

# Beautiful Countess Once Hungry in Omaha Claims

## Powers of Joan of Arc



The Hat

One day The Count, without knowing why, he says, walked into a Fifth avenue shop and purchased the hat which The Countess is wearing in this picture. When he presented it to her she laughed and said it was a ridiculous "lid." According to friends who were in the room at the time the Countess fell upon the floor in a faint. When she regained consciousness The Count was advised that the "powers" had told her to wear the hat and make no complaint. After wearing it three times it took on a helmet shape as Joan of Arc.



Count de Fersen

## Mysterious Couple Disappear When "Powers" So Direct

Sail Under Assumed Name for French Port—Where Are They?

By ADELAIDE KENNERLY

HAS Joan of Arc been reincarnated?  
Has she been hungry in Omaha?

Whether or not this woman, who is now the Countess de Fersen, is Joan of Arc reincarnated, as she claims, there is no doubt about the fact that she was hungry in Omaha three years ago. That fact alone is of little consequence, however, since this unusual woman hasn't been hungry since then in any city. But the world may soon be eager to know "who" and "why" is this Countess de Fersen—the self-acclaimed Joan of Arc second.

Scores of dying soldiers on the French battlefield, with enemy shells thundering over them and hideous gas bombs bursting in their midst, have hysterically cried that they saw Joan of Arc floating in the smoke-laden heavens above. And some, with their last breaths, sent forth piteous appeals to the once Maid of Orleans, who so mysteriously lead an all but defeated army to victory, to save the allied nations. These visions in the clouds have been interpreted by the comrades of the martyrs as an omen of great fortune for the French in this world war.

And, after 500 years, comes the beautiful young Countess de Fersen, once hungry and looking for work in Omaha, once a skirt model in New York, but now a member of the noted, titled European family, who claims to be vested with similar strange powers that are urging her to flee to this hell on earth—the battlefield of France. Like Joan of Arc, she says, divine "voices" are forcing her to lead the united armies to victory and everlasting peace which the whole world awaits.

Psychic? She doesn't know.  
Religious? Not at all. In fact the "Countess of Sorrows," as she is affectionately called by those who are drawn to her, admits that she knows nothing about creeds and doctrines and cults.

Theosophy? Why, theosophy might be theology or psychology or mythology so far as she knows or cares. But she relates in detail how the "powers" came to her, after a struggle for bread, in a fourth-floor-back room in the great metropolis.

### THE CHILD

As little Margaret Perkins, way out on the Pacific coast, she was a temperamental child, living, acting, thinking according to her emotions of each minute. When she became a young lady many sought her hand in marriage, but a wealthy young chap, from the well known Atterberry family of Pittsburgh, won in the game of hearts. After a few stormy years their marital ties were brought to parting paths through the divorce court, leaving Mrs. Atterberry with bitter memories and two pretty children to love.

Whether for adventure or because some sort of power urged her forth, she started on her search for work. When she reached Denver an emotion, or a "spasm," as

she describes it, took possession of her and instead of continuing her trip to Chicago she ordered her trunk put off at this point.

Her complexion was fresh and her skin lovely, so within three days she was demonstrating cosmetics in a large department store. The novelty soon wore off. She lived in a good hotel and used her money as fast as she earned it. Although there were only a few dollars in her change purse, to continue her trip loomed up as the largest idea on her horizon of thought. After she calmed herself, on an eastbound train, the young adventurer grew panic-stricken and decided to stop at Omaha and cash in the unused portion of her ticket, which would give her a few dollars for food until she could earn more. However, Omaha was well supplied with help, so far as she could learn. Nothing was being demonstrated.

Wouldn't she make a good model?  
Yes, but the merchants of this city seldom use models, and, besides, this was between seasons, when sale dresses were not modeled.

After two days at a good hotel Mrs. Atterberry decided, for the first time in her life, to find cheap quarters. A rather clean looking place on Twenty-fifth street was selected from a group of rooming houses and in a small back room the woman lived for three days with almost no food and no money. This was between the time she wired to her father in California for money and the day the money was received.

Chicago was her next stop. There she had no difficulty in finding a position as model in a wholesale suit house where she earned money enough to take her on to New York and prosperity.

After working as a model in a skirt factory for two months, grieving for her babies, worrying over the strange sensations which were taking possession of her, Mrs. Atterberry became ill in her fourth-floor-back room in upper New York. One night, she declares, something began to shake her and she fell to the floor. Without knowing why she shouted: "If there be a God in Heaven I command you to write with my pencil." And she wrote many weird messages to herself.

From this time on she heard strange voices, saw queer pictures in her mirror. She began to paint and draw and do many odd things.



Countess  
de Fersen

### The Count

Then comes the dashing young Count de Fersen, a member of the Swiss legation who thought that Fate had a grudge against him or he would never have been sent to horrid America. He left the Waldorf and its crowds a few days after landing in New York and took an elaborate suite in the building where the woman of mystery was living. In this suite he felt as lonely as at the hotel, and in a desperate mood went to Washington and resigned his post almost before his mission had begun.

SHE was going out for a walk one evening.  
HE, a good looking young man of foreign mein, was coming in. They bowed and smiled—a thing quite unusual in a New York apartment—each went a different way.

Who was this pretty woman with shadowy eyes? he mentally inquired. Have the powers done this also? inquired the young woman who talked with herself and her "voices" only.

There was no chance for a formal introduction. How could it be managed, each asked nobody in particular and everybody in general.

Fate arranged details a few days later.  
In less than a month Margaret Atterberry became Countess de Fersen, wife of the Beau Brummel she had met in the doorway—Count de Fersen. America, from then on, looked like a beautiful rose to this descendant of the history-making Count Hans Axel Fersen, whose love letters to Queen Marie Antoinette are now a part of French and Swedish history. And like his great uncle, the young count stakes all, he says, for the woman he loves.

### VISIONS

Marriage, however, did not interfere with the countess' vision, and day by day she claimed to be given messages about Germany and the traps and trenches which were being built for the murder of allied soldiers. The "powers" drew maps and made pictures of battle fronts and traps, often keeping their victim up days and nights until the work was completed. Then, she says, the powers would put her in a state of coma for ten or fifteen minutes, during which time her fatigue entirely disappeared.

The countess was growing thin. Her eyes were taking on a strange, shadowy expression. She never left her room day or night after she began receiving war messages. Several times she tried to laugh at the "powers" and shake them off, but each time she was stricken dumb, the countess declares. Is it any wonder the woman began to fear for her life?

"His bride was losing her beauty," so Count de Fersen whispered. He decided to take her away from her environment—to visit her parents on the west coast. While there the "powers" told her of her mission and urged her to go to France, where she would be given information through "voices" to direct our soldiers in their fight.

Was the mayor of Los Angeles with this strange tale?  
The count said "yes."  
The countess said "no."

But she balanced on the scales of her heart the "yes" and the "no" when she should have used her brain—and the count won, of course.

To Mayor Woolwine they went to relate in detail to one of his secretaries the story of the countess and her "powers." She begged to be sent to France to hasten world peace. But the executive sent word that he had no department for dealing with the supernatural, his work being entirely with the material.

Then to the Red Cross the young count took the message from his countess, but the officials of that body winked and referred him to the New York headquarters. Then the countess said "no" and the count acquiesced.

"We will take our message to Colonel Collardet's office, French attache militaire, at Washington," said the count, and they hastened east-



### The Mystery of Her Art

A summons to the Countess' apartment one evening without being informed as to whether I was to receive advance news on the war or meet my Fate, brought me face to face with the auburn haired woman in filmy matinee, coiffure tumbled, bare feet and in a most perplexing mood.

"Everything is all right now," she smiled as I entered. "The Powers have been controlling me for six hours and I am limp as a faded flower. They tell me that through your influence I shall go to France and point the way to victory. For this I am to present to you a portrait of myself, which 'they' painted through my hand at night under a dim light. Take it to the art critics if you like. I know not whether it is good or bad. I am not responsible. 'They' did it."

To a dozen or more of the famous Fifth avenue art galleries I took this queer mixture of paint and oil. The profile was unmistakably that of the Countess—far better, in fact, than a colorless photograph. And yet this fascinating woman claims never to have studied art.

"She is crazy," said one of the noted critics.  
"She is marvelous," said another.

"She has cut a beautiful French poster from something and painted over it," said the third.  
Said the fourth, "She has studied art. This is a most wonderful combination of the old French poster and the Italian clay work I have ever seen. The French poster is not so old, but the Italians, long ago, worked in clay and painted the colors in afterward. There are but a few left and they are in the Vatican at Rome. This, however, is pure oil and paint, because it is yet a little soft."

And the fifth said he could not call her a great artist, because there was nothing like her work by which to compare it. Yet none called it trash, as art critics are likely to do, and all admitted that it was a most fascinating and unusual piece of work.

ward. But at Washington they found deaf ears for the woman who proclaimed her willingness to sacrifice her life, in the effort to save our soldiers from slaughter and defeat. Nor would they hear the count, whose love and faith in his beautiful, mysterious, American wife, prompted him to give up title, wealth, position—even to become an American citizen—if necessary, that the Countess de Fersen should be given an opportunity to carry on the work which her "voices" had urged.

In the office of the French attache militaire there were only pooh-poos and skepticism.

"But wasn't Joan of Arc thought crazy at first—until she succeeded in convincing the army's commander that she was inspired?" asked the countess.

And we ask: "Was the life of Joan of Arc so different, after all from the Countess de Fersen?"

To her friends in New York she predicted losses and gains on the battle front before the papers printed them. March 22, 1918, in the presence of two friends and the writer, the countess jumped from her couch on which she had been reclining, and screamed: "Those reports are lies! We are not holding our own in the new drive. Those fensidish Germans are winning I tell you! For two weeks they will mow us down like chaff. Networks of hell everywhere. Traps and pits at every turn. Oh, my God! I must go to France and show them the way."

Several hours later the same day, headlines in New York papers read: "German Troops Hurl Back." And, "Allied Troops Holding Their Own Against German Attack."

March 23, again without having seen the paper, she fell from the chair at her dressing table shrieking: "I told you so! Those German devils dare not retreat. My God! How they are beating us. Why don't they send me to France?" They are bringing collapsible airplanes in submarines. They will shell New York. Hell awaits us unless they are checked immediately. I see it all in my mirror."

### QUESTIONS

Friends of Count and Countess de Fersen are dazed. They make no statement, but merely ask: "Has Joan of Arc been reincarnated? Will she, through her 'voices' be able to do what our greatest generals and strategists have been unable to do?"

But the Departments of Justice in New York and Washington ask quite another question.

The department was informed, April 4, that the Fersens had sailed for France under an assumed name, at 1:30 p. m. that day; that no one was notified that they were leaving until 1 o'clock, 30 minutes before sailing. Friends could tell nothing to the agents from the department who inquired, except what had been told to them. But they turned over photographs of this mysterious couple with the sincere hope that they would be sufficient evidence to clear the mind of Charles DeWaddy, chief of the Department of Justice in New York and also the department at Washington.

However, up to this date, the countess' family have not heard from her since arriving at Bordeaux.

Now a certain group of newspaper writers in the metropolis are asking: Have they been interned at Bordeaux?

Was the countess' "power" just a ruse to cover her queer actions?

Did the count come to America as a Swiss diplomat in order that his passport should be recognized?

Will he try to reach Berlin through Switzerland?

Is this another notorious spy case which may startle the world?

Or is the countess really, as she claims, the reincarnated Joan of Arc, once hungry in Omaha?

Nobody really knows and the Department of Justice, if they know, won't tell.