FROM SORCERESS TO SAINT: Final Canonization of Joan of Arc Has Worked This Change in Her Official Ecclesiastical Status

At the Vatican they are completing the canonization of Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orleans. The ceremony of beatification held there eleven years ago made her venerable permission. The canonization will render it obligatory.

In 1900 the Devil's Advocate, having presumably done his utmost to show that the Maid was unworthy to become a saint, was not satisfied. He was pursuing further investigation of the claims put forward on her behalf. It was at this time that the canonization would be extended until May 30, 1921, just five hundred years after she took up her life as a maid in the market place at Rouen.

The great war may have had something to do with hastening the final date. It was in that region north of Paris where Foch launched the first of his series of overwhelming offensives in July, 1918, that the Maid suffered the series of defeats which ended with her capture in prisoner at Compiègne, the Burgundians, her sale to the English for $1,000 by John of Luxembourg, her trial and execution as a sorceress, and here, too, after the battle of the Marne, the bullet of the forlorn hope repeatedly wounded the gentle Maid against the arms of France, leading the armies of France against the invaders.

There is to be considered the fact that there were more than 40,000 priests under the Tricolor fighting the Germans, which provided the Church with a vast new audience from both a material and a spiritual standpoint. It feels the need of this religious stimulus to a certain extent in the relations with the Vatican which were ruptured a century while before the Maid was beatified.

In 1844 there was a great revival throughout France of interest to services rendered to the country by the Maid. It was then that Michelet's account of La Pucelle in his "History of France" reawakened national interest. Up to that time Shakespeare's account of the Maid no doubt had been pretty clearly represented foreign opinion. Voltaire's "La Pucelle" still preserved what he meant to the French philosophic mind. Only the German Schiller in his "Jungfrau von Orleans" had consistently represented her a virgin mystic and a messenger from heaven.

For seventy years France was to be held this constantly augmenting revival initiated by the historian. Artists and sculptors and writers in all other fields, especially those in the search of the truth; poets and novelists, dreamed of the realities that the scholars discovered amid dusty manuscripts.

On Sept. 13, 1851, her status, the first of a series, the work of Princess Marie of France, was inaugurated at Orleans, the scene of the Maid's historical achievement; there, too, on May 14, 1850, the 450th anniversary of the victory of Pierre Duguesclin, whose birthplace, the Muidon was born, Aug. 28, 1851; Chil- non, Aug. 14, 1851; Rheims, July 15, 1851; St. Pierre-le-Moûtier, Aug. 4, 1852.

But her progress toward rehabilitation among the civil and ecclesiastical authorities did not go forward with the same waves of enthusiasm which carried her on in the popular and artistic mind. Her father, Jean Durc, who had been ennobled with the name of Du Luy by the Dauphin, whose throne the Maid had saved, repeatedly petitioned the French Court, as her mother and brothers did the Pope, for a revision of her trial, alleging that it had been illegally conducted by the Bishop of Beauvais and the Faculty of the University of Paris while under English control. The revision lasted from 1450 until 1464, when the Maid was pronounced innocent and Pope Callixtus III. Her life and character to be solemnly vindicated at the place of her trial and execution.

Then there was a long wait until the enthusiasm aroused by Michelet and his followers had its effect on Rome. There the Curia first considered the matter in 1854, and then in 1902 it took the first step toward her beatification by pronouncing her "venerable." Her beatification was approved on Jan. 27, 1924, by Pope Leo XIII, always a good friend of France. Then her canonization was proposed in February, 1923, with the initial ceremonies on Jan. 6, 1924, and complete beatification amid glorious ceremonies in the Vatican on April 18, 1929.

In St. Peter's, on the high altar, in the shadow of St. Peter's chair, stood the "Gloria," a picture representing the Maid in the glory of Paradise and clothed in the full, shining raiment of her earthly achievements. The Apostolic Brief for the beatification having been read, a veal fell from the picture, electric lights blazed out all round it, and the bells began to ring joyously. Some 50,000 French pilgrims journeyed to Rome to witness the ceremony, but it was too early to say that official France allowed its Anti-Clerical bias to blind it to the significance of the occasion, ignoring the national importance of the heroic figure which impersonated so significantly the country's glorious past and the agony of patriotism which is France but of the whole world. But both impersonation and spirit were to be preserved for five years more.

The period of beatification produced another flood of statues, pictures, biographies and novels. Antoine France gave the Maid of his genius. In England, Andrew Lang gave of his. In Japan, Jutta, twin of his father, gave of his. Japan is long enough to write and soundly a rare story of her life with great generosity and beauty and with a power of visualization which was the despair of critics.

The story of Joan's brief life may now be gathered from a thousand sources; its scenes viewed from a thousand can- vases, tablettes, and sculptures; still a bare outline of them may not be amiss here.

Born of devout peasant parents, in the village of Domremy, in Jan. 1412, Joan first heard the prophetic "voices" which tell her that her work is done, and reopen the campaign against the English. * * * The King, now republicann, France, was restored and he was promised * * * July 17, 1929, by the King not to forsake her, given no heed to her "voices," which tell her that her work is done, and reopen the campaign against the English. * * * Thrown into prison by the English, she was saved from further treatment by an army of troops, into Compiègne, then besieged by Burgundian forces, and is driven back and captured May 24, 1429, sold to the English for $2,000 by John of Lux- embourg. * * * Nov. 10, 1430, carried to Rouen, head- quarters of the English, heavily fettered December 1430, burned at the stake, in Rouen, after a trial of several months. May 30, 1431.