

(Fifth Panel)



FOLLOWED by not more than twelve thousand men, Charles VII. left the town of Gien on the 28th day of June. But on the road to Rheims his retinue grew.

First, the King passed before Anserre without endeavoring to enter it; this town was in the hands of the Duke of Burgundy, a partisan of the English, who was being treated with caution.

Troyes was garrisoned by a mixed force of Burgundians and English who, as soon as the royal army appeared, dared to make a sortie. At once the politicians and courtiers talked about retreat.

And now it devolved upon Joan again to restore courage to all. She knocked upon the door of the council chamber and assured those within that in three days it would be possible to enter the town.

"We would wait six days," said the Chancellor, "were we sure that you spoke the truth."

"Six? You will enter tomorrow!"

She snatched up her standard; all followed her to the moats. Every one threw into them all that he could find—fagots, doors, joists. And this went on with such celerity that the people in the town thought that soon there would be no more moats. As at Orleans, the English began to lose their heads. Finally they parleyed and obtained permission to leave the town with all their belongings.

The most important of these were prisoners, Frenchmen. Joan threw herself in their path.

"In the name of God, you will not take them away!" she cried. She demanded that the prisoners should be turned over to her and their ransom paid by the King.

On the 16th of July, Charles VII. made his

entry into Rheims at the head of his troops. On the next day the ceremony of the coronation took place in the midst of a great multitude of nobles and of the people. Joan stood behind the King, her standard in her hand; "her standard had been through trials, it was just that it should be at this place of honor."

Charles VII. was anointed by the Archbishop with oil from the holy phial brought from Saint Remy; in conformity with the old ritual, he was raised to his seat by the ecclesiastical peers and served by the lay peers both at the coronation and at the repast.

All the ceremonies were conducted without any omission. From now on he was the true and only King. The English might have Henry crowned, at their leisure; this new coronation could not but be a parody of the other.

At the moment when the King was crowned Joan threw herself at his feet and, embracing his knees, wept hot tears.

"Oh, kind Sire!" she said, "now is accomplished the will of God, Who desired that I should cause the siege of Orleans to be raised and that I should conduct you to your city of Rheims that you might receive your holy coronation, showing that you were the true King and that to you the Kingdom of France should belong."

Joan was right; she had done her task. So that in the very midst of the joy at this triumphant and solemn occasion, she had the feeling, the presentiment, of her end soon to come.

When she was entering Rheims with the King and all the people were marching ahead chanting hymns, she said: "Oh, what a good and devout folk! If I am to die, I should be very happy to be buried here!"

"Joan," said the Archbishop, "where then do you think that you will die?"

"I know nothing about it; wherever God wills. I wish that He might will that I should go to take care of my sheep with my sister and brothers. They would be so happy to see me again. I have

at least done what our Lord commanded me to do."

And she gave thanks, lifting her eyes to heaven. All who saw her at this moment, says the old chronicle, "believed more than ever that what was occurring was ordained by God."

Nothing was so touching as the way the people crowded about Joan. All vied with each other in kissing her hands or garments, in touching her. Little children were held up that she might bless them, chaplets and holy pictures that she might sanctify them by passing her hand over them.

And the humble girl gracefully turned away these marks of adoration, gently chiding the poor people for their belief in her powers. She felt that she was their sister, knowing that she had been born one of them.

Later, when taxed with having tolerated this adoration from the crowd, she answered simply: "Many people looked upon me willingly, and kissed my hands the few times that I could not prevent it; but the poor people came willingly to me because I did not cause them displeasure."

