

beatified as the patron saint of France. Naturally of a contemplative disposition, she was accustomed from earliest childhood to long fasts and solitary communings, in which she brooded over the miserable condition of her country, then overrun by English armies. When 13 years of age, she had a vision in which a voice spoke to her from out of a great light, telling her that God had chosen her to restore France. She immediately fell on her knees and made a vow of virginity and entire devotion to the cause, and from that day to the time of her cruel death she believed herself inspired and guided by supernatural voices to lead her countrymen against the invader. A simple peasant girl, she sought out the royal court and boldly announced to the king her divine mission. Her manner made such an impression that she was assigned a command, and putting on a soldier's dress and carrying a sword which she claimed had come to her through miraculous means, she led the armies of France, performing superhuman feats of courage and endurance and winning victory after victory for three years until she was finally captured. After a long and harassing mockery of a trial, in which the whole machinery of the law and the church was brought into action for the destruction of one poor girl barely 19 years of age, she was finally condemned and burned at Rouen, ostensibly as a witch and a heretic, but really as the most dangerous enemy of English tyranny in France.

She was forever hearing these spirit voices, which she called "her voices" or "her counsel." They spoke to her with articulate words in the ripple of the village fountain, in the vesper bells, in the rustling of the leaves, and in the sighing of the wind. Sometimes it was the warlike archangel Michael, but oftener it was the gentle Saint Katherine, who appeared to her as a beautiful woman wearing a crown. Her visions must be ascribed to the effect of the troubled times in which she lived, acting on an enthusiastic, unquestioning religious temperament. She is described as physically robust and intellectually keen, aside from her hallucination, as was proven in her trial, and there is no evidence that she was subject to epilepsy or other abnormal conditions such as belonged to Mohammed and most others of the same class. Her long and frequent fasts unquestionably aided the result. She claimed no supernatural powers outside of her peculiar mission, and in every public undertaking relied entirely on the guidance of her voices.

Toward the end these voices were accompanied by other hallucinations, together with presentiments of her coming death. On one occasion, while assaulting a garrison, her men fled, leaving her standing on the moat with only four or five soldiers. Seeing her danger, a French officer galloped up to rescue her and impatiently asked her why she stood there alone. Lifting her helmet from her face she looked at him with astonishment and replied that she was not alone—that she had 50,000 men with her—and then, despite his entreaties, she turned to her phantom army and shouted out her commands to bring logs to bridge the moat. It was in April, while standing alone on the ram-