

est deception and flattery, a villain who finds his proper antagonist and conqueror in the sausage-seller of the agora. It is absurd to suppose (as Plutarch and other historians have done) that such a man could have been a successful opponent of Perikles and Nikias.

'84

JEANNE DARC.

The darkest hour in French history is just before the dawn of the reformation, of the revival of learning; just before the dawn of modern times. War had been carried on with England for a hundred years, and at no time in that dreadful century of devastation did France seem so nearly lost as in the year 1428. The English Henry VI, had been proclaimed king of France, while the Dauphin, Charles VI, still uncrowned was making no effort to regain his lost kingdom. Never has France been so near extirpation. "The people," as the historian Martin expresses it, "were no longer bathed in their sweat, but drowned in their blood, debased below the beasts of the forest, among which they wander panic-stricken, mutilated, in quest of an asylum in the wilderness."

But France was not to be lost. If her king or her men at arms were not able to save her, there was one who could. This one was a girl of scarcely eighteen years, a poor uneducated peasant's child. Jeanne Darc was the child of a laborer of Domremy, a village on the marches of Lorraine and Champagne; her home was close to the fairy haunted forests of the Vosges, with their sacred trees and fountains. Such surroundings would have an influence even on the rude peasantry, and how much more would they effect a mind so imaginative and delicate as Jeanne possessed? A French writer says of her: "Born under the very walls of the church, lulled in her cradle by the chimes of bells, and nourished by legends, she was herself a legend, a quickly passing and pure legend, from birth to death."

But her quiet, dreamy life was soon broken by the storm of war which at last burst upon far off Domremy. Her hitherto aimless dreams were now centered upon the condition of France. She had pity, to use the phrase forever upon her lips, for the fair realm of France. And so intense was her pity that at last her one absorbing thought returned to her, in what she fancied to be the voices of the saints, assuring and commanding her to go forth, crown her king and save France.

For five years she resisted the voices, her delicate nature shrank from so bold an undertaking. But when the crisis came, when the French were besieged in Orleans, the key to the whole country, she could resist no longer, but left her home forever to present herself at the Dauphin's court.

The story of her exploits is familiar to all. What this untaught girl really did for her country was of itself simple, but great in its results; she brought to bear upon the armies of France the influence of a devout, patriotic, christian life. From bands of reckless, dissolute plunderers, she made French soldiers orderly, decent, moral and devout. Hope revived, she made the Dauphin believe in himself, and the court believe in the cause. Men of faith saw in her the expected virgin savior; men of understanding, perceived the advantage to their side of having her thus regarded. She inspired a superstitious con-

fidence in the French, and in the English superstitious terror.

This was the secret of her success. It was no magic, but the irresistible enthusiasm of a restless spirit which calculated no chances, felt no doubts. Firmly believing in a divine mission, she moved serenely on towards its aim.

Her career could be but brief. She left her home to relieve Orleans and crown the king. She accomplished her mission and begged leave to return to her shepherd's work. But this could not be. After a series of important victories accompanied by minor defeats, she was taken prisoner under the walls of Compiègne, which she was attempting to relieve.

She had saved others, herself she could not save. All were against her. Those whom she had saved deserted, betrayed, and condemned her. French troops fighting on the English side captured and imprisoned her. French priests sang a Te Deum in honor of her capture, and of the judges who condemned her fifty nine were French.

But the English from whose grasp she had wrenched so great a province, were wild with hate and humiliation. They had been thwarted in their conquest by a child. There was but one hope left to them, to prove that Charles VII, had been crowned by a witch. If Jeanne were not tried, condemned and burned as a sorceress, if her victories were not set down as due to the devil, they would remain in the eyes of the people miracles, God's own work.

Accordingly after twelve months imprisonment, she was brought to trial on a charge of heresy, before an ecclesiastical court with the Bishop of Beauvais at its head. Never from the foundation of the earth has there been another such a trial. It was a contest between one ignorant peasant girl and the church of Rome, paid and backed by the power that ruled England and a part of France.

Nothing is so striking as the utter silence with which all men looked on at the long, dreary trial, at the shameful imprisonment and bitter death. From all the surrounding darkness the noble figure of the heroine of France stands out in wonderful beauty against the background of treachery, meanness and cruelty of her persecutors. Throughout the long process every device was used to entangle her speech. Two-edged questions which not one of the judges themselves could answer, were put to her. To the unlawful question, "Do you believe that you are in a state of grace?" She simply replied, "If I am may God be pleased to keep me in it, if I am not may God be pleased to put me in it."

For five months she kept her judges as it were at bay. Her condemnation was delayed by the hope that some sentence would be dropped which would prove her a witch. But her woman's subtlety thwarted all their attempts. Not one word of repentance could they persuade her to utter. The snaky kindness and the threats of the judges were alike of no avail.

The University of Paris was consulted: it could give but one judgment, either the events related by the prisoner occurred, or they did not occur; if they did not occur she is a contumacious liar; if they did occur she is a sorceress, a servant of the devil. She must confess, recant, renounce, or suffer a penalty proportioned to her crimes.