

signal. At last, the people are all arranged. Suddenly the trumpets blare, and as the last echo dies away, there is a growing din of hooves. Round the corner of the church, at full gallop, sweeps a cohort of horsemen and horsewomen, at the head of which—in full panoply of war—is Sainte Jeanne d'Arc.

She rides a white horse, her two male squires on either hand. Behind them is her female entourage, and in the rear, like a mob of demons, is her retinue of knights, black, savage-looking Kanakas for the most part, reining in their steeds like Centaurs. They have knots of grass at the saddle-bow, and flower circlets round their necks.

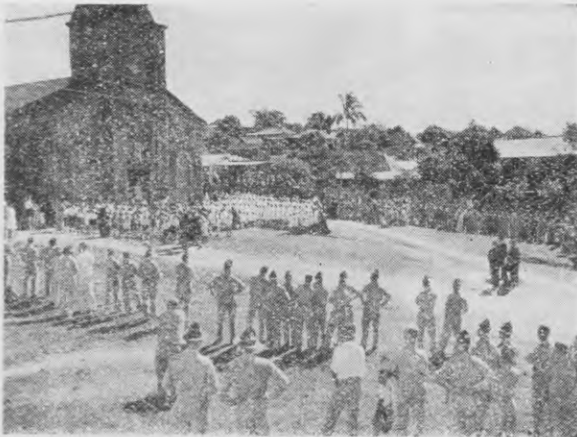
Jeanne pauses before the cenotaph as a wreath is laid upon the steps. She wears a white surplice over a blue robe. The former bears a blue cross. A fillet with a diadem encircles her hair, and in her hand she carries a banner. Her squires wear armour, white and blue robes, and silvery visors, made (even from the distance at which I sit) from cardboard. They carry spears and axes, and the horses of all three are caparisoned in white and gold.

The ceremony is now carried on by a French "aumonier," or Army padre, who delivers a dissertation on the life of the Saint, with deductions for the present day. This time it is Hitler and

the Nazi hordes who are overriding the fields of France, and it behoves us all to make every effort to eject the invader.

For a second time the trumpets blare. Again confusion. Gradually order is restored, out of which comes a procession, headed by the groups of children, which marches round the cenotaph and the horsemen, giving a salute with the right hand. Finally, the group of horsemen joins in, the cavaliers having much trouble with their recalcitrant mounts, until Saint Joan herself makes the circuit, when the whole procession, trumpeted by the four "éclairons," makes for the open road and the tour of the village.

The crowd splits and disperses. All those bright dresses retire to the wardrobe for another year, all the relations go back to their homes in the back-blocks. Soon the square is deserted, except for me, still seated on the wall of my French friend, a black and white cat, and a few small boys playing round the memorial. There is no colour but the bright glow of my friend's oranges, and the last slants of the sun on the white-washed walls of the Army headquarters. The vision has faded, but it will come again, every year, as long as there is a France and a New Caledonia—the "France of the South."



The open-air mass.