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PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF
Joan of Arc
MARK TWAIN

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Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc
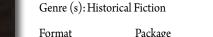### *Mark Twain (1835 - 1910)*

Read by: John Greenman	Length:	13 hours and 38 minutes
Language: English	Style:	Solo
Genre (s): Historical Fiction		

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Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc, by the Sieur Louis de Conte, published in 1896, is Mark Twain's last novel, his most unusual novel, and, in his opinion, his best novel. It recounts the life of Joan of Arc in the guise of a purported translation by one "Jean Francis Alden" of the memoirs of Louis de Conte, a fictionalized version of her page. Twain had an enduring fascination with Joan of Arc dating from the 1850's and spent considerable time on research, much of it during his time in France. He modeled the physical appearance of Joan of Arc on his late daughter Susy Clemens as he remembered her at age 17.

The book is structured in three parts: Book One treats Joan of Arc's youth in Donremy; Book Two recounts her time as commander of the army of the French King Charles VII; Book Three covers her imprisonment and trial in Rouen. The novel was serialized anonymously in Harper's Magazine starting in April, 1895, so that readers would take it seriously, but his authorship soon became known. It was generally well received upon publication. Some critics commented that Twain's tone and style were completely different in this work. Twain's typical flippant, sardonic mocking spirit gave way to a dignified sincerity and pathos; laughter was replaced by tears. It presents something of a conundrum: a serious treatment of the life of a French Catholic martyr by a man who is an anti- Catholic non-believer who dislikes the French. Perhaps that's why he liked it so well.

Mark Twain is the pen name of Samuel Langhorne Clemens (November 30, 1835 – April 21, 1910), an American novelist, essayist, and lecturer noted for his humor and biting satire. Born in Florida, Missouri to a poor family, his father failed in business repeatedly and died of pneumonia when Sam was eleven. He went to work as an apprentice typesetter and then for brother Orion's Hannibal Journal. He worked as a journeyman printer in the east and started writing humorous articles and sketches to fill space. He returned to Missouri and worked as riverboat pilot until the Civil War broke out in 1861. He avoided service in the Confederate Army by journeying to Nevada with his brother Orion, then secretary to the territorial governor. After a failed attempt to strike it rich as a miner he wrote for the paper in Virginia City, where he adopted the pen name Mark Twain. He began developed a specialty as a traveling correspondent, posting pieces from Hawaii for the Sacramento Union and then a journal from a six month excursion to Europe and the Holy Land that formed his first book in 1869, *The Innocents Abroad*, considered the most popular travel book ever written. He followed with *Roughing It* in 1872, a portrait of life on the American frontier, and The Gilded Age in that same year, a satirical treatise on the follies and foibles of the emerging elite in American culture.

Twain was happily married Olivia Langdon in 1870 and settled first in Buffalo and then Hartford. In spite of his success with *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), he experienced substantial financial losses as an entrepreneur with the Paige typesetting machine and then a venture established to publish the memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant. He closed shop in Connecticut and embarked on a long tour of lecturing and writing abroad, which enabled him to retire his debts and return a conquering hero in 1900. Twain was born after a visit by Halley's Comet in 1835 and predicted he would "go out with it, too". True to his word, he died the day after its return in 1910.