

# The Victorious Battle of Patay

(Fourth Panel)



**T**HE effect of the deliverance of Orleans was prodigious. Everybody saw in it the hand of a supernatural power. Some credited it to the devil, but the majority to God. It became the general belief that of the two Kings, of England and of France, our Charles VII. had right on his side.

On the day after the raising of the siege, Joan escaped from the enthusiastic outbursts of the citizens of Orleans, and, though still suffering from her wound, went to seek the King.

The latter was expected at Tours. She reached there before him and rode to meet him on horseback, her standard in her hand. When the King appeared, Joan made him a reverence, bowing her head very low. Deeply moved, the King removed his headgear, put his arms about Joan, and raised her to her feet. Willingly would he have given the humble maid a kiss, say the chroniclers, so great was his joy.

Charles VII. ought to have seized this opportu-

ity to go boldly from Orleans to Rheims and put his hands on the crown. This smacked of temerity, and was made no less difficult by the first fright of the English.

As they had committed the serious mistake of not crowning their young Henry VI., it was necessary to forestall them. He who was first crowned should remain King. It would also be a great thing for Charles VII. to make a royal progress across English France, to take possession, to show that everywhere in France the King is at home.

Joan alone was of this opinion. The politicians, the wise counselors, smiled; they wished to go slowly and surely; in other words, to give the English time to regain their courage. Joan would throw herself on her knees before her sovereign and repeatedly say to him: "I shall not last long, sire, it is therefore necessary to make good use of me."

So, while waiting before going to Rheims, it was

decided to attack the places still held by the English on the banks of the Loire. Suffolk had thrown himself into Jargeau; there he was shut up, overpowered. Beaugency was also taken before Lord Talbot had received the aid from the regent announced to him by Sir Falstaff. The Constable of Richmond, who for a long time had remained on his estates, came with his Bretons to the aid of the victorious army. A battle was imminent.

For some days the two parties sought each other in vain. "In the name of God, it is necessary to fight them!" Joan exclaimed. "Even were they suspended from the clouds, we shall have them, since God has sent them to us in order that we may chastise them. Our Kind king will today win the greatest victory ever known."

And, in effect, the two armies met on the 18th of June, at Patay. Joan wished to place herself in the van, but she was held back, and La Hire was

charged with attacking the English and making them face about, in order to give the French troops time to arrive.

But La Hire's attack was so impetuous that all gave way before him. When Joan hurried up with her men-at-arms the English were retreating in disorder. Their retreat became a flight. Talbot persisted in keeping up the fight, thinking, perhaps, that he might get himself killed, but he succeeded only in getting captured. "You did not think this morning that this would happen to you," said the Duke of Alencon to him. "That is the fortune of war," replied Talbot.

The English lost four thousand killed. Two hundred of them were taken prisoners. Mercy was shown only to those who were able to pay a ransom; the rest were killed without pity. One of them was struck down so brutally in the presence of Joan that she leaped from her horse to help him.

She lifted up the head of the poor fellow, sum-

moned a priest, and consoled him in death. "Never," said she, "have I seen the blood of a Frenchman without its making my hair stand on end." Nevertheless her heart was as full of pity for wounded Englishmen as for those of her side. As for herself, she exposed herself, was often wounded, but never availed herself of her sword. Her sole weapon was her standard.

The victory at Patay brought to an end the campaign begun by the deliverance of Orleans. Thus Joan accomplished the first part of her mission. All that she now needed to do was to bring about the coronation of the King of France.

"To Rheims, now!" she cried. And this time it was necessary to make this resolve despite the wise-aces of the court. From all sides came men wishing to take part in the expedition. Those gentlemen who had not enough money to fit themselves out as knights on horseback, came as mere archers; and, no matter what his pay might be, each man-at-arms was happy, for he was following Joan.