







## JOAN OF ARC.

It is a cruel trial for one's cherished romance to be compelled to turn from the spotless enthusiast, the gentle martyr of history, who has made this name famous, to the poor counterfeit and impostor who appears as the heroine of the first part of *King Henry VI*. The "La Pucelle" of Shakspeare is painted with the bitterest English prejudice, as half witch, half charlatan—a coarse, fighting, blood-thirsty Amazon, who, when made prisoner, condescends to an ignominious subterfuge to escape the death-sentence.

She is introduced to the prince-dauphin, during the desperate straits of the siege of Orleans, by the Bastard of Orleans, who addresses his royal master in these words :

Methinks your looks are sad, your cheer appall'd ;  
Hath the late overthrow wrought this offence ?  
Be not dismay'd, for succor is at hand :  
A holy maid hither with me I bring,  
Which, by a vision sent to her from heaven,  
Ordained is to raise this tedious siege,  
And drive the English forth the bounds of France.  
The spirit of deep prophecy she hath,  
Exceeding the nine sibyls of old Rome ;  
What's past, and what's to come, she can descry.



And to Charles, himself, she thus relates her story, and declares the mission she is charged with :

Dauphin, I am by birth a shepherd's daughter—  
My wit untrain'd in any kind of art.  
Heaven, and our Lady gracious, hath it pleas'd  
To shine on my contemptible estate :  
Lo, whilst I waited on my tender lambs,  
And to sun's parching heat display'd my cheeks,  
God's mother deigned to appear to me,  
And, in a vision full of majesty,  
Will'd me to leave my base vocation,  
And free my country from calamity ;  
Her aid she promis'd, and assur'd success ;  
In complete glory she reveal'd herself ;  
And, whereas I was black and swart before,  
With those clear rays which she infus'd on me  
That beauty am I bless'd with which you see.  
Ask me what question thou canst possible,  
And I will answer unpremeditated ;  
My courage try by combat, if thou dar'st,  
And thou shalt find that I exceed my sex.  
Resolve on this : Thou shalt be fortunate,  
If thou receive me for thy warlike mate.

La Pucelle is as good as her word ; she forces an entrance to the town of Orleans, in the very teeth of the redoubtable John Talbot, "the scourge of France;" and at once the shepherd's daughter is deified by her grateful sovereign and her enthusiastic countrymen :

*Puc.* Advance our waving colors on the walls ;  
Rescu'd is Orleans from the English wolves :—  
Thus Joan la Pucelle hath perform'd her word.

*Char.* Divinest creature, bright Astræa's daughter,  
How shall I honor thee for this success ?  
Thy promises are like Adonis' gardens,  
That one day bloom'd, and fruitful were the next.—

France, triumph in thy glorious prophetess !—  
Recover'd is the town of Orleans ;  
More blessed hap did ne'er befall our state.

*Reig.* Why ring not out the bells throughout the town ?  
Dauphin, command the citizens make bonfires,  
And feast and banquet in the open streets,  
To celebrate the joy that God hath given us.

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*Char.* 'Tis Joan, not we, by whom the day is won ;  
For which I will divide my crown with her,  
And all the priests and friars in my realm  
Shall, in procession, sing her endless praise.  
A statelier pyramis to her I'll rear  
Than Rhodope's, or Memphis', ever was ;  
In memory of her, when she is dead,  
Her ashes, in an urn more precious  
Than the rich jewell'd coffer of Darius,  
Transported shall be at high festivals  
Before the kings and queens of France.  
No longer on Saint Denis will we cry,  
But Joan la Pucelle shall be France's saint.

One passage from the lips of our Joan of Arc is worthy of her great namesake—her exhortation to the Duke of Burgundy, who has joined the English forces against France :

Look on thy country, look on fertile France,  
And see the cities and the towns defac'd  
By wasting ruin of the cruel foe !  
As looks the mother on her lowly babe,  
When death doth close his tender dying eyes,  
See, see, the pining malady of France ;  
Behold the wounds, the most unnatural wounds,  
Which thou thyself hast given her woful breast !  
O, turn thy edged sword another way—  
Strike those that hurt, and hurt not those that help !  
One drop of blood, drawn from thy country's bosom,  
Should grieve thee more than streams of foreign gore ;  
Return thee, therefore, with a flood of tears,  
And wash away thy country's stained spots !



*Bur.* Either she hath bewitch'd me with her words,  
Or nature makes me suddenly relent.

In the Fifth Act we are treated to an episode of genuine witchcraft, over which the "holy maid" presides; by the desertion of her "familiar" we are prepared for her speedy downfall:

*Puc.* Now help, ye charming spells, and periapts;  
And ye choice spirits that admonish me,  
And give me signs of future accidents! *[Thunder.*  
You speedy helpers, that are substitutes  
Under the lordly monarch of the north,  
Appear, and aid me in this enterprise!

*Enter Fiends.*

This speedy quick appearance argues proof  
Of your accustom'd diligence to me.  
Now, ye familiar spirits, that are cull'd  
Out of the powerful regions under earth,  
Help me this once, that France may get the field.

*[They walk about, and speak not.]*

O, hold me not with silence over-long!  
Where I was wont to feed you with my blood,  
I'll lop a member off, and give it you,  
In earnest of a further benefit;  
So you do condescend to help me now.—

*[They hang their heads.]*

No hope to have redress?—My body shall  
Pay recompense, if you will grant my suit.

*[They shake their heads.]*

Cannot my body, nor blood-sacrifice,  
Entreat you to your wonted furtherance?  
Then take my soul—my body, soul, and all—  
Before that England give the French the foil.

*[They depart.]*

See! they forsake me. Now the time is come,  
That France must vail her lofty-plumed crest,  
And let her head fall into England's lap.  
My ancient incantations are too weak.

In the next martial encounter, therefore, we are not surprised to find her captured by the Duke of York, and at once condemned to die:

*York.* Take her away; for she hath liv'd too long,  
To fill the world with vicious qualities.

*Puc.* First, let me tell you whom you have condemn'd:

*Not me begotten of a shepherd swain,  
But issu'd from the progeny of kings;  
Virtuous, and holy; chosen from above,  
By inspiration of celestial grace,  
To work exceeding miracles on earth.  
I never had to do with wicked spirits;  
But you,—that are polluted with your lusts,  
Stain'd with the guiltless blood of innocents,  
Corrupt and tainted with a thousand vices,—  
Because you want the grace that others have,  
You judge it straight a thing impossible  
To compass wonders, but by help of devils.  
No, misconceiv'd! Joan of Arc hath been  
A virgin from her tender infancy,  
Chaste and immaculate in very thought—  
Whose maiden blood, thus rigorously effus'd,  
Will cry for vengeance at the gates of heaven.*

*York.* Ay, ay;—away with her to execution.

*War.* And hark ye, sirs; because she is a maid,  
Spare for no fagots—let there be enough;  
Place barrels of pitch upon the fatal stake,  
That so her torture may be shortened.

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*Puc.* Will nothing turn your unrelenting hearts?—  
Then, Joan, discover thine infirmity,  
That warranteth by law to be thy privilege:—  
I am with child, ye bloody homicides:  
Murder not then the fruit within my womb,  
Although ye hale me to a violent death.