On October 24, 1430, while Joan was still a prisoner at Beaurevoir, the Duke of Burgundy had been forced to raise the siege of Compiègne, that town having been relieved by a French army commanded by the Comte de Vendôme and the Marshal de Boussac. The offensive operations which the duke had been able to prepare, thanks to the imprudent truces signed by Charles VII, had not been as profitable as he had hoped. In 1431 there were more French successes, chiefly owing to the energy of La Hire, who had been appointed captain-general in Normandy immediately after the taking of Louviers in December 1429, and of the sire de Barbazan in Champagne. The Bastard of Orleans was sent to Louviers in March 1431. But this military effort was not maintained: on October 28th Louviers was forced to capitulate to the English, a fresh body of English troops having disembarked at Calais in June. And on July 2nd the sire de Barbazan—"heart of fine silver, flower of chivalry" says his epitaph—was killed at the battle of Bulgnieville during which René of Anjou was taken prisoner. By a curious coincidence, on May 30, 1431, the day of Joan's death, news of which cannot therefore have reached the king, Charles sent a letter to the inhabitants of Rheims asking them to make the sire de Barbazan welcome.

However, after a campaign which had been fruitless from his point of view, the Duke of Burgundy seems to have decided to seek peace with the King of France. He kept away from Henry VI's coronation ceremony in Paris in December 1431, and this alone was a gesture of independence of the English: and in the course of the same month he signed another truce with Charles VII's ambassadors, at Lille. Much more advantageous for the French King than its predecessors, the truce in question was for a period of six years and has the appearance of being preliminary to a definitive peace treaty. In Rouen itself the French sentiments of the population must have been roused by Joan's death: on February 3, 1432, a free-lance
called Ricarville, with one hundred and three followers, succeeded by a coup de main of astonishing boldness, in making himself master of the castle. Unfortunately the reinforcement which was necessary if he was to hold the place was not forthcoming, and a few days later the one hundred and four soldiers were decapitated in the same Old Market Place which had witnessed the conflagration of that sinister pyre in the previous year, at the order of Bedford and the Earl of Arundel, captain of Rouen.

Meanwhile the King's attention was more than ever absorbed by his unworthy favourite, Georges de la Trémoille who, as always opposed to military action, fostered the King's natural apathy. One fine day he received a sword-stroke through the stomach; this attempt at assassination had been organised by the Constable Arthur de Richemont and the Angevin family, Queen Marie of Anjou, Charles du Maine and their mother Yolande of Sicily, who had made up their minds that the King of France should prosper even despite himself. His life saved by the thickness of his own fat, La Trémoille left the court never to return, and from that moment French military activity was more energetic and better sustained.

On January 16, 1435, there began, between France and Burgundy, the conferences of Nevers in which Rene of Anjou played the part of honest broker. They concluded with an adjournment to Arras where, despite protests from England, peace was concluded between France and Burgundy on September 20, 1435. The Regent Bedford had seen the beginning of the negotiations, but was not to see the end of them, for he died on September 14th in the castle of Houen where he had held Joan prisoner. One of the principal French negotiators had been Cauchon's successor in the see of Beauvais, appointed by the King of France after the town had been retaken in 1429, Jean Jouvenel des Ursins.

At the same time and throughout the country the people were quivering with impatience: there were uprisings in Lower Normandy in 1434; at the time of the treaty of Arras the English were virtually helpless in that region, and the town of Dieppe went over to the King of France. At last, on April 13, 1436, Arthur de Richemont, taking advantage of the insurrection which had been seething in Paris for four months, made his way into the city by the Saint-Jacques gate, while the "foresworn Frenchmen", among them Pierre Cauchon himself, fled hastily, pursued by the shouts of the mob, "After the fox! Have his tail!" (There was a curious popular superstition that all Englishmen had tails.) "Before seven years,"

Joan had said in 1431, "the English will lose a greater gage than they have ever lost in France."

But the Parisians had to wait a year before the King came to their town: he did not make his entry until November 12, 1437. Even the Bourgeois de Paris was obliged to admit that "he was fed like God himself". (P.136) The King was accompanied by the Dauphin Louis, heir to the throne.

Several years passed thereafter during which neither England nor France seemed to be in a state to continue the strife. In both countries finances were in a parlous state, as we may judge from the monetary measures of the time: the coming and going of free-lance bands paralysed agriculture by terrorising the peasantry; disorder reigned throughout France and, as a last straw, plague broke out in the kingdom, and in Paris raged throughout 1438 and 1439, killing fifty thousand people in that city alone; among the victims was Marie de Poissy, the King's sister and prioress of the convent of Poissy.

Military action was resumed in 1441 with the taking of Pontoise and, in the following year, with a raid into Guyenne: the King recovered Saint-Sever and Dax, but failed to take La Réole. Discouraged by this failure he hurried back to the banks of the Loire and was again overtaken by inertia, the more so in that his mistress, Agnes Sorel, who first appeared at the court in 1444, roused in him a belated appetite for pleasure: banquets and tournaments followed one upon another, in which the taste for luxury, which had distinguished the Valois line since the first of them became King, reappeared. The Archbishop of Rheims, Jean Jouvenel des Ursins, raised an indignant voice in an effort to recall the King to a sense of his duty and to the misery of the people confronted with this extravagance of luxury paid for with "aids (taxes) raised for the war". But, also in 1444, a truce was signed with England and reinforced by the marriage of Henry VI to Margaret of Anjou, King René's daughter: this truce was renewed periodically until 1449.

In that year an English raid against Fougères caused the resumption of military operations, centred in Normandy where the population rose. In the month of May the French took three small towns in succession, Pont-de-l'Arche, Conches and Gerberoy; next, Dunois seized Verneuil, and at last, on August 6th, Charles VII set siege to Louviers. Towns rose in his support on all sides. In Rouen an insurrection forced the governor, Somerset, to quit the castle
in haste and take refuge in Caen on October 29th; a few days later Charles made his entry into the capital of Normandy, reconquered after thirty years of occupation.

Then, and not till then, did it become possible to determine in what manner the trial and execution of Joan of Arc had taken place. All the documents in the case had been preserved at the archbishopric; and it was also in Rouen that eye-witnesses of her last moments were to be found. It had, therefore, been impossible until then to undertake any kind of action with a view to her rehabilitation. It is, of course, self-evident, but historians have not always made the point clearly enough. For a long time, indeed, the rehabilitation proceedings were misunderstood because they were so little known. The rehabilitation was seen as an act of mere opportunism: Joan is rehabilitated as soon as they are vanquished. This is to forget the actual circumstances in which the events took place. So long as the English were masters of Rouen, the mere fact that they held the papers in the case, a case which they had managed themselves, maintained their version of what the trial had been—a trial by the Church carried on in the ordinary and regular manner, by which it had been established that Joan was a heretic. In the event, to reproach the King or the Church with having done nothing to bring the Oradour war criminals to justice before 1945.

Perhaps the only deed which can be placed on the credit side of Charles VII’s account is this: that he did, shortly after his entry into Rouen, undertake to find out what had really happened in the matter of Joan. On February 15, 1450, a letter in the following terms was sent to one of his councillors, Master Guillaume Bouille, canon of Noyon cathedral:

“Whereas formerly Joan the Maid was taken and apprehended by our ancient enemies and adversaries the English, and brought to this town of Rouen, against whom they caused to be brought proceedings by certain persons to that end committed and deputed by them, in which proceedings they did and committed many faults and abuses, to such point that, by means of that trial and the great hatred which our enemies had against her, they brought about her death iniquitously and against right reason, very cruelly; therefore we would know the truth of the said trial proceedings and the manner according to which it was carried on and proceeded with. We authorise, command and expressly enjoin that you enquire into and inform yourself diligently on that which is said about it; and the information (gathered) by you on this matter, bring it close and sealed before us and people of our council...” (R.11-12)

The terms of this letter are significant: we would know the truth of the said trial; until then, in fact, they knew nothing, excepting what their enemies had been willing to tell them. But now, and only now, might the truth be discovered.

Guillaume Bouillé was to bring to this business a punctuality and energy which clearly reveal his own feelings; having always been loyal to the royal cause, he was designated Rector of the purged University of Paris in 1439. Less then three weeks after the date of the above letter, the first witness called by him appeared before him: Guillaume Manchon, the notary in the other trial. As we know, he had been present throughout that trial from beginning to end; he had signed every page of the proceedings and set his seal on the completed document and kept his notes in French, where Joan’s own words were set down together with a translation into Latin. The whole of March 4th was necessary for hearing his evidence.

On the following day six more witnesses were heard, four of whom belonged to the convent of Saint-Jacques in Rouen in which Joan’s execution had caused a stir of anger, since it was there, on the day after the burning, that Pierre Bosquier was arrested. The two Brothers who had supported Joan to the stake were there, Isambart de la Pierre and Martin Ladvenu: their interrogation took a long time. Two others, whose role had been more obscure, were also examined, Guillaume Duval and Jean Toutmouillé. The usher, Jean Massieu, was called. And by a lucky chance a man who had played one of the leading parts, Master Jean Beaupère himself, was in Rouen, having come to take possession of a canon’s prebend to add to the large number of others he had accumulated: as a rule he lived in retirement in the diocese of Besançon.

The evidence given by these seven men was amply sufficient to establish what Joan’s trial had really been: a political trial in which, by convicting Joan of heresy, the English had successfully sought to destroy the woman in whom they saw, not without reason, the instrument of Charles VII’s victories and coronation.

This interrogation of seven witnesses was staged against a dramatic backdrop. Normandy was seething with excitement, town after town was opening its gates to the King of France—Lisieux, Coutances, Saint-Lo—and meanwhile, on the other side of the
Channel, Henry VI was making a supreme effort, going even to the length of pledging the Crown Jewels, in order to raise another army for service in France.

That army landed at Cherbourg on March 15th under the command of Thomas Kyriel, who was to make a junction with Somerset's forces entrenched at Caen. But Richemont's army, arriving unexpectedly, was too quick for him, and on April 15, 1450, Formigny avenged the shame of Agincourt. Normandy was virtually recovered; and completely so after Caen had been taken on June 24th and Cherbourg on August 12th. All northern France was in the King's hands.

Now in the following year Pope Nicholas V, who had succeeded Eugenius IV after the latter's victory over the fathers at the Council of Constance and the resignation of the anti-Pope Felix V, sent a legate to France, Guillaume d'Estouteville by name, whose primary mission was to restore peace between all Christian princes. Not without anxiety did the Pope see the Turks threatening Constantinople, and his object was to bring about a closing of ranks in Christendom so that some new enterprise might be attempted in the East.

Guillaume d'Estouteville was the brother of that Louis d'Estouteville who had successfully defended Mont Saint-Michel from 1425 until the liberation of Normandy. There can be no doubt as to what his personal feelings were. He was the first legate sent to France after the long series of disturbances and quarrels which had enfeebled the papacy, and he was coming into a realm which was itself in the process of being re-established. Shortly after his arrival (August 13, 1451) Dunois, conducting operations in Guyenne, the last English bastion in France, entered Bordeaux on June 30th and by August 25th had taken Bayonne. Not the least important of the matters which were pending between France and the papacy was that of Joan of Arc's trial.

For the business stood thus: the enquiry initiated by the King the year before had established, indeed, that she had been destroyed by the hatred of her political enemies. But since they had been clever enough to make the Church try her, her cause remained a matter for the Church and, officially, she was still a heretic condemned as such. Her trial had been conducted by an Inquisition Court; only the Inquisition could annul it.

Guillaume d'Estouteville had an interview with the King at Tours in February 1452. Two months later he made his way to Rouen, and it is probable that he was already in possession of the facts which had emerged from Guillaume Bouillé's enquiry.

In Rouen, struggling to rise out of the decline in which the horrors it had had to endure had left it (the population had fallen during the Occupation from 14,992 to 5,976), he must himself have heard memories of la bonne Lorraine as they called Joan, recalled by eyewitnesses of her trials and death. He put himself in touch with the Inquisitor-General of France, the recently appointed Dominican Jean Bréhal, a Norman like himself. And Bréhal took Joan's cause in hand and carried it through to a satisfactory conclusion.

The impetus given to the business by d'Estouteville and Bréhal resulted in the opening of the first official enquiry into the matter of Joan the Maid on May 2nd. The earlier enquiry, although it was carried out under the orders of the King of France, had no official standing in the eyes of the Church and the Inquisition courts; but its results were studied and they were embodied in the file of the Rehabilitation proceedings. The record of the Trial of Condemnation was carefully studied by the two prelates, who called to their aid two jurists who were members of the legate's suite, Paul Pontanus and Theodore de Lelis. On the foundation of that study they drew up an interrogatory designed to be used in examining the witnesses who would appear before the commissioners in charge of the official enquiry.

The first witnesses were called for May 2nd: but within two days their answers had raised such a host of new questions, that a second questionnaire, much more thorough than the first and comprising twenty-seven questions, was drawn up. This was used as the basis for the whole of the rehabilitation proceedings, which were resumed on May 8th. (The text of both lists of questions is to be found in R.277-282.) On the whole, the questions asked bore chiefly on the fundamental flaws of the first trial: the partiality of the judges; the hatred which the English seemed to have had for Joan; the want of liberty which this entailed on the judges and assessors; what pressures had been applied. Also examined were errors of form: the fact that Joan had been held in a lay prison while under trial by an ecclesiastical court; the want of an advocate, which was contrary to the law; the methods employed to embarrass her in the capital matter of rebellion against the Church; the way in which the interrogations were conducted. Finally, the proceedings tried to throw light on the question of Joan's innocence and piety or otherwise, on the causes of her relapse, her attitude in her last moments, and so forth.
Some of the witnesses who appeared in this new ecclesiastical enquiry had already been questioned by order of the King, such as Manchon, Ladvenu and Isambart de la Pierre; others were being questioned for the first time, such as Pierre Miget, one of the assessors in her first trial, and Pierre Cusquel who, as a mason in the public works department of Rouen Castle, had the entrée to Joan's prison. After May 8th most of the old assessors who were still alive were examined, among them being Nicolas Cavall, who had been the executor of Pierre Cauchon's last will and testament, Andre Marguerie, Richard du Grouchet, Jean Fabri, Guillaume du Desert, and some others who had expressed a wish to testify although they had taken no effective part in the trial, such as Jean Faye, Jean Riquier, Thomas Marie and above all the famous "resistance leader" Nicholas de Houppeville. Most of the other participants in the Trial of Condemnation were dead; both Couchon and Loiselier had died suddenly in 1442, the latter in Basle. The promoter, Jean d'Estivet, had been found drowned in a drain. As for the vice-Inquisitor, Jean Lemaître, was he dead or alive? We have no means of knowing, but there exists no further trace of his existence after 1452. Nicolas Midy, who had preached the last sermon to Joan in the Old Market, had died of leprosy ten years ago.

On May 22nd Guillaume d'Estouteville officially notified the King that the enquiry was finished. A few days later, acting in his capacity as legate of the Holy See, he granted indulgences to all who should walk in the procession and be present at the ceremonies of May 8th; which can only mean that already, in June 1452, he was fully convinced of Joan's innocence and the injustice of her condemnation.

At about the same time Jean Bréhal and Guillaume Bouillé were passing through Orléans. They were received with eager respect by the municipality and entertained to a vin d'honneur. Finally, during the first days of July, d'Estouteville was received by the King at his castle of Mehun-sur-Yèvre, and communicated to him the conclusions he had reached during the ecclesiastical enquiry. The rehabilitation cause thereafter entered upon a new phase, juridical and theological in character; it was a question of collecting opinions from specialists in canon law on the whole business. For their convenience Jean Bréhal drew up a résumé, known as the Summarium, which, taking each principal charge in turn, grouped the answers from the trial record each under its appropriate head. Each doctor then had to answer the following question: given these answers,

would you have reached the same conclusion as did the judges at Rouen? These consultations alone compose a stout volume, which bears witness to the fact that every canonist and theologian of importance in the realm, and one or two outside the kingdom (e.g., Leonard von Brixenthal of Vienna University), had been asked to give an opinion. Among them, and apart from the two Roman jurisconsults already mentioned, were Robert Ciboule, former rector of the University and chancellor of Notre-Dame of Paris; Elie de Bourdelles, Bishop of Périgueux; Thomas Basin, the famous Bishop of Lisieux who was later to write the life of Charles VII; Martin Berruyer, Bishop of Le Mans, and Jean Bochard, Bishop of Avranches.

D'Estouteville returned to Rome at the end of 1452; in April of the following year he was made Archbishop of Rouen, an appointment which seemed likely to quicken the rehabilitation proceedings again.

The year 1453 was to be rich in military events; for much amazement was caused when, in October 1452, Talbot, the aged Talbot whom Joan had once taken prisoner at Patay, disembarked in Guynenne—he was then 81 years of age—and was received with eager respect by the inhabitants of Bordeaux while the French seneschal, Olivier de Coetivy, was seized and imprisoned by them. This was the outcome of a plot hatched by the burgesses of Bordeaux and its neighbourhood whose income was chiefly derived from the large sale of wines of Guynenne in England; the restoration of French government had impoverished them. And during the first months of 1453 it looked very much as if Guyenne and Gascony, detaching themselves from France, were returning under the aegis of England. However on July 17th the battle of Castillon decided matters otherwise: Talbot was killed and Bordeaux forced to submit.

Meanwhile things were happening in the East; on the morning of May 29, 1453, Constantinople fell to the Turks. The last of the Byzantine emperors, Constantine Paleologus, was found among the dead and his embalmed head was to be sent to all the principal towns of the Ottoman empire as a sign of the victory of their sultan, Mahomet II who, standing on the altar in Saint Sophia, himself transformed that venerable Christian basilica into a mosque. The pope was more than ever anxious to urge upon the Christian princes the necessity of uniting to take some action in the East. The answers he received were evasive, or even fantastic, like the promise made by Philippe the Good in the middle of a luxurious banquet—to go on a Crusade. In the event the advance of the Turks was not
to be checked until they were at the walls of Vienna, and after they had committed appalling ravages in Hungary.

Was it because of these events that the rehabilitation proceedings seemed to be suspended? At all events, it does not appear that Charles VII's victory in Guyenne did anything to hurry things up; on the contrary, a whole year passed without providing us with anything new in the matter.

In 1454 we note that Jean Bréhal made a journey to Rome "to go to our Holy Father the Pope touching the trial of the late Joan the Maid". It was doubtless on this occasion that there was delivered to the pope a supplication from Joan's family that a Trial of Rehabilitation be initiated. Only the pope could authorise the opening of such a trial, since there was no appeal from decisions of the Inquisition. One of the canonists consulted, Jean de Montigny of the University of Paris, had given it as his opinion that Joan's family were best qualified to act as plaintiffs or appellants (se porter partie civile):

"Although many persons could be the plaintiffs, as all those whom the thing concerns could be so considered (or 'must be included') and the thing concerns many persons in general and in particular ... it seems to us that the near relatives of the deceased Maid must have an advantage over the others and ought to be admitted to this trial (ought to be granted the right to proceed) as prosecuting (bring suit) for the injury done to one of their family in the murder (killing) and lamentable smothering (stifling) of the said Maid."

Of Joan's family the only survivors were her mother, Isabelle Romée, who lived as a pensioner of the city of Orleans; and her two brothers, Pierre and Jean. It was therefore in their name that the proceedings were to be initiated. Meanwhile the pope, Nicolas V, died. His successor, Calixtus III, had not been two months on the throne when he delivered a rescript which, dated June 11, 1455, authorised Isabelle Romée and her sons to demand the rehabilitation of Joan the Maid. This rescript designated three commissioners who were to "cause to be delivered a just sentence without appeal" (lit. "in last resort"). They were Jean Jouvenel des Ursins, Archbishop of Rheims; Guillaume Chartier, Bishop of Paris, and Richard Olivier, Bishop of Coutances.

On November 7th Isabelle Romée, assisted by her sons (but the final record mentions only Pierre), went in person to present the papal rescript to the commissioners, in the nave of Notre-Dame of Paris, Jean Bréhal, the Inquisitor, being also present. It was a very moving audience, for the old countrywoman was escorted by a whole group of people from Orleans who joined their plaint to hers, and soon the nave of the cathedral was so crammed with people, and there was such a tumult, that the commissioners were obliged to take refuge in the sacristy, taking Isabelle and her immediate escort with them. And we may share the feeling of the crowd at the reading of the old woman's request, as it is set down in the record:

"I had a daughter born in lawful wedlock, whom I had furnished worthily with the sacraments of baptism and confirmation and had reared in the fear of God and respect for the tradition of the Church, as far as her age and the simplicity of her condition allowed, in such sort that having grown up amid fields and pastures she was much in the church and received every month, after due confession, the sacrament of the Eucharist, despite her youth, and gave herself up to fasts and orisons with great devotion and fervour, for the wants at that time were so great which the people suffered and which she compassionated with all her heart; yet although she did never think, conceive or do anything whatever which set her out of the path of the faith, or spoke against it, certain enemies ... had her arraigned in religious trial ... and ... despite her disclaimers and appeals, both tacit and expressed, and without any succour given to her innocence, in a trial perfidious, violent, iniquitous and without shadow of right ... did they condemn her in a fashion damnable and criminal, and put her to death very cruelly by fire ... for the damnation of their souls and in notorious, infamous and irreparable damage done to me, Isabelle, and mine ... " (Q. ii, 82)

It was the real trial of Joan of Arc which was beginning there in the sanctuary of Notre-Dame, more charged with history than any other on the soil of France. In it were to appear the majority of those who had known her, peasants of Domremy, comrades in arms, princes of the blood royal, prelates of the Church, each with his own particular emphasis and personal memories. It is true that, after a lapse of twenty-five years, those memories must often be faded or defaced; certain, too, that failures of the memory would be numerous among the former assessors at the Trial of Condemnation who, obviously, while they were being questioned at the Trial of Rehabilitation must wish themselves elsewhere. Such, for example, was to be the case of André Marguerie, Nicolas Caval, Thomas de Courcelles, declaring that they could not remember and besides had taken but a very minor part in the proceedings, and
so forth. It remains nevertheless true that, from the whole body of the evidence, emerges a portrait of Joan which bears comparison with the Joan we know from her own words, words which the Trial of Condemnation at least has the merit of having handed down to us. And the rehabilitation was carried on in an atmosphere of peace restored; of unquestionable freedom, too—Charles VII had granted "letters of abolition" thereby deserving credit for showing himself clement in victory. Thus we may almost feel surprise when, in the course of the preliminary royal enquiry, we see certain witnesses, and among them the most thoroughly compromised, for example Jean Beaufére, persisting in their original attitude, and being thereafter permitted to withdraw with impunity. No doubt there were, especially among the witnesses from Rouen, a certain number of opportunists—men like Jean Marcel, a merchant of that town and a notorious "collaborator", whose sole purpose in volunteering to bear witness seems to have been to whetwash himself. But overall there is, in the depositions, both a general agreement in essentials and enough individual differences due to age, condition and personal character, to carry conviction.

To represent them at the trial Joan's family chose as advocate Pierre Maugier, and various procurators, the chief of these being Guillaume Prevost, councillor of the Exchequer. One reason for this was that the court was to move from place to place, so as to carry on its work in every place where important information about Joan was to be had; and obviously the family could not follow it about everywhere. The first session was held in Paris, at the bishopric, on November 17th, a solemn session attended by the three pontifical commissioners, the Inquisitor, and numerous prelates. The two clerks designated to keep the record, Denis Lecomte and François Ferrebouc, began their duties on this occasion.

From Paris the court moved to Rouen where everybody involved was required to appear between December 12th and 20th. As was usual in the case of Inquisition or Officiality causes, proclamations were made by means of publicly displayed notices, and by their being "cried" in the streets. It was during the most important of these sessions, December 12th, held in the great hall of the archiepiscopal palace, that Guillaume Manchon delivered over to the court all the documents which he still retained, including the famous nouta, the French Minute, of which it is possible that the MS. now preserved at Orleans may be a copy, as likewise the so-called "Urfé" MS. in the Bibliothèque Nationale. It was also in the course of this session that a promoter* was appointed—Master Simon Chapitault. Most of the witnesses who had already appeared in the preliminary enquiries were called, and in the course of these sessions, notably that of December 17th, which was almost wholly devoted to the examination of Guillaume Manchon, it was the Trial of Condemnation which was on trial and the flaws in it revealed. The fact that the twelve articles of accusation, the effective indictment, were never read to Joan, and the substitution of the cédule of abjuration for another, were what particularly impressed the court. And at the conclusion of this session Simon Chapitault was able to deliver an indictment (régulatoire) in which he declared that the Trial of Condemnation had been "vitiated" in both substance and form.

A series of particularly moving interrogatories was that which took place at Domremy and Vaucouleurs. The sessions began on January 28, 1456, in the presbytery of the little church at Domremy. As is still the custom of Officiality courts to-day, local worthies had been designated to compose the court, and given the list of questions to be asked. In this case the substitute pontifical commissioners were the dean of the church of Notre Dame of Vaucoulours, Master Reginald Clichercy; and a canon of Toul cathedral, Wautrin Thierry. But, of course, the promoter Simon Chapitault had come from Paris to be present. The sessions ended on February 11th after, in default of Baudricourt who was dead, Jean de Metz and Bertrand de Poulengy, the knights who had escorted Joan, had been heard. On February 16th sessions were resumed in Rouen and two inquiries were ordered, one at Orleans and the other in Paris where depositions had already been taken between January 10th and 15th; these included those of Thomas de Courcelles and of Cauchon's devoted friend Jean de Mailly, Bishop of Noyon.

In Orleans as in Domremy, popular feeling was manifest: numerous were the ordinary, the "little" people who passed before the commissioners between February 22nd and March 16th, 1456; and in their evidence is apparent that enthusiasm for the heroine which also marks the depositions, taken in Paris on May 12th, of great noblemen like Dunois and Alencçon.

One witness of the first importance, Jean d'Aulon, Joan's faithful intendant, would have been left out if the archbishop of Rheims had not written to ask him at least to send his deposition in writing. Jean d'Aulon had become seneschal of Beaucaire; rather than fetch him to Paris he was invited to say what he knew before the Lyon

* He fulfilled the functions of Public Prosecutor (Ministre public).
Officiality. His deposition was forwarded in French whereas all the others were translated into Latin by the clerks as they wrote. It was the last in date, May 20, 1456, and meanwhile hearings had been resumed in Rouen on May 10th to finish on the 14th.

On May 30th a new hearing opened, but this was simply a formality: contradictors—people who might wish to speak against the rehabilitation—were called upon to appear. None did; and on June 2nd the evidence collected in the course of the enquiries was declared officially accepted by the court. At last, on June 10th, after a final assignation, all the documents in the case were placed in the hands of the Inquisitor Jean Bréhal, who, having returned to Paris, drew up that over-all summary of the case which is known as the Recollectio. Point by point the charges brought against Joan twenty-five years before were refuted from the evidence in hand, by a detailed and careful comparison between the answers Joan had given in the first trial, and the material obtained during the enquiries connected with the new trial. The work was very thoroughly done and thereafter nothing was left of the heresy charge.

During the month of June the Commissioners devoted themselves to a study of all the documents and of the Recollectio. Once again, on the 24th of the month, notices were fixed to the doors of all the churches in Rouen calling upon objectors to the rehabilitation to come forward and say what they knew; but nobody came forward. On July 2nd, in solemn session, the promoter, Simon Chapitault, then Guillaume Prevostau on behalf of Joan’s family, appeared to implore the judges to pronounce, in the name of the Holy See, Joan’s rehabilitation.

On July 7, 1456, at nine o’clock in the morning, the three pontifical commissioners took their places in the great hall of the arch-episcopal palace of Rouen; with them were the Archbishop of Rheims, the Bishop of Paris, the Bishop of Coutances, and the Inquisitor Jean Bréhal. Prominent among the crowd in the body of the court, seated on the front bench, was the promoter Simon Chapitault; and, standing at the bar of the court, Jean d’Arc, who was called Petit-Jean and also Jean du Lys, beside him being his advocate Pierre Maugier and the procurator Guillaume Prevostau.

Among those present was one who had supported Joan in her last moments, Martin Ladvenu; but Isambart de la Pierre was not there, he had died.

A solemn ceremony; but, as has been pointed out, a wholly juridical one. After the customary preliminaries and formalities, the Archbishop of Rheims, acting as president of the court, read aloud the following document:

“In consideration of the request of the d’Arc family against the Bishop of Beauvais, the promoter of criminal proceedings, and the inquisitor of Rouen . . . in consideration of the informations . . . and juridical consultations . . . in consideration of the facts, in consideration of the defamatory (or dishonourable) articles . . . We, in session of our court and having God only before our eyes, say, pronounce, decree and declare that the said trial and sentence (of condemnation) being tainted with fraud (dolus malus), calumny, iniquity, contradiction and manifest errors of fact and of law, including the abjuration, execution and all their consequences, to have been and to be null, invalid, worthless, without effect and annihilated . . . We break and annul them and declare that they must be destroyed (lit. lacerated) . . . In consideration of Joan’s appeal to the Holy See . . . in consideration of the threats of torture . . . We proclaim that Joan did not contract any taint of infancy and that she shall be and is washed clean of such and, if need be, we wash her clean of such absolutely . . .”

One of the original copies of the articles of accusation was then symbolically torn-up (“lacerated”); the whole court and assembly then moved to the cemetery of Saint-Ouen where the “abjuration” had taken place, and the verdict just given was repeated. On the following day this was done yet again, this time at the Old Market, where there also took place a solemn preaching and the erection of a cross “in perpetual memory and that prayer for the salvation of her soul and those of the other dead be here offered up”.

The Rehabilitation of Joan of Arc was celebrated in many towns throughout France, among them being, needless to say, Orleans, where, on July 27th, celebrations were presided over by Jean Bréhal and Guillaume Bouillé. The municipality spread itself and gave them a grand banquet for which were purchased “ten pints and chopines of wine . . . twelve chickens, two rabbits, twelve pigeons, two leverets . . . etc.” And it is pleasant to imagine Isabelle Romée in the midst of that friendly crowd: long dishonoured by the taint of infancy which the enemy had succeeded in inflicting upon her, the true countenance of her daughter had at last been restored to her: she was free to die now. And tradition has it that she died in the little village of Sandillon, near Orleans, on November 28, 1458.
It has often been regretted that Joan, a girl full of life and sap, should be known to us only and paradoxically in lawyer's jargon. We confess that we do not share this regret. In a case which is so very out of the ordinary—for everything from herself to the least detail of her history is exceptional—it is well, on the contrary, that the documents which are our sources should be as strictly factual as possible; that is why it seems to us that even contemporary historians should give way to the records of the trials; and why we hope against hope that one day the first "trial"—her examination at Poitiers—will turn up. The dryness of juridical (orms and the detail of her history is exceptional—it is well, on the contrary, that chronicles should give way to the records of the trials; and why the documents which are our sources should be as strictly factual recorded on the pages of a register, each page authenticated by the notary's signature—all this is, for the historian and his reader, a sort of retrospective guarantee. No historian could possibly have the same measure of confidence in a chronicle—in which the facts are invariably seen through the deforming prism of the author's ideas, temperament and point of view—as he can have in a sworn affidavit.

And this point is brought out in all its importance in the actual scene of the Rehabilitation: it was Father Doncoeur who first drew attention to absence of feeling, the true legal dryness, of that ceremony. Not one act or word but was a juridical act or a juridical word. You may study the judgment in vain for a single term which even suggests praise. Certain commissioners were appointed to answer a question: Was Joan, or was she not, a heretic? They answer: No. And that is all. The verdict is negative: the Church confines itself to disavowing a judgment formerly handed down by an ecclesiastical court of judges who judged ill. Certain historians have tried to see in this rehabilitation scene the beginning of the Joan of Arc "legend", by which she is supposed to have been artificially aggrandized and prepared for the admiration of the mob. All this proves is that they never bothered to read the documents. Whereas, if one does go to the actual documents, being in the habit of hearing Joan made the subject of extravagant panegyric pronounced by politicians as well as prelates, one is curiously disappointed. One seeks for the moment of feeling and fails to discover it. Only at the very beginning of the proceedings do we find a moment of feeling in the record, on the day when Isabelle Romée made her petition in Notre-Dame; but that derived from the drama inherent in the old countrywoman's cry for justice, and had no place in the trial itself.

We thought it as well to report one by one the stages of Joan's rehabilitation because, dry though the reading must be, it is necessary to an understanding of the care and earnestness with which the business was conducted. Too often, as we have said, even historians have failed to recognize this. It is well worth while taking the trouble to realise that, taking account of the first royal enquiry set on foot to "learn the truth" about Joan's condemnation, the proceedings were spread over seven years, that they involved the setting up of a royal commission and an ecclesiastical court, that two popes took a hand in it, that one hundred and fifteen witnesses were called to give evidence, some of them as many as four times. A bogus trial on that scale is simply not conceivable.

We have seen how the court of rehabilitation heard evidence in most of the towns where Joan had lived, including the places where she had spent her childhood, those where her prowess were performed, and the places of her agony and death. The procedure on these occasions was exactly the same as for any other trial: there was a clerk who kept a minute of what was said and done as the evidence was heard, his notes were put into Latin, and the record of each session drawn up. Three copies of all these notes were re-copied into registers—three copies of the whole dossier in fact—each page bearing the signature of both the notaries present at all the hearings, Denis Lecomte and François Ferrebouc. These registers were enormous, for apart from the record of the trial itself which was held in 1455-56, comprising records of sessions, questions asked of witnesses and their depositions, the notaries also copied all procedural papers into these files, for example counsels' opinions from jurists and all the canonical enquiry conducted by Cardinal d'Estouteville in 1452. Some idea of the sheer bulk of the whole can be gathered from the fact that the two volumes of Quicherat's edition comprise 855 pages of small, close print; but he did not include all the counsels' opinions (consultations juridiques) and theological opinions which make another two fat volumes in Lanéry d'Arc's edition of 1889; and he also left out all Bréhal's work, the Summarium and the Recollectio, which were published in 1893 by Fathers Belon and Balme. To all this must be added the fact that the MSS. of the rehabilitation proceedings do not include the first, royal enquiry, nor the memorandum drawn up by
manipulate history. This is an inadmissible proceeding. The interpretation of events and personalities is a matter of personal conscience; but the facts, the historical facts, are a matter of documents, of proofs received and checked by the historical method; individual fancies have nothing whatever to do with the matter. And that is why we consider that some of the explanations offered must be set aside to start with; they are based on ignorance of the historical facts. The Burgundian chronicler who makes Joan a serving wench at an inn, was in error; it is proved that she was nothing of the sort. When, in the sixteenth century, Girard du Haillan makes her a prostitute, he was in error. And so are they in error who imagine that Joan was able to escape from the stake and reappear in the guise of the adventuress Claude des Armoises. As for the hypothesis of bastardy, it is proved that this is without foundation; moreover, one cannot help wondering how it is supposed to “explain” her career; for, after all, the fact of being a bastard does not necessarily enable one to win battles. By and large, it has been this desire to explain that has muddled the data and complicated the story. Yet that story is one of the best-established in history. The text of the two trials, and the public and private papers which confirm the conclusions from those texts, make Joan one of the best-documented people in history, one of those about whom we are really well-informed. And to reject a conclusion established by historical method is about as sensible as casting doubt on an algebraical formula: it cannot be done without arguments, that is to say without documents duly established and unquestionable.

But, we repeat, the question becomes one of distinguishing between the fact and its explanation. To establish the progression of factual events is the historian’s work; and one can no more improvise oneself as an historian than as a nuclear scientist. But as to the interpretation of the fact, once properly established, that is a personal matter and each of us, historian or not, is at liberty to draw his own conclusion.

Once this distinction has been made, it is much easier to understand why historians of every persuasion, clerical or anti-clerical, communist or monarchist, are in complete agreement as to the actual events of Joan’s history: those events have been recounted in the same way by Michelet, anti-clerical; by Quicherat, scholar and likewise anti-clerical; by the Catholic canon, P. H. Dunand; by Charles Peguy, socialist both before and after his conversion; and in our own time by Edith Thomas, communist; and by P. Donceeur, Jesuit. There is, in fact, one trait in common among all these writers: they are professional historians. And it would not even have occurred to any of them to deny the historical facts.

On the other hand, the very numerous works which, in our own time and in the past, have maintained the theory of bastardy, also have one trait in common: not one of their authors is an historian. And one cannot prevent oneself from finding their way of reading and understanding history somewhat suspect when one notices that all of them claim to find their case on “new” or “newly discovered” documents, and that the said documents turn out to be invariably and eternally the same old ones. The marriage contract of Robert des Armoises, for example; or, worse if anything, “documents” which turn out to be non-existent, like the one which lists the four hundred witches to be burned at the time of Joan’s execution.

History has nothing in common with such fancies, and Joan of Arc’s history less than nothing. How very much we prefer to these clumsy fumblings the remark made by Robert Bresson, the first French film-producer to devote a film to the history of Joan of Arc: asked whether his work would offer an “explanation” of the heroine, he replied: “One does not explain greatness, one tries to attune oneself to it.” One might easily pour out torrents of ink in trying to explain Joan, futilely, and without having understood in the least what kind of person she was. Quite otherwise has been the attitude of the people of France since the fifteenth century: the people, feeling that confronted with Joan, the wisest plan was to admire her, in admiring have understood her. They canonised Joan and made her their heroine, while Church and State were taking five hundred years to reach the same conclusion.

It remains true that, for us, Joan is above all the saint of reconciliation—the one whom, whatever be our personal convictions, we admire and love because, over-riding all partisan points of view, each one of us can find in himself a reason to love her.