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The Home and Personality of Joan of Arc

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JOAN OF ARC ACCLAIMED BY THE PEOPLE



JOAN OF ARC TAKEN PRISONER AT COMPIÈGNE



JOAN AND HER UNCLE BEFORE SIRE DE BAUDRICOURT—MAY 13, 1428



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JOAN RECAPTURES BEAUGENCY



JOAN IDENTIFIES THE KING AT CHINON—MARCH 9, 1429



CHARLES VII CROWNED AT REIMS—JULY 17, 1429



JOAN MARCHES TO ORLÉANS WITH AID—APRIL 27, 1429



JOAN SOLD TO THE ENGLISH—NOVEMBER, 1430



JOAN WOUNDED AT TOURNELLES—MAY 7, 1429



JOAN PUT TO TORTURE—MAY 9, 1431



JOAN MEETS CHARLES VII AT TOURS—MAY 19, 1429



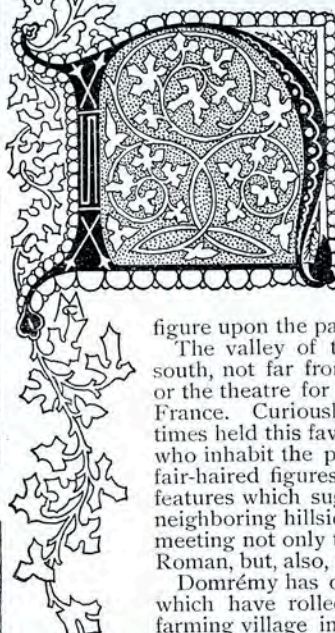
JOAN CONDEMNED TO DEATH—MAY 29, 1431



JOAN OBTAINS EXEMPTION FROM TAXATION FOR DOMRÉMY



JOAN BURNED AT THE STAKE AT ROUEN—MAY 30, 1431



ESTLING beneath a wooded hillside, in the province of Lorraine, lies the little village of Domrémy, the birthplace of Joan of Arc. The main street of the hamlet is a part of the great national highway, which just there runs along a terrace overlooking the valley of the Meuse. Behind the houses rises the forest, and in front stretches the greensward of the meadows extending in light and shadow to the opposite hills. At the upper end of the village, beside the church, stands the picturesque cottage wherein was born, to Jacques of Arc and Isabeau Romée, on the night of January 6, 1412, the little daughter whose name shines out as the brightest illuminated figure upon the pages of mediæval history.

The valley of the Meuse is one great garden land, and stretching north and south, not far from the frontier, it has been for ages the highway of the nations, or the theatre for many of those movements which have decided the character of France. Curiously enough the types of those alien nations, which have at various times held this favored land, are preserved, to a certain extent, among the peasants who inhabit the peaceful valley. In Domrémy to-day walk the tall, commanding, fair-haired figures so characteristic of the German across the border, but with features which suggest the profile on a Roman coin, dug up but yesterday on the neighboring hillside. Talking with the villagers in their homes you find you are meeting not only the physique of the German, and the indomitable energy of the Roman, but, also, the keenness, the vivacity and freedom-loving traits of the French.

Domrémy has changed but little during the four centuries and fourscore years which have rolled away since that winter's night of the Epiphany. It was a farming village in Joan's day; it is a farming community still, with its hillside marked with the varied tints of the grain fields, and meadows dotted with the flocks of grazing sheep or herds of cattle. It is a country big with the story of the past, a country filled with the inherited traditions and some of the superstitions of the nations which have occupied it in turn, a land well suited to form the background in a picture, whose prominent figure is the historic Maid of Orléans.

Jacques of Arc was one of the most prosperous farmers in the village. He owned his modest home and some twenty acres of meadow, field and woodland, and had an income of about one thousand dollars a year. He was a much respected citizen in the small community, performing many of those duties now relegated to a mayor, or a justice of the peace, and entertaining, in a humble way, the pilgrims who passed along the great highway.

It is truly said that great characters are the children of unusual mothers. Joan of Arc was no exception to this almost universal rule. Isabeau of Arc was a woman evidently far in advance of her village associates. She had a brother who had been educated for the clergy; she possessed some little property in her own right; and what was, perhaps, rarer still, she signed her name with the title of Romée, only taken by those who had made the pilgrimage to the eternal city. The broadening influences which must have thus acted upon her character can only be fully appreciated when one contemplates the rather narrow life of the Lorraine peasant woman of to-day. Do we not find in the historic record of the life of the daughter, then unborn, some suggestion of these broadening spiritual influences which must, even from the first, have differentiated her from the other children?

The family of seven, three sons and two daughters, lived in the vine-covered cottage beside the mill on the plot of land adjoining the church. The house has scarcely changed since repaired by one who knew Joan, and were it not for the sculptured details above the door, the tall spruce trees which shelter it, or the well-kept inclosure, there is nothing to

distinguish it from the other farmhouses in the village. The arrangement of the rooms is typical of the Lorraine home, and the interior is in much the same condition as on the morning when Joan set out upon her mission. The sculptured portal opens directly into the living-room with its black oaken ceiling and the wide-mouthed fire-



VILLAGE OF DOMRÉMY

place. In this room Joan was born, and here the family life went on as we find it to-day in the other Domrémy homes.

Joan was a happy little girl, beloved by all the village, and with an early home life as simple and apparently uneventful as that we see to-day along that village street. She arose with the birds, with brother or sister made the fire, pattered barefooted across the grass to the brook for water, and assisted in the preparation of the frugal breakfast. Noon-day found the family afield, for in the peasant home the work is divided among old and young, and all have to share it.

With the other children she rode the horses to water, and, as it came her turn, drove the flocks and the herds of the village to a common pasturage ground in the meadows toward Neufchâteau.

As we sit beside the door of the cottage watching the sunset fade and the twilight fall there comes from across the stream and along the highway beneath the poplars a faint tinkle and patter, growing louder and more distinct at the turn beyond the bridge. It is the flocks and the herds coming home once more, coming just as they have probably been doing every summer night in the twilight since Joan herself last drove them home. As they reach the church part turn to the left, for the barns at the mill, and the others continue down the street, the tinkle of the bells growing fainter as bands of animals detach themselves from the mass on reaching their own barn door. It requires but very little imagination to re-create Joan in the barefooted, sturdy-shouldered, dark-eyed lass who follows in their train.

The peasants, too, come in from the fields, stooping picturesquely beneath a pile of fagots, or a basket piled high with greens. Then the fires are lighted, the flickering light shines out across the falling darkness, the table is spread for the evening meal, and the work of the day is done.

What stories could be told to us by the walls of the Arc cottage if those rooms could speak. These are the thoughts which come to us as we stand in the narrow room called Joan's, and the past comes sweeping back. We can picture her looking out of the little latticed window at the white church walls, as they show beneath the garden trees, and recall her pious devotions at the evening hour when she fell asleep with all the gentle confidence of her childhood faith, never dreaming of any future beyond the quiet life apparently marked out for her in that Lorraine valley.

A pious child was little Joan, with a creed most simple and homely, no doubt, in expression, but born of the intensity of character which made martyrs in the earlier days. On Sunday mornings, as the bell from the little white church sent forth its peal, the peasants of the village assembled for worship beneath the dim arches of the cool interior. Attentive faces, toil-marked, but peaceful, look up at the good curé who to-day leads the service, and the voices which rise in the responses, though husky, are earnest and true. The chapels within the aisles are filled with the pictures or statues so typical of the peasant religion, but it is noticeable that the girls of modern Domrémy remain longest in devotion beneath those arches wherein is marked in quaint Gothic letters, "Here Joan was Baptized," "Here Joan Received Communion," "Here Joan Used to Pray." The neighborhood is full of shrines where the little girl went often in devotion, and on which in the spring time the peasants hang decorations and wreaths. On feast days and festivals not one in the parish was merrier than our barefooted girl, as, dressed in her simple, homespun gown of blue, she danced with the other children around the fairy-tree, or wove garlands to test their fortunes at the spring. The games and plays of these children had something of a quaint and unusual character, for legends and superstitions were handed from one generation to another, and the children wove them into their happy life. The childhood of Joan was peaceful, happy and industrious, and filled with an abundance of healthy exercise,

leading to that hardy, iron physique which was later to astonish veteran warriors. Hers was a sweet, winsome, trustful character, and from her face shone a soul as fresh and pure as the purling little brook which ran bubbling beside her home.

Domrémy, because a part of Lorraine, was warmly loyal to France, but only a quarter of a mile across the fields was Greux, with its inhabitants hotly Burgundian in sentiment, and, therefore, ranked by the loyal villagers of Domrémy as the enemies of the King. Rumors of the great war and the English invasions now and then reached the hamlet from travelers over the highroad, and party spirit often ran high across the meadows. Joan and her brothers took an active part in the differences of opinion between the children of the hamlets, and juvenile battles were frequently the outcome. At last the war was brought to their very village, and Jacques of Arc and his family fled to Neufchâteau until things were safer in their home land. These were some of the things which taught Joan, child though she was, the deadly peril which threatened her native land. Although far removed from the area of the great campaigns yet news came more frequently to the Arc cottage as the years rolled by.

In that living-room much was discussed concerning the condition of France by the old men, as they gathered before the crackling logs on the winter nights. The pilgrims and the villagers often grew eloquent as they recounted the conflicts which made the provinces run red with fire and sword. Joan, spinning by her mother's side, heard all these things, pondered over them, and pictured them as only children can. What wonder that, hearing these recitals night after night, listening in open-eyed marvel as her soul grew big with patriotism—filled with all the fire and enthusiasm of the impressive age—what wonder that the condition of France

became her daily converse, and the soul was prepared for the inspiration which was to come in Joan's visions and voices.

She had reached the age of thirteen when she saw her first vision. It happened while she was in the meadows at play with the children, and it seemed to her that some one said, "Joan, hasten home, your mother wishes you." She ran to the house, and, finding her mother, asked, "Did you want me?" "No," said the mother. Seeing her error the little girl started back to her playmates, when



HOUSE IN WHICH JOAN WAS BORN

suddenly a transparent, shining mist appeared in front of her, and out of the mist came a voice telling the strange tale, to this country girl, that she was destined for another life than that of the valley; that great wonders would be accomplished through her instrumentality, and that she, of all the girls in France, was the one chosen to fulfill the ancient prophecy and reestablish the Dauphin on the throne of his fathers. That

to accomplish all this she would leave home, become a great warrior, lead the armies as chief of division, and that all should follow her guidance and counsel. Whereupon the voice ceased, the shining mist faded slowly away, and the little maid was left standing in the pathway dazed and wholly overcome.

scarcely knowing what to think or believe. Day and night these apparitions came, again and again, and for the next five years the girl remained in great perplexity.

As she grew older the visions became more frequent, urging her to her mission and chiding her apparent delay. The voices were particularly urgent when the news came along the highroad that the English had encamped around Orléans. That was what the village elders had been dreading to hear, for it seemed to them that when the enemy held the valley of the Loire all was lost to France. Then it was that the poor girl could neither eat, sleep, nor occupy herself with the daily duties. When the heart is full the lips speak out; Joan was no exception, and one time meeting a playmate on the village street she said: "Michel, there is between Croisey and Vaucouleurs a

young girl, who, within one year, will yet crown the Dauphin King of France."

At last some of Joan's statements reached her father, who was naturally very much surprised and angry, not only to feel his bright little daughter was becoming the laughing-stock of the village, but to think that, perhaps, she was losing her mind. In no uncertain manner he reproved the girl, calling attention to the presumption she was showing in urging her ability to go to war and command armies. He warned her of the moral dangers which lurked in the camp of the men-at-arms, and threatening, if she did not cease her foolish dreaming, to take her to the brook and drown her with his own hands. Hardly knowing what to do, or how to combat the subtle influences which seemed to be surrounding his daughter,



VILLAGE CHURCH AT DOMRÉMY

he determined to marry her to one of the young men of the village, but Joan quickly put an end to his hopes in that direction.

One day, while alone in the wood which crowns the hill behind the village, Joan heard the familiar voices, and once again the vision appeared in bright array. In tender, urgent tones the voices pictured the condition of France, and the apparent inaction of the maid, the cities which were being devastated, the provinces torn asunder and the death of the brave men, the valiant and true of the realm. Then the modesty, simplicity and the humility of the peasant girl were apparent as she pled her inexperience, her ignorance of martial life, or her power over the rough troopers. Still the voices urged her on; urged her to leave home, to forsake her family, the good curé, and the peaceful life in the valley. They directed her to the chateau and commandant at Vaucouleurs, and closed with the inspiring statement that it was but the will of God which led her onward, and all should be as He commanded.

Few of us can realize what it meant for Joan to leave that home life, and, against the wishes of all in the hamlet, go out into the wide world of which she knew so little. Only a faith as great as her unusual character could have brought her to do it—an implicit trust in her directing, guiding God. Father and mother might be against such a step, the one with dire threats and the other with tears, yet while Joan wept in secret she did not falter, but went steadfastly onward into a future to which her voices called her.

As the months went on, and now and then the news came back to the little hamlet, it was no longer the woes of France which the villagers could discuss as they gathered in the living-room of the Arcs. For now the maid was no longer looked upon as the dreamer, for had she not achieved success with Baudricourt at Vaucouleurs, with the Dauphin at Chinon, before the council at Poitiers, or in the wonderful attack which raised the siege at Orléans? Then came the joyful tidings that the Dauphin was on his way to Rheims, and half

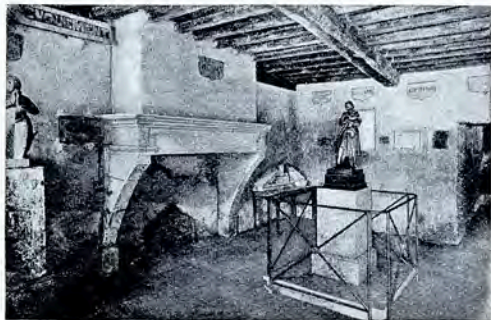
Domrémy went out to meet the troops at Challons and to go up to the coronation in the great cathedral city. Was it a proud and haughty warrior maid with a spirit vain from the honors heaped upon her, that greeted the village folk? Far from it, the Joan whom they saw at the head of the troops was the same frank, winsome, unselfish creature they had known in her childhood home.

This was the keynote of that character which has left its impression forever upon the national life of France. A sturdy, honest, trustful creature, remaining, in the midst of successes which would have turned the head of many an older warrior, the same serene, transparent character.

Everywhere throughout the Republic, in the footsteps of the maid, are monuments and statues to her valor and renown. Each year brings forward an additional number of plastic examples, while few of the great annual exhibitions are opened in which some reference to her history is not displayed. But it is not the statues which each great city is hastening to erect in her memory, nor the paintings which adorn the gallery walls, nor yet the national monuments which rise on the green hillsides of Domrémy, Vaucouleurs or Rouen which best keep fresh the memory of the maid. Her grandest monument is the spirit of liberty which she left as her great inheritance to the French people, and upon that, as upon a massive foundation course, rises the superstructure of the grand united nation of to-day.



ANOTHER VIEW OF DOMRÉMY



LIVING-ROOM OF THE ARC HOUSE



JOAN OF ARC'S SLEEPING-ROOM