazier before the altar of the Sacred Heart she made the burnt offering, and as it blent with sweet odours of incense, the pagan sacrifice went up to heaven, and Sister Angela's pure prayer arose with it that he who walked so uprightly in the darkness might see and know the light.

And that prayer was heard. The professor's dim morning dream is again a reality. Holding a Mother's hand, he again walks through holy ways, 'as a little child.'—*Sacred Heart Review.*

JOAN OF ARC.

THE STORY OF A GREAT CATHOLIC HEROINE.

AN ARTICLE THAT EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD READ.

ONE of the many hopeful signs of the French public life of later years is the fast growing interest and enthusiasm which is aroused in the breasts, not alone of Catholics, but of people of every creed and non-creed and of almost every shade of political thought, by the annually recurring festival which takes place at Orleans in honour of Joan of Arc. A special interest attaches to this year's festival on account of the noble panegyric of the sainted maiden that was pronounced by the great American golden-tongued orator, Archbishop Ireland, to whose effort reference is made elsewhere in our columns of this date. As far back as 1882 the first steps were taken to secure the canonisation of the noble maiden. One day we may venerate her upon our altars—a fit emblem of the sacred spirit of patriotism inspired from above, and blessed by the Spouse of Christ upon earth. The story of the brief but glorious career of the girl-warrior is invested with a deep and peculiar interest, and recalls a succession of strange and momentous events that form a unique epoch in the history of France. We have, therefore, thought it well to prepare and lay before our readers in and out of New Zealand the following brief sketch of the remarkable story of the bright particular star of that stirring period, the heroic Maid of Orleans.

'At the time of which we write Henry VI. had been declared King of England and France by his General the Duke of Bedford. The northern provinces of the latter kingdom had openly declared their allegiance to the new and youthful king; those of the centre and south adhered to the fortunes of Charles VII., their legitimate sovereign, who had been proclaimed at Poitiers. War was declared between the contending parties. The English and Burgundians, who made common cause, reaped a harvest of easy conquests over the poverty and weakness of the French Monarch, and at the battle of Verneuil inflicted upon him a blow which almost proved the utter downfall of his rapidly-declining power. Orleans, the last support of his tottering throne, was at length besieged, and, despite the gallantry of its brave defenders, was on the point of falling into the hands of the English; the king himself was about to retire for personal safety to the mountains of Languedoc, when it pleased Divine Providence to make Joan of Arc the instrument of one of those unexpected revolutions, which, confounding the pride of earthly conquerors, set at naught the calculations of human wisdom and lead back people's thoughts to the foot of the only throne that is immovable, of the only power that is eternal.

EARLY LIFE OF JOAN OF ARC.

Joan of Arc, whose birth took place in 1411, was one of five children that blessed the union of a pious couple who lived in the village of Domremi, situated at a distance of two leagues from the town of Neufchateau. Her early education was in keeping with the humble circumstances in which her pious parents lived. She

never knew how to read or write, but the words and examples of the authors of her existence instilled into her youthful mind those principles of exalted virtue which she displayed in so eminent a degree throughout her short and eventful life. All are of accord in representing her as endowed with the most admirable qualities, and adorned with every virtue; modest, patient, submissive, devoted to the poor and sick, and timid to such a degree as to be disconcerted by being simply spoken to. Work and prayer engrossed her time. After her daily toil, instead of joining in the merry pastimes of her companions, she quietly slipped away to the village church, where, in a shady corner, she poured forth to her Saviour all the affection of her young and guileless heart. It might truly be said that she prayed always; whether labouring on her father's little farm, or tending the flocks, or at her household duties, her communion with heaven was tender and constant. The young people blamed her for what they chose to term her 'excessive devotion'—it was the only reproach of which she was ever the subject in her native hamlet of Domremi. Thus she lived till her fourteenth year, unknown to the world and knowing it not, acquainted only with the limited circle of human wisdom conformable to her sex and condition, and far from dreaming of being called to raise and reconsolidate the throne of the Louis that had received such a rude shock from the united strength of foreign and internal enemies. I am well aware that some very smart people will refuse to attribute a heaven-sent mission to Joan of Arc, and will try to explain away, after their own fashion, facts which no one can call into question. But let them remember that no profane history is based on materials so certain and authentic as that of the Maid of Orleans, which is made up for the most part of judicial informations, and the sworn depositions of hundreds of witnesses of every age, profession, and condition. For us, we are convinced that God, when He thinks proper, intervenes in the affairs of the world, and that it pleases Him to make use of what is apparently the weakest instrument to manifest His power and justice, and confound, at the same time, the folly of merely human pride and wisdom.

HER FIRST SUPERNATURAL VISION.

She was in her fourteenth year when she was favoured with her first supernatural communication with heavenly spirits, and vowed to consecrate her virginity to God. At short intervals during the rest of her life these celestial visitors, but especially St. Michael the Archangel, St. Catherine, and St. Margaret, came in visible form to direct and encourage her, both in her humble home at Domremi, in the midst of her conquests, and in the changed fortunes that preceded her immolation on the altar of English cruelty and hatred. The principal missions confided to her were the relief of Orleans and the crowning of King Charles VII. in the ancient city of Rheims. After having overcome difficulties which would have disheartened the bravest person of the stronger sex, she set out for Chinon, where Charles was then staying. It was winter time. Her only escort was her brother Pierre and seven cavaliers. Her path lay through a country occupied by the enemy, and traversed by deep and swollen rivers. Yet, as if by a miracle, she reached, in perfect safety, her journey's end, and announced her wonderful mission in a letter to the King, saying that she 'had traversed five hundred leagues to come to him, and knew many things that would please him.' She arrived at Chinon at a moment when the French monarchy seemed to be in its death throes, when Orleans was about to fall, and divine assistance alone could have led on its cause to triumph. She was in her eighteenth year, and described by eye-witnesses as endowed with uncommon beauty. When speaking of the mission with which she was charged, her language was noble, dignified, and even sublime; did she treat of other subjects she expressed her thoughts in the artless language of a simple, uneducated, peasant girl. The fame of her high destiny and the extraordinary sanctity of her life inspired the people with new confidence, and recalled to their minds the words of an old prophecy, which told that 'a virgin would come to the aid of France, which a woman (Isabel of Bavaria) would have destroyed.' But the enthusiasm with which she inspired the multitude was in no way shared by the King and his counsellors. A thousand delays and difficulties were thrown by them in her path, and it was only after the most minute precautions, reports from Domremi, decisions of ecclesiastical and parliamentary commissions, and every other measure which human prudence could suggest, that she was allowed to fight her country's battles and fulfil her high and noble mission. 'Most noble Dauphin,' said Joan, when at length admitted to the royal presence, 'I am sent on the part of God to bring succour to your kingdom. I am ready to go to war with the English.' Four of her most celebrated prophecies were made at this period, and were subsequently carried out even in their minutest details.

HOW SHE SAVED THE CITY OF ORLEANS.

She was charged with the relief of Orleans. The girl on a sword that was said to have been used by Charles Martel against the Saracens. Blasphemy, licentiousness, and other abuses, were, by her prudent regulations, banished from the midst of her soldiery; numerous chaplains were introduced, and devotional exercises called down Heaven's blessing on her little army. She never desecrated Sundays or festivals by bloodshed or the clang of arms. Her banner was the crucified; she always bore it in her hand, so as not to use her sword, which she unsheathed only in the last extremity, and even then only for the sake of defence. 'I never killed a man,' said she to her interlocutors during her subsequent captivity at Rouen. Though altogether without previous training, she displayed consummate skill in riding, running the tilt, artillery practice, and every sort of military exercises then in use. The route marked out by her for the relief of Orleans, as well as most of her subsequent tactics, were warmly opposed by King Charles' officers, as contrary to the dictates of human prudence, but the event invariably proved that her enlightenment proceeded from a source far superior to merely human knowledge or foresight. On her arrival at Orleans she thus summoned the English generals to raise the siege: