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# JOAN OF ARC:

A NARRATIVE POEM.

IN FOUR BOOKS.

BY

GEORGE H. CALVERT.



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## ADVERTISEMENT.



THE transparency imparted to words by clear type on fine paper aids in the detection of that class of defects that are corrigible. So many such were thus discovered in the following poem (printed for private circulation in 1860), that in now offering it to the public the Author deems it proper to state that the pages as here revised are the only ones that are amenable to criticism.

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BOOK I. DOMREMY.



# JOAN OF ARC.



## BOOK I. DOMREMY.

### I.

MAN's earthly being darksome rolls  
In atmospheres of latent light,  
Whence on his toil, through gospel souls,  
Outstreams the supervisory might.

Before his footstep, straining higher,  
Illumined pillars always shine, —  
The flaming of great souls on fire, —  
Pillars half human half divine.

The Eternal Spirit breathes upon  
Its filial race in all degrees :  
But warms Egyptian Grecian sun  
One Moses and one Socrates.

The like of these reverberate  
Upon the finer senses speech  
High whispered in their ears, elate  
To be within such holy reach ;

Which seldom are the ears by din  
Of power besieged, grown deaf thereby  
Against the notes which then begin  
When silent is the grosser cry.

Thence mostly bide the great aloof  
From inspiration's breath, which stirs  
Beneath the lowly toilsome roof  
Of miners and of carpenters.



## II.

BLIND was the time with hates and greeds,  
With crimeful wars and ruffian raids,  
Decrepit old the manful needs  
Whence grew and throve the first crusades.

The Pope sold heaven for carnal cash ;  
The Kings had earned no right of trust ;  
The People was a thing to lash ;  
And learning lent itself to lust.

The ear of France was faint with sounds  
Of wail and woe, her will amort  
With lavish losses and the wounds  
Of Crecy and of Agincourt.

So shrunk her arm it nothing dared,  
Her cities foul with mutiny,  
The very soil will soon be shared  
'Twixt England and false Burgundy.

## III.

ALREADY kindled is the flame  
To purge this peril clean away,  
And glow around a woman's name  
A marvel and a joy for aye.

In lone Domremy, on the marches  
Of France, of Lorraine, and of Bar,  
Her cottage cowered near the arches  
Of hoary oak-woods, glooming far

In space and time ; for gaping Thought  
    Roamed their dusk centuries, in search  
Of nests for winged traditions, wrought  
    Into the brain ere yet the church

Was consecrated, whose slow shade  
    Hallowed her window in its fall ;  
Then, touching calm the forest, made  
    Evanish elves and fairies all.

Here, 'twixt the past and future rockt,  
    The meditative Maiden leaned  
Upon her peasant childhood, stockt  
    With radiant reaching thoughts unweaned, —

Great thoughts, too great for utterance,  
    Till, in the glow of visionary act  
Full nursed to ripeness, hopeful France  
    Shall bless them with her rescue backt, —

Thoughts born of goodness, which doth breed  
The broadest and the boldest bred  
In heaven or earth, the liveliest seed  
In warm Creation's womby bed.

## IV.

GREAT Joan at first was only good:  
She gave herself, she gave her tears  
To friend and friendless, and did brood,  
So young, on France's deepening fears.

That wild birds fed them from her hands,  
Was token of her innocence,  
Needed, ere Heaven its choice commands  
Will lay upon the inner sense.

Only the great can do great things :

The greatness was ere they were done ;  
And long before Fame's belfry rings  
For victory, 't was inly won.

High chosen are the messengers

Through whom religious lightnings flash,  
To illumine, when too blindly stirs,  
Man's will in storms that madly crash.

Sway oft is lent to men of guilt,

But guilt heaps no creative gains ;  
The fast foundations aye are built  
By Alfreds and by Charlemagnes.

## V.

MORE subtle than belief can gauge  
The lines that link our life to His ;  
But stronger than the whirlwind's rage  
The finest of these subtilities.

In thicker throng than brain can breed  
'Twixt heaven and earth the unbodied ply,  
And, viewless, soundless to the unfreed,  
They flash and hymn to the inner eye.

The advent of large thought the mind  
Enwrapeth oft in terror, like  
First flames from deep volcano's rind,  
That rashly on the darkness strike.

When first foreshowing ravisheth  
The vision of elected seers,  
They trembling hope, as when through death  
Man onward glides to higher spheres.

The shivering change is like the break  
Of flowers through frost in spring, when veers  
Upward the sun his warmth to make,  
And they are freed in flood of tears.

The tender, pious Maid of Arc,  
Who nursed the sick, whose thought was prayer,  
Saw lights that made the noon seem dark,  
So sun-surpassing was the glare.

And voices heard she, heavenly speech,  
That came from angels 'rayed in white,  
That came her fateful life to teach  
In flashes of prophetic light.

At first she fell upon the ground,  
    Bewildered, bathed in timorous tears ;  
But faith the coils of fear unwound,  
    And she grew greater with the years.

Grew greater as her brain absorbed  
    And throve upon the holy fire,  
That to one end her being orb'd,  
    Sublimed her life to one desire.

And must she forth to war and roam,  
    So weeping loth to conflict she !  
She loved her comrades, loved her home,  
    Her mother, father, tenderly.

But newly fledged was bolder love,  
    To country, right, and to her King :  
Unpractised maid, unventuring dove,  
    She pitched her flight with eagle's wing.



## VI.

SHE fled to neighboring Vaucouleur,  
To loyal Captain Baudricour.  
At first he chid, then mocked at her,  
So mad she seemed, so peasant-poor.

“I am commissioned by our Lord  
France and the King and crown to save :  
That I am coming send him word.”  
Sir Baudricour looked scornful grave.

This told, the King, — as one who waits  
Upon the scaffold for reprieve,  
And grasps at nothings in his straits, —  
Commanded him to give her leave.

At Vaucouleur her saintly mien,  
And words, and beauty, and the shower  
Of light about her forehead sheen,  
Had made the people know her power.

They flocked to front her eyes, and play  
With prodigal hope returned ; and blades  
Of knights outgleamed, to light her way  
Through passes dim and scowling glades.

Good steed and armor they bestowed,  
A sword and spurs and trooper's gear ;  
And she, who horse had ne'er bestrode,  
Sat like a Captain Cavalier.

The sky was glad and bells did ring,  
And old and young bowed low to her,  
As forth to meet and lift the King  
She sallied from full Vaucouleur.

The gentle, trustful Maid of Arc  
Rode fearless forward joyously :  
Her comrades' bosoms soon grew dark  
With dreads, and thoughts of sorcery.

“ Be of good heart and cheer,” she said ;  
“ Our guides are friends in Paradise.”  
And they were boldened by the Maid,  
Their bad thoughts chastened by her eyes.

Nor English nor Burgundian swords,  
Nor fraudulent Frankish ambuscades  
Could compass her : she cleared the fords  
And fens and brakes and scowling glades.

## VII.

TWICE fifty torches shook their life  
In arrowy showerings on the Hall, —  
Like thoughts of genius, glistening rife,  
That glow creative where they fall.

These fell on gold and gem and steel,  
That flushed beneath the welcome dart,  
And made three hundred courtiers feel  
The pomp whereof each one was part.

The King he thought to dazzle so  
The timid, rustic Maid of Arc ;  
But that she brought to which all glow  
Of earth-lights is a vanished spark, —

Inward illumination, fired  
By selfless longings, in a breast  
So heavenly strung, in it are quired  
The harmonies of courses blest.

Prizing the pomp as 't should be prized,  
Erect, unblenching, angel-led,  
She walked right to the King disguised,  
And bent her knee and bowed her head.

“My King, the King thy King wills me  
His instrument to have thee crowned  
At holy Rheims, that France be free  
Of foemen who profane her ground.”

Her instinct's eye that knew the King,  
Her voice that tuned the listener's ear,  
A spell that did her face enring,  
Balked the glib courtiers' couchéd jeer.

The unointed King drew her aside,  
And lowly speaking to the Maid,  
His brow upheaved with wonder wide  
At what the whispering Joan said.

A sceptred secret, pale with doubt,  
Had harrowed long the royal breast:  
The unworded torment she spake out  
And put the rankling doubt at rest.

And issuing forth, with ribald breath  
A soldier sought her ear to wound:—  
“Blaspheming, and so near to death!”  
A moment after, he was drowned.

## VIII.

OUR boldest thinking strives to hit  
Beyond a finite circle's range ;  
For law comes out of th' infinite,  
And is to deepest insight strange.

And so far we have now been taught,  
Slow climbing on from law to law, —  
There's no new wonder but 'tis wrought  
By rule that has nor breach nor flaw.

There cannot be of law a breach,  
And what so seems is but a link  
In chains that hang beyond the reach  
Of present reason's furthest brink.

These seeming miracles, — where leaps  
In startling flash the eternal fire,  
That thrills the bravest pulse and creeps  
Through faintest fibre of desire, —

Had never warmed the credent crowd :  
'Tis only life that life can melt :  
Herself, to holiest living vowed,  
Made others throb with what she felt.

She wearied not of doing good,  
And through her simple words and creed  
Ran ruddy streams of Wisdom's blood,  
Whose fountain-heart was daily deed.



## IX.

LIKE misty mirror wiped by rays  
Which then it gladly echoes round,  
Are bosoms cleansed by goodness' blaze,  
Reblazing it with health's rebound.

Befouled so long men's hearts had been,  
That on them fell those holy streaks,  
As the first morning's wakening sheen  
On rescued night-doomed mountain-peaks.

But here the highest were not first:  
The bruised many, earthly bare,  
Were tenderer to a light that burst  
From heaven, — Faith fathered by Despair.

And women's flashing instincts leapt  
    Into the truth of Joan's look :  
With her they prayed and warmly wept,  
    And sweet heart-incense on her shook.

The King convoked judicial priests  
    And doctors on the maiden youth,—  
One of those supersubtle feasts  
    Where sophistries benibble truth.

She foiled her greedy questioners,  
    And beacon-bishops took her side,  
Pronouncing that the right was hers,  
    And she a heaven-enabled guide.

The people's faith, true Orleans' need,  
    The Council's voice, the wide alarms,  
So wrought, the wavering King decreed  
    Her Captain o'er his men of arms.

BOOK II. ORLEANS.



BOOK II. ORLEANS.



I.

ON that new morning rose in France,  
Flusht with a high expectancy,  
An April sun, his swayful glance  
Darting hot life from sea to sea.

More festive shone the blue than wont,  
The birds prophetic joy did pipe,  
And waters leapt in stillest font,  
And blossoms burst that were not ripe.

The sunbeams on embattled steel  
Clashed like the stroke of myriad swords,  
And the glad clarion's muster-peal  
Rang vauntful with sonorous words,

As in pure argent armor dight,  
On martial courser glossy dark,  
With sainted sword and banner white,  
Came forth the warrior Maid of Arc.

Men's blood was wildly moved, to see,  
With squire and heralds battle-'rayed,  
In chieftain's pluméd panoply,  
Ride forth the pious, prayerful Maid.

Erect she sat and vivid calm,  
As one long schooled to leadership;  
And so she had been, through the balm  
Breathed on her from unearthly lip.

She rode enguarded by her worth,  
By ministries of subtile hands  
Invisible, and by the new birth  
Of love and courage in the bands, —

The shrivelled roots in desert breasts,  
(By war laid waste and misery,)  
Rewarmed, as fledglings on their nests,  
By pulse of feminine sympathy.

## II.

THE crowd heaved towards her on the tide  
Of hope and faith and joy reflowed,  
And Captains hearkened at her side;  
Yet she amid them rode alone.

For none could see what she could see,—  
Dear France's fetters wrestled loose;  
And none could feel and know as she  
The means awaiting her high use.

But with her rode the powers that rule  
In heaven and earth, and baffle hell,—  
The judgment that events doth school,  
The feeling that the self doth quell.

No princely promptings wily threw  
Upon the ear of inward sense  
Insidious baits, that suasive drew  
Her thoughts to gilded recompense.

Within that vestal brain, whence shot  
A mystic light the crowd that spelled,  
Could sprout no seed of self, to spot  
The brilliancies her bosom held.



## III.

FROM royal Chinon rode she forth  
Towards leaguered Orleans, where winged fame  
Had with mere prologues of her worth  
Fanned fainting hope to sturdy flame.

The haughtiest Chieftains brooked her power, —  
Uplifted scorn chastised by awe, —  
And feudal masters learnt to cower  
Before a shepherd-maiden's law.

And still they gathered far and near,  
Men who could sup on raid and wrack,  
Saintrailles, Gaucourt, Coaraze, la Hire,  
And the rough Lords of Armagnac.

And more than Fame's hoarse cry can call ;  
None spirit-gifted, and not one  
Had gained the mastering summit tall  
Only by blest obedience won.

They scaled it never. Even the King  
Chief over chief could scarce advance ;  
And hence in part this conquest's ring,  
Harmful to England as to France.

But she bore sway above the King's,  
Of genius hers the right divine,  
Whose lightning-loaded sceptre swings  
High over Kingship's earthen line.

## IV.

A SEA surged round her foamed with joy,  
A vocal, vaulting, soul-lit sea  
Of tremulous hearts, each face a buoy  
Swayed by the swell of ecstasy.

They felt deliverance in her look;  
Those grateful hearts, they read her right,  
And long despair and anguish shook  
Themselves away in tears of light.

Majestic meek she rode along,  
With glad Dunois and tamed la Hire;  
Behind them, twice one hundred strong,  
A line of horsemen armed with spear.

Thought flamed his glory 'bout her head,  
And from her lids Love poured his gifts,  
As Silence locked the lips that sped  
The generous promise that uplifts.

With awed delight the people gazed  
In eyes where they saw heaven glassed,  
And mothers gaunt their children raised  
To catch a blessing as she passed.

And when with speech her visage burned,  
It seemed descended sounds did break;  
And wild submitted faces turned  
As warm religious words she spake.

She alighted at the house of prayer, —  
To keep unslacked the cord that bound  
Her life to God's, the foremost care  
Her thought on daily duty wound.

When came the hour to interrupt  
And brace the day with tables heaped,  
She passed the dainties by and supped  
On bread in watered wine ensteeped.

And then to sleep she laid her down  
In Orleans, where high guard she kept ;  
For knowing her within their town  
Fearless the rescued burghers slept.

## V.

BUT Fear and Hate were hatching then  
In mirksome deeps their ghastly brood,  
That brave unvanquished stalwart men  
Be caged by new fright-haunted mood.

For that same hour on English dreams  
Of Joan fierce lurid spectres cast,  
As on still night-cloud fiery seams  
Forewrite the shattering thunder-blast.

And Talbot, Suffolk, Glansdale, — chiefs  
With whom success had grown to fate, —  
Cursed the base craven blind beliefs,  
That mixed so much of fear with hate.

Their soldiers' creed was sullied faith, —  
Spring-currents drooping in a ditch:  
Their pulse was seized as by a wraith, —  
The inspired girl, they damned her witch.

For men are minions of belief,  
Be it high or low; and being low,  
They crucify beside a thief  
The holiest that the earth can know.

In bodeful awe this churlish creed  
    Enfolded Joan: she came to sweep  
From Gallic soil their English breed,  
    All who escape sepulchral sleep.

## VI.

THE shadows cast on the orient gate  
    Of Orleans from beleaguering towers,  
No longer fell with gloomy weight:  
    The Morn that sent them blazed his showers

On one who rose, the first of May  
    Of fourteen hundred twenty-nine,  
With robust dawn, herself a day  
    That dawned, release on France to shine.

The eyes of Orleans, flush with strength  
Of pious, tempering martial, glee,  
Drew her through all the city's length,—  
A second day of jubilee.

Then mounting on the rampart tall,—  
So near the foremost English fort  
That tongue could bridge from wall to wall,—  
She hailed them with a queenly port.

“Lords Suffolk, Talbot, valiant chiefs,  
Ye war against the right, and fill  
England as France with daily griefs:  
Depart ye hence—'tis Heaven's will.”

Thus venting words of wisdom's truth,  
Her voice's cadence music-fraught,  
The sinuous grace and glistening youth  
Of her mailed pluméd figure wrought



On the azure of the approving sky,  
She looked alighted from above,  
One missioned by the unearthly high,  
A herald less of war than love.

But Glansdale, unacclaimed by trumpet,  
With accents steeped in rancor's pitch,  
Answered and called her cow-herd, strumpet,  
Crying, "Avaunt! accurséd witch!"

The prophet-Maiden quick replied:  
"Spite of yourselves hence will you flee,  
All who this week shall not have died.  
But, liar, this *thou* wilt not see."

## VII.

HER task she would at once begin ;  
But others deemed, and Dunois chief,  
'T were best, the ranks being yet so thin,  
To wait from Blois the sure relief.

They chafed her with delays ; for she  
Had the true leader's gift, to know  
The worth of calm celerity,  
That springs to clutch the deeds which grow

Just o'er the magic line that parts  
The future from the now, where bells  
Ring only for respondent hearts,  
And drown with life Time's funeral knells.

She would not have old Time command her,  
She the sure mistress of the young,  
Whom she bade bide her will and squander  
On her the tribute to him flung.

At last, their coming far espied,  
She rode to meet them, passing near  
To the English bastions, whence was tried  
No sally on her escort's rear.

Again she marched with succors close  
Under their bulwarks' heavy brows;  
Again, unstruck his wonted blows,  
The lion could not him arouse.

'T was no familiar fear that held  
From the brave shock those warriors grim;  
But manful breasts were partly spelled,  
And partly Suffolk reined them in.

Like famished tiger who in sleep  
Nears the fat herd and whets his jaws,  
But dream-imprisoned cannot leap,  
And maddened bleeds from clenched claws,

With armless anger inly bled  
Those haughty chiefs, to see the prey  
Go scathless by, mysterious led  
By a girl in broad defiant day.

## VIII.

O'ERSPENT with toil, in the afternoon  
To rest she couched her weary cheek;  
But not unguarded slept, for soon  
She started with a tender shriek, —

“My arms! My horse! Blood flows, French blood—  
I see it dripping on the ground.”

Snatching her mail and helmet-hood  
And flag, and mounting with a bound,

Away to the Burgundian gate  
She sped, unguided, undismayed.  
Less haste and she had come too late:  
The French were flying disarrayed.

She stayed their flight, she rallied them:  
They clung reheartened to her side,  
Beneath that banner stanch to stem  
And reflux make the stormy tide.

Those Englishmen, they battled well,—  
When did they not?—and Talbot stout  
Sought from his western fort to quell  
Part of the foe; but they swarmed out

So valorous eager, he withdrew  
Tristful within his towered hold.  
Into the French their leader blew  
Her soul, and they were angel-bold.

Hot and more hot the war was waged,  
The English from their fortified coop  
Resallying, with despair enraged,  
Till came the last ensanguined swoop,

Led by the Maid, whose banner white  
Flamed o'er the field a quickening Sun,  
And following which with frantic fight  
The fort St. Loup by assault was won.

Swift now were spent the fondled hoards  
Of hate, revenge, and all that wreaks  
Itself in death, the victors' swords  
Choking with blood the vanquished shrieks.

Not one was spared, save those who fled  
    Befrocked as priests, whom she concealed,  
The victor-chief, whose great heart bled,  
    So many dying unaneled.

## IX.

As, maddened by the trampling rain,  
    Mud-freighted mountain-torrents pour  
Into a lake, its lustre stain  
    And blot heaven's image from its floor,

On Joan's unstained pellucid soul  
    That deathful rage so darkening swept,  
Her eyes grew sick at slaughter's scroll  
    And through their triumph anguish wept.

She smote not with her sword, and spared  
Blood-currents when she could, the hests  
Divine fulfilling meek, nor dared  
To fathom them with reason's tests.

The ascending law of sacrifice  
To compass she was yet too crude,  
Nor could forefeel the boundless price  
Herself must pay for France's good.

Life springs from death and thrives on death:  
We grow upon a charnel-heap,  
Where rottenness breeds sweetest breath,  
And light wakes livelier from a sleep.



## X.

THEY could not for they would not see  
    (So wilful is self-dazzled sight)  
That hers was that first victory,  
    From her the new resistless might.

Those jealous chieftains, woman-shent,  
    Would shun her wishes, pass her by ;  
She read their thought, and to them sent, —  
    “Follow your counsels — mine will I.”

And well for Orleans that she did ;  
    For they beyond the river led  
A corps (from her the movement hid)  
    Where panic-struck their squadrons fled ;

When she, quick crossing with la Hire,  
Took the fierce forward foe in flank,  
Whereat the French, uncoiling fear,  
Drove the besiegers from the bank

Behind their screen of palisades  
And parapets, o'er which with flood  
Rage-crested rolling, thirsty blades  
They slaked once more in English blood.

They forced her quit the field, where they  
Would lie companions of the night;  
For she had fasted all the day,—  
The holiest of the long year's flight.

## XI.

BEFORE she laid her down to rest, —  
“Come early, much will be to do:  
I shall be wounded in the breast,” —  
To her chaplain thus she gave the clue

Of the great morrow, at whose dawn  
She hurried with a martial crowd  
To the eastern portal, where was drawn  
Afront the bolted gate, by proud

Gaucourt, a line to bar the way.  
“With or without thy will I pass.”  
The Chieftain’s own would not obey,  
But hand in hand with her hot mass

Efforced the gate, whence all in boats  
Sped glibly to the southern shore,  
To assail the fortress, fenced by moats,  
A strong redoubt and cannon's roar.

So stoutly did the English fend,  
The French lost heart. A ladder snatched,  
Into the fosse she leapt to ascend  
The rampart wall, when, sure despatched,

An arrow found her, and she fell.  
Out sprang the foe to clutch the prize;  
But she on a swift-rallying swell  
Was borne away amid their cries.

When trickling warm she saw the blood,  
The woman from her eyelids gushed,—  
The warrior quelled by maidenhood,—  
But for a moment—then back rushed

The hero to her heart. She drew  
That arrow from a shoulder fair  
With untrained hand, (it had pierced through,)  
Then rose and, self discharged, all care

She lavished on her comrades worn,  
So faint with battle and defeat,  
That Dunois, seeing them o'erborne,  
Already sounded a retreat.

She bade him pause, his fear dismiss, —  
“Let them an hour rest and feed:  
Our foemen's fall is doomed, and this  
The day that Orleans will be freed.”

## XII.

AWAITING summer's liberal noons,  
Close by a vineyard trustful lay ;  
Here, deeply craving instant boons,  
The constant Maiden knelt to pray.

That silent solitary prayer  
Was clean and clear as bluest sky  
That climbs Mont Blanc's white topmost stair,  
And warm as breath that heaved him high.

So luminous her visage grew  
From inward light, that when she rose  
And leapt into her seat, she drew  
Men's eyes as when a wonder glows.

Now quailed the foe, who thought her dead,  
And the joyed French upsent a shout,  
On whose wild gale the wings were spread  
That drove them on the stormed redoubt.

Thence Glansdale fleeing on a plank  
The bridge was shot beneath, and he  
Steel-cased, with other Captains, sank,—  
And the death-bubbles all could see.

Like spring's young tide Atlantic-rolled,  
Her warriors poured themselves upon  
Their battlements with surge so bold,  
That in a trice the work was done.—

That night in Orleans sleep was shook  
Out of all eyes by joy, and clang  
Of boastful bells, that would not brook  
A transient cheer, but pauseless sang.

From soul to lip, from tongue to tongue  
With awe was thrown her simple name,  
And there by raptured hearts was sung  
The prelude to a deathless fame.

## XIII.

THOSE midnight revels sank in ears  
Whereon the jocund peelings fell  
Dismal as the last toll that sears  
The sentenced culprit in his cell.

They sat around the council-board,  
Talbot and Suffolk and their mates,  
Scowling, that they must sheathe the sword  
Or draw upon enangered fates. —



Night still perplexed Day's forward brink,  
When vengeful eyes were on the strain  
West towards the single uncrushed link  
Of their besiegers' fortress-chain.

Ere sun could smite their dinted steel  
The silent English bands were seen  
To issue from the fort and wheel  
Into close line with sullen mien.

This told to Joan,—who wounded lay  
Unarmed,—donning a light loose mail,  
She galloped with the broadening day,  
And as the French were about to assail

The foe, her voice cleft through them,—“Hold!  
Bestain not with a bootless blood  
The Sabbath day. This front so bold  
Means no attack: 'tis but the flood

“Of brave men’s will ere ebb their feet.”

Lo! while she spake they turned, and forth,  
In order rankt, to slow drum-beat,  
Grimly they marched into the North.

She led her comrades to their rear,  
And on the plain whence Talbot trod,  
In his unwilling waning ear  
A loud thanksgiving sang to God.

BOOK III. RHEIMS.



### BOOK III. RHEIMS.



#### I.

NEVER outleapt more moving blast  
From Fame's far trump than when it threw  
On Europe's deep resounding vast  
The Maiden's exploits, peerless new.

'T was no brief earth-blast, for it bore  
Great messages of high relief,  
And swift from men's slow vision tore  
The sensuous film of unbelief.

Men's thoughts were godless — they had lost  
    Hold on the stable lines that link  
Earth to superior spheres, and, tost  
    Unsteadied in the sensual sink,

Deemed it their home, man's saving good,  
    His conscience, given in pawn to priests,  
Who cunning lent thereon the food  
    That nurtures men to passive beasts.

As a fresh-bursted bloom of stars, —  
    Out-dazzling so men's common eyes  
It would their thoughts through earthliest bars  
    Drag up to Him who sows the skies, —

The Maiden shone siderial strange,  
    And such great wonders 'bout her grew,  
Of sense she balked the grovelling range  
    And heavenward mortal bosoms drew.

Old Merlin's whispered prescient dream  
Now swelled to sounding prophecy, —  
“A Virgin shall the realm redeem,” —  
And the good Maid of Arc is she.

## II.

FROM rescued Orleans to the King  
She hastened with her victories,  
In fearless forethought conquering  
For France becrowned regalities.

The King was slow to think, and had  
No vision for the future's blank,  
And when she there the good and bad  
Unraveled, he bewildered shrank.

She saw, — and she at first alone, —  
    By consecration would be flung  
A sacred splendor on the throne,  
    And thence a wide submission wrung.

His Captains each had partial aims,  
    His counsellors so laggard dim,  
Her plans to them were misty names  
    Illegible on space's rim.

Time's wrinkled children seldom dare  
    Unwrinkled paths, tied torpid fast  
To staid routine ; and silvered hair  
    Is the white livery of the past.

Nor can the younger even keep pace  
    With girded genius, who outruns  
His own thought's light, through whispering space  
    A life-beam flashing with the suns.



“Use me while yet you may, great King,”  
The Maiden said: “My parting date  
Comes round within a short year’s ring:”—  
A first forefeeling of her fate.

The sluggard King was moved by this,  
By the strong under-swell still more  
The Maid was heaving from the abyss  
Of a great People’s aching core,

Which, quickened by a life like hers,  
Felt her deep puissance through its own,  
And, instinct-guided, never errs  
As to its needs, divinely sown.

How soul doth answer soul, and might  
Breed might, and one warm bosom tune  
Millions to higher beat, new sight  
Kindling old eyes in Truth’s broad noon!

Faith in themselves so stout was born  
Of faith in her, in a few days  
Men grew like pulse of slow-breathed morn  
Now panting up meridian blaze.

## III.

THE impalpable is ever best,  
His subtlest is man's liveliest food,—  
The viewless air that feeds his breast,  
The unconscious life that heats his blood.

The clamor of the common voice,  
The grumbling winds of discontent,  
Seemed of King Charles to sway the choice ;  
But with the grosser vigors blent

Supreme the omnipresent breath  
That whispers to th' unwilling will,  
With ceaseless circling baffles death,  
And ever wafts us higher still.

And so, all other counsels quashed,  
The King and Court must yield to her,  
Their creeping crook'd devices dashed  
By Orleans' fleet deliverer.

And now began that laurelled march  
To regal Rheims from distant Selles,  
The heavens a glad triumphal arch  
O'er feats as bright as story tells.

Like seas before a tropic gale  
Onward the martial torrent roared,  
Through ford and fortress, shout and wail,—  
Fresh fighters in it daily poured.

Onward still onward towards the goal  
Her joyous swiftness never flags :  
As fleshly members lifts the soul,  
With her the sensual King she drags.

Onward with victor speed she swept,  
Great Talbot's self her prisoner ta'en :  
Bravely the foe their life-blood wept,  
Her path besprinkled by the slain.

Suffolk held Jargeau in her way, —  
She carried it by assault ; then Fort  
Beaugency stormed ; and with Patay  
She quitted them for Agincourt.

## IV.

THEY halt before the gates of Troyes, —  
To the English and Burgundians liege, —  
Where envy sucked its impish joys  
From hope of an arresting siege.

A week's delay the French unmanned, —  
Enhungered guests without a feast, —  
While pompous Councils feebly planned,  
Ruled by a forward faith-less priest.

Ere they resolved retreat, — which all  
Save one, advised, — they summoned her;  
While she, who had doomed the city's fall,  
Nor longer would its fall defer,

Was tapping at their Council-door.

When asked — “Can six days win these towers?”

She said — “There needs not half of four :

To-morrow noon they shall be ours.”

Mounting, she waved her pennon white,

And as it shimmered on the wind

Brave thousands mustered with delight,

Ready to do her utmost mind.

This swarm boards, tables, fagots heaped

Into the fosse ; whereat, appalled,

The foe, — before the French had reaped

Their escalade,— a parley called ;

Then oped their gates ; whence marching swift,

No more assailing or assailed,

Thank-radiant eyes she soon could lift,

As of dear Rheims the spires she hailed.

## V.

TIME's friendliest fervors seldom bore  
To martial France so freighted hour,  
As when that temple, holy hoar,  
Breathed its old benison of power

Upon the Monarch, girt with lay  
And spiritual peers, and dignities,  
And colored pomp and solemn play  
Of sensuous-sacred liturgies.

And as the gaudy regal rites  
Unrolled themselves to saintly song,  
Nor king nor priest nor gilded sights  
Held the hushed gazes of the throng ;

But she, in splendent maidenhood,  
Whose presence all their bosoms thrilled,  
Who foremost near the altar stood,  
And the wide church with wonder filled;

Her great heart beating in accord  
With music of the spheral dance,  
Her thanks and praises to the Lord,  
Her wishes with the King and France.

When ceased the pageant's ritual flow,  
And blazed the King with forehead crowned,  
On humbleness she slid so low  
She clasped his knees upon the ground.

Then gushed in stream of sudden tears  
Her deep benignant being, rent  
By exultation, wherewith fears  
Unconsciously with triumph blent.



In such high rapturous unison  
The crowd's rough heart beat with the Maid,  
Quick as the dew with risen sun  
Glistened the church in tears arrayed.

She spake — “ My King, the work decreed  
For me to do is done. O! send  
Me to my parents poor: they need  
My help, and thither would I wend.”

## VI.

'T WAS not to be, that filial flight,  
Her only home the sinless blue:  
Her simple name has grown a might,  
And France's King doth claim his due.

Domremy lay beyond a flood  
Whose waters she herself had loosed,  
Their bellowing billows, black with blood,  
Henceforth on earth her only roost.

No more a mother's ripened love  
Shall feed her with its autumn balm;  
Nor her warm teemful bosom prove  
Young mother's first ecstatic calm.

No youth with her great look shall gild  
The home his fancy's wealth has given,  
While her coy boldness helps him build  
One future for the two to live in.

Nor toil-earned joys nor sweetened care,  
Nor the week's crown of Sunday ease,  
None shall be hers, nor the loved stare  
Of upturned faces at her knees.

Her woman's walk shall be a tramp  
    Along the soldier's gairish path,  
Till she exchange the brutal camp  
    For the dim dungeon's tutored wrath,—

A dungeon round whose wall shall hiss  
    Exultant nations' rabid breath,  
While kings and bishops crosiers kiss,  
    With thanks all bloodied by a death.

## VII.

THE crowning made allegiance cheap :  
    Soissons, Laon, Chateau-Thierry  
Gave in, each opening gates and keep,  
    As marched the King towards Picardy.

Far shone above the serried line  
That pious banner dipt in light,  
A moving fortress, being a sign  
That Heaven marched with them for the right.

But she who bore it, she was changed ;  
Her mood was sad, and oft she sighed.  
Her angel-friends, were they estranged ?  
Not so, or breathless she had died.

But shadows, from the future blown,  
Upon her silence coldly crept,  
And, with dark nearness heavier grown,  
Her tenderest life-strings grimly swept.

As Indian in his boat, who feels  
At night the current's quickened pace,  
To whom a flash 'mid thunderpeals  
Lays bare his helpless deathward race,

Light beaming on her inner ken  
Through earth's o'ercharged incumbent gloom,  
She saw, close yawning at Compiègne,  
Her dread inevitable doom.

## VIII.

BUT ere it came to this, moons waned  
On discord, feud, and jealousy,  
While she, though thwarted, still had gained  
Bold battles with her martial eye.

And now once more the year was warmed  
By nuptial breath of florid May,  
When, where Burgundians thickest swarmed,  
To sieged Compiègne she fought her way.

One morning in the holy house,—  
Her vision by communion purged,—  
With motions such as martyr rouse,  
Thus spake she calm, by prescience urged:

“ Good friends, pray for me—I am sold,  
Betrayed: my captors now are nigh,  
To drag me through a dungeon-hold  
To death, by English hands to die.”

With dread and wonder gaping wide  
Were yet the ears her voice had touched,  
When dreadless she rode forth to bide  
The perils those strange words had vouched.

She led a sortie from the town,  
And, shielding the pursued retreat,  
Ere she had cleared the gateway, down  
Portcullis dropt behind her feet,

Leaving her helpless 'mid the foes,  
Whose circling spearmen quickly forced  
Her cease from brave and manlike blows,  
And captive made her, first unhorsed.

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BOOK IV. ROUEN.



BOOK IV. ROUEN.



I.

Hot were the spurs that sped the news  
Of that day's deed to Bedford's ear;  
And England's yeomen stretched their thews,  
Freed from the cramping links of fear.

As for won battles they rejoiced;  
Big bonfires pranced on flimsy piles,  
And high *te Deums* loud were voiced  
In crowded broad cathedral aisles.

Becrowned and mitred princes fling  
To silent heaven quick joyful cries, —  
The joy of tigers ere they spring,  
While hells are leaping through their eyes.

The Church's claim to interpret whole  
God's will, bred angry jealousies  
Towards Joan, thence concord with the soul  
Of England's aim and enmities.

Priesthoods were then, as now, a school  
Of power and pride, and level ran  
With the strong world, serving to rule,  
Rule the chief test of every plan.

Swayed too was England by a priest,  
There as elsewhere a sway accurst,  
Of public guidances the least  
Divine, and thence of all the worst.

The true priest's function is to obey,  
And thus avouch, the voice that calls  
To pious self-renouncement: they  
Who rule, or long to rule, are false.

## II.

ENGLAND must prove the Maid a witch;  
Else on the crowning of King Charles  
Heaven's seal is set, in power so rich,  
Whether the lion leaps or snarls:

Good Burgundy sues England's aid,  
Would trade his bales, would Brabant gain:  
Lean recreant Anjou would be paid  
By Burgundy with fat Lorraine:

The Duke de Ligny holds the Maid,  
For purchase, tightly prisoner :  
And Bishop Beauvais higher grade  
Would compass through bad Winchester.

Around the Maid this web of lusts  
Was grossly spun with spider-speed,  
Not by short passion's fitful gusts,  
But the monsoon of gainful greed.

England held all these hungry hounds  
In leash to her revenge and hate,  
She so through pride abased, her wounds  
She sought to heal with Joan's fate.

## III.

WHERE was the King whom she had crowned?

When those fell tidings struck his side,  
Did he not pale — then red rebound  
With heart of bridegroom for his bride?

Did noons not lighten with the swords  
Outflashed to vows ten-myriad-tongued,  
And earth shake, trampled by the hordes  
That galloped to her tempest-lunged,

Led on by France's chivalry,  
The Maid to save who all had saved,  
From wrong to wrest the greatest she  
Whom Fame on Story's front hath graved?

That generous thought should draw but blanks !

Alas, were lofty baseness less !

In this wide scene of glow and thanks

All is a cold waste wilderness.

Burrowing in trains of lust and pelf,

The vauntful Frankish chivalry

Was drunk with fulsome draughts of self ;

And for King Charles — sooner than he

Would burn with nobleness, will howl

Young kids. Among ignoblest things

His then inaction sinks, as foul

As aught on the foul page of kings.



## IV.

COULD bolts imprison prayer and thought,  
And fence the fields of memory,  
A deadlier ravage had been wrought,  
And quenched an infinite liberty.

As lightly black cyclopean walls  
Around her closed with sigh-strained bars,  
As on the earth Night's shadow falls  
That opens wide the world of stars.

They could not bar the empyrean friends  
But they her bosom's brood would greet,  
And parley hold for saintly ends  
With thoughts unblushing, memories sweet.

Of angel-guests the seemly mate,  
    Within the ruthless grated stone  
She sat, in cloistered queenly state,  
    Upon her high interior throne ;

Too high for self to climb, and wear  
    And soil the steps, whence momentarily  
Blest messengers went forth, to bear  
    Good-will and love to all that be.

But still she had despondent cares,—  
    Cares for Compiègne, whither she sent  
Her heart's whole crop with daily prayers,  
    And would for that her bonds have rent.

## V.

To England sold for kingly price,  
The Maid was dragged to Rouen's tower,  
To be there tortured in the vice  
Of lawless, godless, rageful power.

A lonely dream of innocence,  
Lost in a murderer's tangled brains,  
A ray whose fleeting flash indents  
The dark of snaky cavern's stains,

Benighted lamb's lorn bleat, that stirs  
The blood of wolves in hungry den,  
Was Joan amid her purchasers, —  
High priests and chiefs and learned men.

Lord Cardinal Winchester, the Duke  
Of Bedford, Warwick's puissant Earl  
Were there, — lest Beauvais should be luke, —  
To bait, rack, butcher one poor girl.

Their ruffians watched her when she slept,  
They hung big irons on her legs,  
Let none weep with her when she wept, —  
To drug her with Despair's dull dregs.

## VI.

CAUCHON, Bishop of Beauvais, his,  
A Frenchman's, was the tiger's paw  
To push their inhumanities  
'Gainst duty, manhood, justice, law.

He, Beauvais, and the Inquisitor's  
Pale vicar, sat sole judges, backt  
By lay and spiritual counsellors, —  
A court for death and murder packt.

They forged guilt nooses for the mind,  
With crafty clasps equipt and springs,  
With these about her life to wind, —  
Keen, subtle, covert questionings.

Though dim to her their worst intents,  
She snapped the slimy tortuous chains,  
With answers of wise innocence  
Confounding their insidious pains.

They asked — “Does God the English hate?” —  
“Whom God doth hate or love, from me  
Is hid; but this I know and state,  
Outdriven from France they all will be.”

— “That you are in a state of grace  
Do you believe?” — “If I am not,  
I pray God bring me so apace:  
If so, may I keep such blessed lot!”

One tongue there was, but one, so base  
To ask — “St. Michael, was he drest?” —  
“Think you our Lord” — with childlike face —  
“Hath not wherewith to clothe his best?”

And more than once her plaintive tongue  
Chastised their shameless rank abuse  
Of judge’s speech, which from her wrung —  
“Would you make me myself accuse?”

## VII.

SHE smote them with her simple words ;  
And not at Orleans or Patay  
Were stouter battles won with swords  
Than here with speech from day to day.

And she had humbled haughtiest hearts,  
Had other Talbots captive ta'en,  
So edged with truth her worded darts,  
Her holiness so whitely plain ;

Had they not rallied from defeat  
On fresh reserves of malice, pride,  
And for each sophism that was beat  
Two marshalled that as deeply lied. —

Then over the profound great face  
Of Mercy shadows swept, and she  
Reascending to her hallowed place  
To weep alone, all suddenly

New darkness rushed upon the soul  
Of that high crew, already dark,  
But now so beamless black there stole, —  
As from a devil-delivered ark, —

And crept into their pitchy breasts,  
Monsters that cannot live in day,  
Nor brook of sense or thought the tests,  
Who there had quenched all human ray,

Had not been flushed that hideous night, —  
As on mad storm-clouds tender lie  
The promises of rainbow-light  
From sun that sinks and seems to die, —



By radiance from the martyr-Maid,  
A glow by spirit-beauty nurst,  
With vestal fire so warmly rayed,  
It for a moment warmed the worst.

## VIII.

DEATH wooed her from his halcyon heights,  
Sent inmates of his palaces  
To whisper of their chaste delights, —  
Veracious unbought embassies

Of livers from beyond our sky,  
Large affluent heirs of lavish Death,  
Whose presence teaches, that to die  
Is but to breathe a livelier breath.

To win so great a guest, they broke  
    Their law of silence on her ear,  
And in earth's accents plainly spoke  
    Of sure deliverance glistening near.

At first the senses pried for sound  
    Of scaling squadrons, and a ring  
Of Frankish swords sad Rouen round,  
    Her shackles loosened by the King.

As noontide brilliance whets the eye,  
    The light wherein her longings dwelt  
Gave them so fine a mastery,  
    That soon a subtler hearing felt

The upward pointing of the tones ;  
    Then soared they on as blameless wings  
As waft the swarm of infant ones  
    That daily up to heaven swings.

## IX.

BUT nether life entwineth roots  
So close about the seedful heart,  
That till full ripened fall the fruits  
A rending 't is for them to part.

Young blood holds hidden in its streams  
The spawn of giant plans and wants :  
To spill it, wastes high germs and gleams,  
As when a murdered embryo pants.

The soldier-Maiden knew no fear ;  
But life was young in her, and she  
Had many loves, and much was dear  
That held her earth-tied tenderly.

And so, when to the sense were hushed  
Her angel-voices, on the stones,  
Where she lay cold and chained uncrushed,  
Would creep those loves to warm her moans.

Domremy came, and from its spring  
Outgushed far childhood on her brain,  
And saddened there, pale wandering,  
Like moonlight on a desert main.

Her mother's voice dropt in her ear,  
As chimes of first familiar bells  
The home-returning seaman cheer  
Through deathful Storm's insatiate swells.

Swift as the viewless harnessed fire  
That speeds a thought o'er continents,  
Across her soul's homesick desire  
Ran strange, as through a magic lens,

Her vast career to Rheims the proud  
From meek Domremy; nor with pride  
Was she upheaved, but humble bowed  
Before her greatness' rapid tide.

And then, — as in a harp uphung  
A warm wind waketh tender tones, —  
A yearning for loved legions flung  
Sweet tremors through those stable stones.

Then visions of new victories played  
Becrowned before a martial mood,  
And in bright prophecies arrayed  
The grandeur of her solitude. —

The agony of sleeping child  
Who starts, entailed in serpent-coils,  
Was hers, — in vision's sea inisled, —  
Waking to chains, and the worse toils

By tortive cunning wove with threads  
Of vengeance in that court, whose gloom  
Was ghastlier than the maiden-dreads  
Of her rude dangerous prison-room.

They could but kill, they could not tame  
Or conquer her, or wilt her bloom,  
Heaping upon her higher fame  
By that which doomed themselves,—her doom.

## X.

THE palsied air in Rouen's streets  
So scanty furnished food for breath,  
The life that plies the pulse's heats  
Was chill with pallid hints of death.

All joys, all griefs, all fears, all hopes,  
What dimmeth, what illumineth,  
The thought that mounts, the need that gropes,  
That day were shadowed all with Death.

Men saw him in each other's eyes,  
And women felt him fill their own,  
And children hushed their playful cries,  
And let grave silence reign alone.

He scowled below each shiny casque  
Of twice four hundred troopers grim,  
Who joyed in helping do his task,  
And on their heartstrings dandled him.

Beyond, ten thousand gloating looks  
Watched him already, ere he came,  
Peering presentient through the nooks  
Of pitiless fagots piled for flame. —

She comes — she comes — the Maid of Arc,  
From Orleans and from Rheims she comes  
Enwreathed, she whom freed France shall mark  
The highest who hath roused her drums :—

She comes for holy sacrifice,  
To win her greatest victory,  
Warding, at costliest earthly price,  
Her soul's full truth and purity :—

She comes to die for France, and lift  
Man's thought forever to the height  
Of love's unselfishness, — a gift  
More precious than her conquering might.

“ O ! Rouen ! Must I die then here ! ”  
Outgush of wonder and of awe :  
Can wrong its crest unsmitten rear —  
Hiss impious at His heaven of law !



She heaved a sigh — then wept and prayed ;  
Then calm and beautiful her face  
Grew strong serene, in power arrayed  
Of faith, and love's perfusive grace.

Like light before whose coming part  
The waves of chaos' surly sea,  
She sat upon the felon-cart  
Dragged through that lowering soldiery.

Their hearts ran hate, wherein they snapped  
At what seemed her, — revenge's food :  
The lusting ones, they only lapt,  
Rage-blinded, their own being's blood.

Man's life no fellow-man can reach,  
And hers had been in heaven on earth,  
Held down by finest threads, whose breach  
Will be a moment's pang of birth ; —

A pang, quick smothered by the smoke  
That suaged the bites of gnashing flame,  
Through whose red roaring, prayerful broke  
A voice that sounded Jesus' name. —

Fresh loosened then a tender breath  
Came whispering to that sated hell;  
And thence, where they had willed a death,  
Forgiveness with a blessing fell.

**THE END.**











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