

## ST. JOAN OF ARC

(By ARCHBISHOP REDWOOD.)

Joan of Arc was a peasant-girl of the Marches of Lorraine. Born on the day of the Epiphany, 1412, she died on May 30, 1431. Almost the whole of this short life of 19 years was passed in the peaceful occupations of the little village of Domremy. Then towards the end (February 22, 1429-May, 1431) the peasant-girl became a warrior-girl; the liberatress of France from the English rule; the victim of most infamous treachery; the condemned culprit of an unjust court; the burnt victim and martyr of Rouen. A unique fact in the history of all peoples! A unique fact in the annals of France! A unique fact in the records of holiness! Joan, the warrior-girl, raised to the honor of our altars throughout the whole world! From every standpoint her history is alike admirable and ravishing. When spinning in her father's house, kneeling in her village church, standing amid the theologians of Poitiers that examined her mission, or the judges at Rouen bent on her destruction, on horseback before Orleans or Compiègne with her troops, radiantly smiling towards the King of France in the Cathedral of Rheims, weeping in the prison of Château-Vieux, in her appeal to the Pope against the sentence of the University of Paris, in her cry towards Jesus while the flames devoured her maiden frame—everywhere she is beautiful to behold, touching hearts, and drawing tears. She is pure, laborious, intrepid, pious, simple, devoted. Puzzled by no prophecies, quailing in no enterprise. God is with her. She knows it, and says it, and she proves the fact in the shame of death as well as in the glory of life.

Powerless to deny facts resting on the bedrock of absolute certainty, unbelievers have attempted to naturally explain her supernatural existence. Their work has been only the work of bad historians and bad Frenchmen. All Voltaire's wit, all Anatole's perversity have been spent in vain to lower the saintly Maid. They have verified Pascal's words to all their crew: *Incredulés les plus crédules*—none so credulous as the incredulous. By the denial of her life's mystery they have wrapt it in impenetrable darkness far more disconcerting than the mysteries of faith.

This unlettered peasant-girl, who heard the voices of St. Catherine and St. Margaret, who conversed with St. Michael, saw more clearly into French politics and ecclesiastical problems of her time than all the statesmen and all the doctors of the Paris University. Of course, she could not have written the *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle* of Bossuet, nor de Maistre's *Considérations sur la France*; but she knew better than Bossuet that all empires depend on God, better than de Maistre she read the map of the Kingdom of St. Louis written in the decess of Heaven. Frenchmen of the Burgundian party were blinded by the triumph of might: the English conquest appeared lawful to them because it had succeeded. In like manner the doctors who went to Bâle lost their footing amid the discussions of the great schism of the West, and about the Pope's person and power. In a superior light Joan, the unlettered peasant-girl, understood beyond all doubt that the Pope of Rome is the sole visible head of the Church, as the *gentil Dauphin* of Chinon was the sole King of France. Besides being the liberatress of France, Joan was the very incarnation of the admirable qualities of the French race, a living synthesis of France's Catholic policy, a type of France's Roman loyalty, an immortal flower sprung from France's faith, and illustrating her marvellous virtues.

In this page of French annals, as in a hundred others, religion has been the very tissue of French national life. The affirmation of this truth is in accordance with facts, imparts the character of consistency to all French history, in its deepest and grandest sense, and faithfully preserves the integrity of the French spiritual patrimony bequeathed to the nation

from remotest antiquity. Modern scoffers would tell us that the Church burnt Joan of Arc of yore, but, wiser to day, she claims Joan as her own and canonises her as a saint. We answer: the judges at Rouen were prevaricators who set their ecclesiastical authority at the vile service of their political passions and English spite. They were not the Church of France, nor the Church at all. If clerics were found to condemn Joan in 1431, there were clerics also to approve in 1429 her extraordinary mission. From the cradle at Domremy to the stake at Rouen, Joan ever walked under the blessings of the true priests of Jesus Christ. The moment the clergy came to know of her imprisonment, they multiplied processions and prayers in her behalf. When Rouen was reconquered, the King ordered an inquiry, and Cardinal d'Estouteville, helped by the inquisitor John Brehal, revised the iniquitous trial of 1431. Joan's supreme appeal and that of her mother Isabella were conveyed to Rome, Calixtus III. appointed to rehabilitate the victim, John Brehal, William Chartier, Bishop of Paris, and the Archbishop of Rheims, Juvenel Orsini. The act of rehabilitation, begun by Calixtus III. in 1455, was finished in the canonisation wrought to-day by Benedict XV. Such throughout the course of ages was the mind of the Church concerning Joan of Arc. These homages, ever on the increase for three centuries, entirely submerged and destroy the error of a handful of judges making a mockery of justice.

As for France of 1920, she knows and venerates Joan of Arc more than ever before. It is the glory of Orleans to have ever preserved the memory of the saint of the Fatherland. By the feast of May 8 which annually recalled the deliverance of 1429, the admiration and gratitude due to the envoy of heaven, were kept alive. The voices of the historians of the 19th century mingle with the hymns which rise from the Cathedral of Orleans. In 1869 Bishop Dupanloup petitioned Pope Pius IX. to beatify Joan of Arc. When Pope Pius X. had beatified her, her most ardent admirers felt sure that her canonisation would be in the near future. Was not the statue of Joan of Arc on the work-table of Pope Pius X., in the lowliest villages of France, in the chapels of foreign missions? Was not the life of the incomparable heroine popular even in the nations the least friendly to France? Had not the Bishop of Orleans sworn in his heart to bring about with all his might and all speed her canonisation? Miracles were required, and the faith of Christians obtained them to the full satisfaction of the severe court of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. So Joan is now on our altars a canonised saint.

### BENEDICTION HELD AMID MONASTIC RUINS

News from England records a historic scene which recently took place in connection with Corpus Christi. This was the occurrence of the solemn ceremony of Benediction in monastic ruins at Thetford.

For the first time since the so-called Reformation, a Corpus Christi procession was held at Thetford on the day of the feast. It was recorded as appropriate that this return to tradition should be an act of reparation for centuries of neglect.

The monastery of the Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre is now in Catholic hands, it is interesting to learn. Therefore the procession took place in the grounds. The main altar was erected in the ruined refectory. A short sermon was preached on the occasion of this ceremony, which was so reminiscent of olden days of Catholicism in England.

The modern ceremony and its surroundings were a striking reminder of how different religious conditions were in the old Catholic days.

The pious man and the atheist always talk of religion; the one speaks of what he loves and the other of what he fears.—Montesquieu.

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