

JEANNE D'ARC



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Zar Madame Reich,

from
Thomas S. Jones.

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2

JEANNE D'ARC
BY THOMAS S. JONES, JR.



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THE FOREST


 CROWNED with may-blossom, very fair to see,
 Angel or demon, evil fay or good,
 A gleaming maid no shepherd understood,
 With fronds of bracken reaching to her knee!
 Heedless she dreams beneath the Druid tree;
 But who are these, this shining brotherhood
 In silver armour flashing through the wood—
 The faery host or Heaven's chivalry?

Where shall they lead her through the apple boughs?
 To see the solemn sacring of a king
 And France restored to all her ancient fame.
 And what is that so bright above her brows
 Encircled with the simple flowers of Spring?
 It is a martyr's crown of blood and flame.

THE KING'S SECRET

WHERE crimson velvet and bright gold festoon
The royal entrance, a fair girl is drawn
Fresh as the dew upon an April dawn
Among sly courtiers in their pointed shoon;
The King bends low to hear her whispered boon,—
And will he bid this shining may begone
To seek the ferny trail of fox and fawn,
To fold her sheep beneath a yellow moon?

But through the halls perfumed with musk and myrrh
There flows the simple fragrance of a field,
And now the arras trembles as with wings;
And at her words the Dauphin kneels to her,
A forest maid whom angels have revealed
The secret envoy of the King of Kings.

THE SABLE STALLION

WE saw the sable stallion plunge and rear,
 Over the saddle-bow his black mane poured,
 And none dared grasp the crimson bridle cord
 But from the shallow doorways gaped in fear;
 Then suddenly the virgin knight drew near,
 Five golden crosses gleamed upon her sword,
 A lance upbore the lilies of her Lord,
 And "Lead him to the Rood" came ringing clear.

How still he stood—the demon put to rout!
 Archer and spearman, looking on her face
 Felt shriven of the foe that lurks within;
 And gates of hell were shaken by their shout,
 "Lead on for France, to conquer through the grace
 Of Michael, Margaret, and Saint Catherine!"

THE CORONATION

A LONG the nave is spread a cloth of gold,
Blue and vermilion through each oriel
Like lances of an angel army dwell
Upon the standard with its blazoned fold;
There like the burning seraph seen of old,
She guards the kneeling Prince while trumpets swell
And gilded rafters ring "Noel! Noel!"—
A maid in snow-white armour silver-stoled.

Chime out, ye bells of bronze, ring to the sky!
Now is the dream fulfilled: he wears the crown
Invested with the royal power of France.
Shout, iron knights, your polished swords lift high
To her whose courage won the flaming town,
The Flower of Chivalry and high Romance!

THE CAPTURE

THE lances gleam, the oriflamme swings wide,
And on a great grey stallion strong and fleet,
Undaunted by the doom she soon will meet
She heads the sortie where her foemen hide;
Down from the cliff like wheeling hawks they ride,
And though her knights are scattered in defeat
Yet for Christ's honour she will not retreat,
For saint and angel battle at her side.

The war-horse sinks within the marshy sedge,
And bowmen clutch the gold and scarlet coat.
—Saint Michael lend her now thy covering shield!—
“Surrender,” cry harsh voices. “Give us pledge.”
Then like a falling star her rallying note,
“To God and to my King alone I yield.”

THE TRIAL

“NOW from God's Body is the maiden banned—
This witch who danced within an eerie glen
When goblin fires were blue upon the fen,
And held the bleeding mandrake in her hand.”
Christ and the Virgin hear the harsh command!
Jeanne of the Lilies, taken from her den,
Shines in the center of these armoured men,
A flower too fair for earth to understand.

“But tell us, Maid, what Voices do you hear?
Do Saints of God condone your scarlet sin?”
She answers with great visions in her eyes:
“They tell me that the victory is near;
That passing through affliction I shall win
The promised Kingdom—but in Paradise.”

THE PYRE

WITH solemn sound the bells of Rouen peal,
And in the square the Maid unarmed, alone,
Lily of France, defender of the throne,
Faces a death more terrible than steel:
Not thus the wondering armies watched her kneel,
Still as the warrior angel carved in stone,
About her helm Saint Michael's banner blown,
The Dragon's head beneath his burnished heel.

And shall the ashes of earth's fairest rose
Be scattered, and the blinding sparks consume
This heart which burns more fiercely than its pyre?
"Jesus!" On that great cry her spirit goes
Where angels gleam, where April gardens bloom,
Flame over flame, and fire transcending fire.

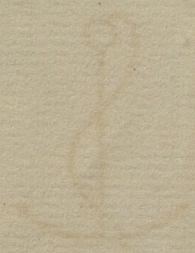


7

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8



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