Literature, &c.

THE MAID OF ORLEANS.

BY MISS SARAH M. STEBBINS.

The sun was pouring his last rays over the fertile valley of the Vosges, and gleaming brightly on the lowly village of Domremi, by the vine clad banks of the Meuse. It was a festival, and the village maidens were dancing to the merry music of the horn, and sporting beneath the "Fairies Tree," famous in the legendary annals of the hamlet. Apart from her companions, and singing to herself, sat a young peasant girl, whose eyes were intently fixed upon the image of the Virgin Mary, that adorned the rude entrance of the little chapel.

She was a modest, gentle girl, well loved in her native village; reserved in her manners; and remarkable chiefly for her deep devotion, the quiet industry of her habits, and her strict attention to the humble duties befitting her station.

Perhaps there are chords in the human heart, which, if not awakened by a mastyr hand, would forever be dormant. Had Joan d'Arc been born in tranquil days, she would probably have passed her life unnoticed and unknown, in the sweet stillness of her village home; those burning feelings of enthusiasm, which raised her to the pinnacle of glory, unsuspected even by herself—remote from the clash of arms, and the war blast of the trumpet; her destiny inglorious but happy.

And who could have deemed, that the young and gentle girl, quietly engaged in her domestic employments, and who might frequently be seen tending her father's sheep by the Virgina chapel, was destined, to lead forth the chivalry of France to victory, to expel a powerful army from the heart of France, to restore her sovereign to the throne of his ancestors, and to hear her ancestors, and to hear her obscure name proclaimed aloud by the united and grateful voice of a happy nation. Yet so it was; nor is there in the annals of history a heroine, more glorious, more pure, and more unsullied by crime, even in the dangerous path of glory, or who won her laurels less bloodlessly, or wore them with more humility, than did

"——— the shepherds child,
Joanne, the lonely dreamer of the wild."

It was indeed a period to sadden all loyal hearts, from the noble in his castle, to the peasants in his cottage. The prince who was expelled from his throne by seditious subjects and foreign arms, was a youth of nineteen, handsome, brave, and though wanting in firmness, was warm hearted, and generous in his feelings. His distressing situation could not fail to excite the pity and compassion of all hearts, not corrupted by faction.

In the village of Domremi was a small inn, where the knight passing to Vancouleurs, would frequantly stop for refreshment and rest; and as he buckled on his armor, and with his foot in the stirrup, quaffed the parting cup with the host, he would answer the questions of the rustic crowd, who would learn the last news from Chinon, where the young king held his court, with mournful tidings of the rapid progress of foreign troops, and the sad prospects of the royal party.

In the mind of Joan, these narrations produced other feelings than those of sorrow. In the darkness of the night she brooded over the sorrows of her king and country till she became filled with the one absorbing sentiment, to the exclusion of all other worldly feelings. It seemed to her that in the calm stillness of the midnight hour, the Virgin at whose shrine her daily prayers were offered, deigned to appear unto her, clothing in robes of celestial brightness and bade her arise and go forth, strong in her protection, and save her country. Her feelings were raised to a pitch of enthusiasm that defied all danger.

It was spring, when Joan left her native village and her father's cottage, where she was never to return. The wild flowers of the field were just bursting into brightness, and the young leaves breaking from their wintry prison, and she deemed not that her eye rested upon them for the last time. Alone and on foot, she took the road to Vancouleurs and rested not till she reached the residence of Robert of Baudricourt, governor of the city.

She requested him to grant her audience. Twice was her request refused, but at length her importunities prevailed, and she was admitted into his presence. With energy and simplicity she stated her errand and conjured him not to neglect the voice of God, whose agent she was. The governor was struck with her intrepidity and enthusiasm, and being unable to resist her eloquent appeal, he treated her with respect, and ordered her to be conducted under safe guard, to the French court, with an explanatory letter to Charles.

The young Prince was struck with astonishment on reading the letter of Baudricourt. The arrival of John seemed to coincide with a prophecy which had been made to him by a pious nun, and which had made a deep impression on his mind, that the hand of a woman should save France.

But he was willing to try her claim to inspiration, and, descending from his chair of state, he divested himself of his royal robes and jewelled crown, and all the insignia of his shadowy power, and assuming a private habit, mingled with the suite. He then gave orders that the maid should be admitted.

She entered the royal apartment not as one whose life had been spent remote from courts The agent of a supreme power, the pomp and pageantry of an earthly king were nothing in her eyes. The ladies of the court, in their splendid robes, and glittering jewels, felt awed by a superior influence in the presence of the young peasant girl. She passed unawed through the brilliant assembly, and, advancing to King Charles, saluted him as the sovereign of France. It might be that she had heard a description of his person, or that the involuntary look of deference in those who surrounded him betrayed his rank. Be that as it may, her discriminati-on was hailed as a miracle.

With modesty, but firmness, she entered at once upon the subject that occupied her thoughts, and offered, in the name of God, to raise the seige of Orleans, and to conduct the king to Rheims, which was now in the hands of the enemy, to be there crowned and annointed. Her words threw a spell over all who listened. Her voice appeared like the voice of an angel. An assembly of learned theologians examined her mission, and pronounced it undoubted and supernatural.

The English affected to ridicule her pretensions; but the minds of the soldiers, and even of their leaders, were secretly overawed by the general belief that prevailed in all around them

At length, all preparations being completed, Joan made her entrance into Blois, where an army of ten thousand men had assembled to meet her. She was received with loud and repeated acclamations. She was clad in complete armor, with a large cuirass, and wore round her waist and embroidered girdle, and by her side a miraculous sword, taken by desire from the tomb of a knight buried in the Church of St. Catharine de Fierbois.

She was mounted on a fiery steed, which she managed with admirable skill. In her hand the bore aloft a consecrated banner, where the Supreme Being was represented as grasping the globe, and surrounded by the sacred flower de luce.

Having first issued a general order, that the soldiers should confess and join in prayer, before setting out upon the enterprise, she placed herself at the head of the troops and took the road to Orleans.

Suffolk, the English general, was so much intimidated at the divine influence which was supposed to accompany her, that he dared not attack her, and the army was allowed to pass unmolested. On the 4th of May, 1429, Joan entered the ancient city of Orleans, arrayed in her military garb, and displaying her consecrated standard; and as she rode over the splendid bridge, and entered the city, the air was rent with acclamations, and she was hailed as the guardian angel of France.

From this day victory followed her steps. The English quailed at her approach, and declared themselves unable to contend with invisible agents. Their generals believed her to be an agent from Satan—the French regarded her as an angel from heaven. In the meanwhile, no earthly feeling of triumph seems to have clouded, even for an instant, the pure mind of this devoted heroine; no unfeminine cruelty ever blemished her ardor—though often wounded and exposed to constant danger, her sword was never stained with blood.

The siege of Orleans was raised, and the first part of Joan's prophesy being accomplished, she desired that Charles should immediately set out for Rheims, and receive, in that ancient city, the crown of his forefathers. It was now the summer season. The maid of Orleans had appeared with the buds of spring; and the roses of summer had scarce blossomed, in their fullness, before her prophecies were on the eve of their fulfilment.

It was a glorious morning in July, and every hill and valley in the province of Rheims echoed to the glad sound of martial music, and the streets and squares of the capital were thronged with a vast multitude of all ranks and ages. A deputation of the chief magistrates had issued forth, with the keys of the city, to welcome a young monarch. A burst of music announced the approach of the royal party—all eyes were strained with eagerness to view its advance. Surrounded by all the chivalry of France, rode king Charles upon a noble war horse; his head uncovered, and his helmet borne by a young page who rode behind. On the king's right hand, mounted on a white charger and holding aloft the consecrated banner, rode the Maid of Orleans. The cavalcade stopped, and the king expressed to her his heartfelt gratitude.—As she listened to his grateful words, her face was shaded with the plume of her helmet; but as she raised her head and pointed with animated gestures to the glittering spires of the cathedral, her face was seen all glowing with joy, and eyes radiant with brightness. Then arose one shout of triumph, "Long live the Maid of Orleans and Charles our king!" the princes and nobles sprang from their horses, and kneeling before her, did her homage and obeisance. Arrived at the gates of the cathedral, the king dismounted, and as Joan alighted, he held the bridle of her horse, and giving her his hand, they entered the ancient abbey Charles sat upon his throne of state, and the nobles, kneeling around, swore fealty to the descendant of Clovis. Peal upon peal of solemn music rolled forth from the cathedral, and the multitude at the door were hushed and mute as the solemn hymn rose triumphantly, swelling down the long, dim aisles, and floating o'er the long array of arms and sweeping stoles. The miraculous oil said to have been brought from heaven by a snow white dove on the day of the coronation of Clovis, was poured upon the head of his descendant—the solemn chants and responses echoed through the vaulted church. The oaths were taken, and the crown placed upon the brow of the monarch, while the deep toiling of the cathedral bell announced that France had once more a sovereign of her own. Again, throughout the whole city, arose one long, simultaneous shout of joy. Then, for the first time, came a gleam of womanly feeling into the triumphant eyes of the heroine. Descending the steps of the altar, she unbound her helmet, threw herself at the feet of the king, and burst into a flood of tears—tears, perhaps, of mingled feelings of joy, gratitude and wonder; it might be of sad and prophetic foreboding. She declared that her mission was now accomplished; and laying her sword at the feet of the king, she requested to return to her hamlet in the valley. The new monarch raised her from her kneeling posture, and the nobles, crowding round, mingled their entreaties with his, that she would not desert them; and conjured her not to abandon a great work so nearly achieved, but to remain among them till the English were wholly expelled from France. Their importunities prevailed. Charles issued letters conferring a title of nobility upon her and her family, and decreed that her crest should be two golden lilies, and a sword poiting upwards and bearing a crown.

But the tide of success which had flowed in such an unabated channel, at length seemed to vary its course; for although the coronation of Charles, new victories had succeeded, the ill-fated Joan at last fell into the enemies' hands. By the advice of Dunois, she had thrown herself into the town of Campeigne, then beseiged by the Duke of Burgundy and the English. On making a sally she drove the enemy from their entrenchments, when she was treacherously deserted by the French officers, and immediately surrounded by the foe. After having received several wounds, her horse fell under her and she was captured by the Burgundians, who basely sold her to the English.

Alone and hopeless—deserted by her friends—brow-beaten and insulted by her enemies, the Maid of Orleans lay upon a heap of straw, loaded with chains, on the stone floor of her dungeon. No helmet was now upon her brow; nor nodding plume. The star of her glory was set; and it seemed as if the Divine presence was withdrawn from her A dreadful death, or a long and dreary vista of hopeless years was before her. Better had she died on the field of battle, while her spirit was yet high and unbroken.

And where were the myriads, who had bowed the knee before her; where the nobles who had done her homage; where the young monarch who sworn her an eternal gratitude? All had deserted her in that sad hour, and now perhaps, her thoughts wandered to the green haunts of her infancy—the lowly hamlet—toe sparkling fountain—and the rustic chapel; and she thought too, of the companions of her youth—her sisters and her gray haired sire. It was too late; she had chosen the path of glory, and could never more tread the lowly path of obscure happiness.

An ecclesiastical court was assembled at Rouen, and she was led forth from her confinement clad in military garments, and loaded with chains, to stand the mockery of a trial in the presence of fierce and unrelenting judges, who had already doomed her to death. She was accused of heresy, witchcraft, idolatry, and magic. No advantage could be gained over her, she betrayed neither weakness nor womanish submission. Her judges were astonished, and enraged at her intrepidity. In June, 1431, she was dragged from her dungeon, clothed with a yellow robe, and crowned with the black cap of the inquisition, to undergo a dreadful death—burning in a slow fire. A vast pile was erected in the market place, and she was led through the senseless shouting of the rabble whose hearts were steeled against her, by vengeance and superstition With undaunted firmness she cast her eyes on these fearful preparations, and mounted the pile with a face of cheerful resignation.

According to the orders of the inquisition, the fire burned but slowly, but at length a hoap of ashes was all that remained of the devoted heroine. Her heart was found entire in the midst of the flames, and it was said that a white dove, the emblem of her soul's purity, was seen to rise from the pile. When all was over, they scattered her ashes in the Seine.

Rome and Atheus would have erected temples in her honor; but such in the days of chivalry, was the fate of a young girl whose only crime was an excess of patriotism.

From a Correspondent of the New York Express.

THE FIELD OF WATERLOO.

Like a good pilgrim, I have put my foot upon the soil of Waterloo—traversing its fields, visiting its monuments, and tracing, step by step, those memorable movements of a day gone by, which in all time to come, will distinguish the place where I am. It is impossible for any man to visit a scene like this, I care not how cold his temperament, with the same feelings that control him in the every day affairs of life. It is true, that nature wears the same smiling face here that it puts on elsewhere—that your eyes are greeted with fruitful and beautiful fields—that hill-side and valley, the near and the distant land alike teem with an abundance of the treasures of the earth. The labor of the husbandman is made almost painfully visible in the severity of the task to be performed by him to bring forth whatever the sun, the rains, and the dews of heaven fail to accomplish without the industry of man—and as if to detract as much as possible from the interest of a spot like this, to one from a land like ours, you see the drudgery of service is apportioned to those of finer nerves and weaker limbs, which are the least able to endure the burdens assigned them by those who here at least are literally their lords and masters. It is not, therefore, the novelty of the scene that enhances the interest of a place like this. The fields of Waterloo are of themselves like a thousand other fields. They wear the rich drapery of nature—are covered with the fruits and flowers of the season, and charm the eye with their extended verdure. The lands, too are only rich and plenteous by cultivation, and the day has passed, if it has ever been—as it probably has been—when the blood and bones of the thousands of victims who fell here a sacrifice to the fate of war, served to manure and beautify the soil. For one I can see Waterloo rather with the soldier's enthusiasm or the traveller's romance. I have read with an interest that made the blood quicker in the veins, the deeds of a day to endure for ever in the memory of man, and I survey now, at this distance of time, the scenes where this great drama was enacted, as I would the spot, had the curtain risen but yesterday to see it performed. Waterloo, though of itself all in the past, is as visible here to the eye now as are the recollections of its achievments to those who have just risen from the perusal of the results of the battle here fought.

It is a morning in June, and the two contending armies are upon the ground of Waterloo. Napoleon is there, and Wellington is there, the master spirits of great and rival nations. The fate of empires are there also, and empires and kingdoms are represented upon the field. A day, one little day, almost the one foot space of time in the life of man, is to destroy or save. Men are to be mown down like autumn leaves but long-contending nations are to obtain peace and quiet at the sacrafice. He whose star for years had been far in the ascendant, who had given kings to nations, and exacted obedience from subjects who were here and there and every where, and in all feats a conqueror, whose genius was transcendant, whose power irresistible, and the mention of whose name was like the wand of the magician—now the soldier, now the Consul, now the Emperor, and the man invincible—is doomed, like the hunted beast of the field, or the bird of the air, to fly for his life, and at last to be caught in the snare of the enemy. Here stood, too, where just now I stood, upon what is now the corner of the highway and a cross-road, the only man who had been more successful than Napoleon. It is easy to imagine with what feelings, upon a day like that eventful one, commemorated around me by monuments innumerable, Welling stood here, entrusted with his own fame, and the fortune of his own and other nations all around him Undaunted as the angel of death, ready to do or to die, he is early at his post, fearing no evil for himself, but seeking to avert it from others. Both commanders were the very antipodes of each other in their schemes of military tactics—of different schools as of different minds—the one the very inspiration of a wild daring genius, ever moving on like a meteor in its course, and the other of a plodding firmness, seeking not so much how he may destroy the ranks of his foe, as gain, through their mishap, advantages for himself. Two braver men, one can see here, if he knew it not before, the world had never seen, and successful as both had been, from time to time, in their peculiar modes of warfare, it would be presumptuous, perhaps, if success is truly to be the test of ability, to say who was the better soldier. At Waterloo, an honest Englishman will readily admit that Napoleon would have been victor, had Wellington and his army been the only opponents to contend with. The advantages of position which Wellington had upon the field of battle, twice made up for the disparity of the force of ten or twelve thousand men between the two armies—and no one can dream of the extent of this advantage of position which had been long before selected by Wellington, who had for himself surveyed the ground where the battle was fought. There could not have been selected from all the country around, so good a natural defence for the allied army, and there not have been a worse pasition for the army of the French. Wellington relied upon the superiority of his force, the courage of his men, and the coolness of himself and others in command. In firmness he expected to be invincible, but not of himself and the army that stood around him upon the morning of the 18th June—for there was no moment when he did not rely upon and look with longing eyes to the spot where Blucher and his Prussians must arrive. He had, it was true, the same confidence that Napoleon had through the day, but with a less boasting spirit. "Would to God that night or Blucher would come," was one of the natural but agonized expressions of Wellington, when told by an aid-de-camp that it was utterly impossible for one of his favourite regiments longer to maintain their ground! "I cannot help it," said the Duke. "They must keep the ground with myself to the last man." And then came that wish for Blucher, which had often been uttered, and to realise which could alone ensure victory, not only to England and Wellington, but to Prussia, Holland, and to Belgium, for all of these, with their host of generals, and some of their bravest men, were in arms against one man, and a single power. The day was everything to Napoleon as a man, and wrapped up in the glory of France as he was, he deemed it every thing to France. His men had toiled with a cheerful spirit through a wet and dreary night to be early in the field, and here they now were upon the ground opposite to that where I have just been, with Napoleon upon a neighbouring eminence, acquainting himself, with his map in hand, and at the earliest hour of the day, with every line and feature, road and pathway of the surrounding country.

It was within an hour of mid-day, when the Emperor gave the word for attack. The English front did not extend more than a mile and a half, and the line of the French but half a mile beyond that of the English. For such a body of men, 80,000 in the one army, and from 65 to 70,000 in the other, no battle had ever before been fought within so small a compass of land.

The Chateau of Hougoumont was the most important, and therefore the first point of attack by the French. The English had been strongly posted there, and it was a place which if itself was a strong defence. An easy victory