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EDITORIAL.

ST. JOAN OF ARC.

THE DAUNTLESS MAID OF FRANCE.

" She climbed the steep ascent of Heaven
Through peril, toil and pain ;
O God to us may grace be given
To follow in her train."

The figure of Joan of Arc, the dauntless Maid of France, is one which shines out in the pages of history as that of one of the greatest heroines the world has ever known. Inspired by a lofty patriotism and serene faith, she achieved military success where distinguished soldiers failed, and died a martyr at the age of twenty, a loyal subject of the King who owed his coronation to her, but who left her to her cruel fate, and a faithful daughter of the Church which burned her at the stake as a heretic.

To-day, five centuries later, that Church has formally admitted her to its calendar of saints, and thus officially recognised that she won by exceptional holiness a high place in heaven and veneration on earth.

The story of Joan, the Maid, is one which English and French alike may well wish had never sullied the pages of their history. Born in 1412 the peasant girl grew up in a distracted France. Domremy, her birth-place, on the banks of the Meuse, was Armagnac, and French in sympathy, but the village across the river was Burgundian, and favoured the claims of the English King, thus Joan early became acquainted with the horrors of war. She was only thirteen years of age when the idea consciously took root with her that her mission was to save France. Then followed four years of waiting, of listening to the voices which bade her go to the aid of her beloved country and its uncrowned King. Still the English invasion continued until Orleans, the key to a strong

position was attacked, and its fall seemed imminent.

Then Joan began her active mission. She obtained an audience of the Dauphin, and eventually so impressed that vacillating Prince that she was placed at the head of some thousands of armed men, whose purpose was to raise the siege of Orleans. But before proceeding on her desperate mission she had to appear before a commission of Bishops, and satisfy them that she was not a witch. Then she triumphantly raised the siege of Orleans, and, according to her promise, secured the coronation of the Dauphin in the cathedral at Reims.

Alas! the Maid's further successes were rewarded with jealous ingratitude by the monarch she had championed, and with treachery on the part of her own countrymen. At the height of her success she was unhorsed and captured by a Burgundian, and sold to the Duke of Bedford, the English Regent in France, for a large sum of money.

Never did her faith burn more brightly than during the year when she was in prison, and at her trial for sorcery, which failed, followed by a charge of heresy, on which she was unjustly condemned. She was burnt at the stake in the market place at Rouen, English and French participating, to their eternal dishonour, in that shameful scene.

Brave, loyal Joan, fair Maid of France, steadfast in death as in life! The voice of the King you served so faithfully was silent in that last dread hour, and you faced its agony alone; but the gates of pearl swung wide as your pure soul passed to the Judgment Throne; and, as you took the place allotted to you by the Majesty on High, the King of Kings Himself reversed the earthly verdict which condemned you heretic, with the words, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

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