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## Auckland Dramatic Students

under the direction of

J. F. MONTAGUE

present...

## Joan of Arc

A Historic Drama in Five Episodes

**I**T is difficult indeed for us in the twentieth century to imagine the state of France in the fifteenth century. Now the country is unified, but then, one spoke of the Burgundians, Armagnacs, Bretons and Provencaux and regarded them distinct from France. One strong man had unified them, several weak ones had allowed them to become disintegrated, to become ruled by petty barons always at war with one another. It was in some respects an England of the reign of Stephen, but worse, for the country was at war with the English, who were then strong and more or less unified.

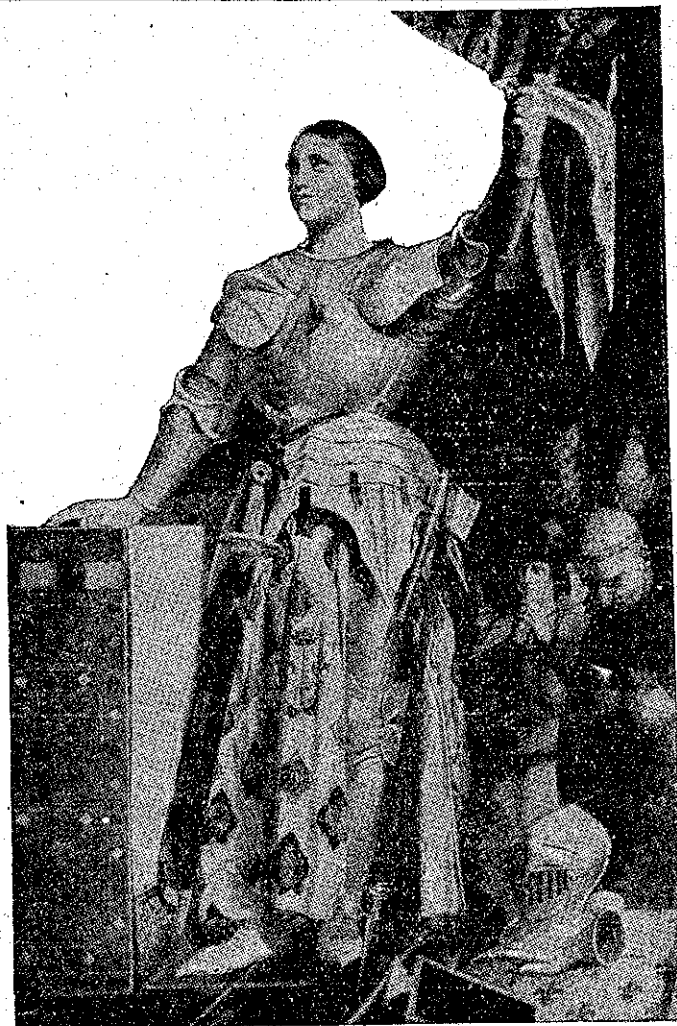
When Charles VII of France nominally began his reign, his own relatives were as determinedly his opponents as was Henry V of England, whose frank object was to take the crown of France from his head. To make matters worse, the French king was mad and incapable of any real share in the internal government of his country, or in resistance to its invader. Everything was out of joint. The Burgundians and the Armagnacs were more bitterly at war than were the English and the French. The Scotch were taking the part of the French.

This is the scene upon which the beautiful, but pathetic, story of Jeanne d'Arc is laid.

The English with their allies, the Burgundians, were in occupation of the most important towns of France. In Paris an English Regent ruled, for the rightful heir to the throne had fled to Poitiers and by a disgraceful act of treachery his mother had bartered the crown to England. The shame and hopelessness of France was almost complete; when in a few short years all this was changed by a girl.

We are inclined to look upon the story of Jeanne d'Arc, or, as she is spoken of in English, Joan of Arc, as mythical or as some moral story that is told children for their edification. But this is far from true; we can read the actual words spoken in the inquiry or the testimony of the soldiers, herds-men and monks. They have been preserved throughout all these five hundred years and are a striking testimony to all that is noble and brave. She manifested that fervent faith that is echoed in high indignation in the poems of Victor Hugo and in the researches of Pasteur, who worshipped more the thought of Infinity as he saw more into the marvels of Nature.

Jeanne was born on January 5, 1412, in the village of Domremy, on the banks of the Meuse, one of the little grey hamlets with its little church tower and remains of a little chateau on the



Jeanne d'Arc.

soft elevation of a mound not sufficient for the name of a hill. In this quiet corner of Lorraine life was calm and humble. Once during the English wars they had fled in terror before the Burgundians and had returned to find their village looted. It was a taste of war that even this inoffensive countryside must feel.

Her parents were labourers, and when she was old enough Jeanne joined with them spinning hemp or wool, following the plough, or going to harvest, according to the season. She sometimes minded the village cattle for her father. A devout girl, she was sometimes made the butt of jokes, directed against her going to church so regularly. Who could picture her, a typical French village maid, tender and meek, controlling armies and over-ruling the decisions of counsellors.

But behind this simple exterior there was another Jeanne who dreamed of the liberation of France and the restoration of its monarch. For long she brooded over the presentiment that she must play an active part in the liberation of her country. When she was not quite thirteen, a child in all innocence, yet full of dreams, confused, no doubt, and vague, she heard a mysterious voice. Between her and the church shone a light unlike anything she had ever seen before, and the voice was coming from it. "Jeanne, be a brave and wise child; go to church often."

After what intervals the vision returned we are not told. It seems to have come to her out of doors, in the silence and freedom of the fields or gardens. Finally, the message came clear-cut, "Jeanne, you must go to the help of the King of France and it is you who shall give him back his kingdom." The message was followed by direction to go to a M. de Bauricourt, one of the French captains, who was to lead her to the king.

It was with (Concluded on page 2.)

*On the evening of March 3 Mr. J. F. Montague and his players will present in five episodes the historical play "Joan of Arc," the story of which is told here. This moving story will be set forth in the present production, upon which Mr. Montague has been working for some time past. The presentation should be profoundly interesting to all listeners, both on account of the story and of the fact that a wonderfully fine cast has been arranged, including several new performers. Striking features of the production will be the exquisite music, rising at times to sublime heights, and the accompanying "effects," to which special attention has been given. Listeners will do well to keep a note of the date of this play—March 3.*