



WOMEN WARRIORS.

BY FRANCIS GRIBBLE.

Haarlem only, but in many other cities of the Netherlands; but, from the point of view of the searcher after romance, she will not bear comparison with Jeanne Hachette, the valiant

WHETHER the woman warrior can properly be held up as an example for the imitation of her sex may be a question open to debate. What is certain is that she has seldom, if ever, shown herself unfeminine in the sense of being unattractive to man, or indifferent to his affectionate regard. The alleged Maid of Orleans may or may not be an exception to the rule; for the extent to which her life realised the ideal of maidenhood has been the subject of frequent and acrimonious argument. But the general principle remains. Almost all the women warriors about whom history is eloquent were married; several of them were married more than once; a goodly proportion of them succeeded in being the heroines of exceedingly romantic stories; and the student of their careers is constantly rewarded by the discovery of distinctively feminine traits.

The famous Kenau Hasselaar, the woman warrior of Holland, in spite of the statuesque beauty attributed to her by contemporary prints, does not, perhaps, cut such a romantic figure as some of the others. Holland is not the most romantic of the nations, and Kenau Hasselaar was a widow of unimpeachable respectability, who had attained to the ripe age of forty-seven before she became a warrior. Armed with a pike, and commanding a regiment of Amazons, she did her duty, and more than her duty, at the siege of Haarlem. Statues to her memory salute the eye, not at



KENAU HASSELAAR.

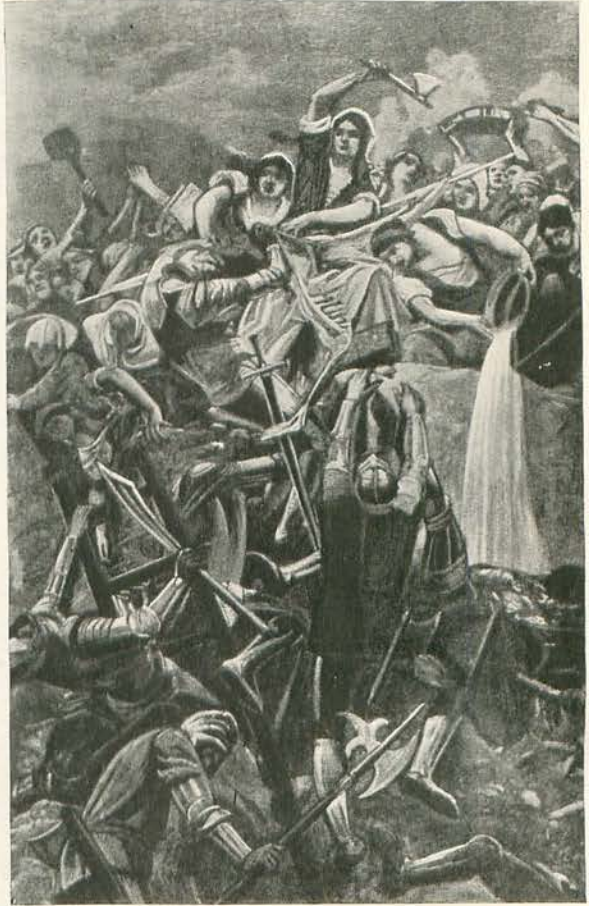
defender of Beauvais, who, after the notorious Jeanne d'Arc, holds the foremost place of any woman warrior in the hearts of Frenchmen.

Hardly any element of romance, and hardly any womanly trait is wanting, in this story of Jeanne Hachette. She flourished, as all the world knows, in the reign of Louis XI, who had trouble with that "first-class fighting man" Duke Charles the Bold of Burgundy. When the Duke marched up unexpectedly to besiege Beauvais, Jeanne was out in one of the suburbs, engaged in the thoroughly womanly occupation of getting married. A dance to celebrate her nuptials was actually proceeding in the garden of the village inn when the rude Burgundians arrived. They made a point of capturing her, because she was so beautiful, while the bridegroom and the other guests were permitted to get back to the town. During the short period of her detention the Burgundian officers made love to her; and there is no saying what might not have happened if her lover, Colin Pilon, had not sallied forth at dead of night and rescued her.

Exhilarated by this adventure, the blushing bride became at once a woman warrior. When the Burgundians came up, the next morning and tried to take the town by storm, they found her in the

midst of the male soldiers, waiting

for them on the wall. Provided with no better weapon than a hatchet, she knocked a Burgundian standard-bearer on the head and took his banner from him. Then the touch of true womanliness comes into the story. Instead of continuing to fight, she left that task to the soldiers, while she carried the banner round the town and showed it to all the other women of Beauvais. It was a very feminine



JEANNE HACHETTE AT THE BATTLE OF BEAUVAIS.



thing to do; and one's heart goes out to Jeanne Hachette for doing it. And one also rejoices to learn that after the battle was over, and the Burgundians were driven back, she and the other women warriors of Beauvais had their reward. Jeanne, "in consideration of her good and virtuous resistance" was made "free, quit, and exempt" of the payment of all kinds of taxes; and a special decree of Louis XI. enacted that all the women who had distinguished themselves should thenceforward take precedence of their husbands. It is probably the only instance on record of an Order in Council directing the grey mare to be the better horse.

The later days of Jeanne Hachette are veiled in mystery. It is known that her first husband was killed at the siege of Nancy, and that she married a second, one Jehan Fourquet, almost immediately afterwards, and that one of her descendants was still drawing a pension from the government in the reign of Charles X. But though the house where she was born is pointed



STANDARD CAPTURED BY JEANNE HACHETTE.

out to strangers, and though the banner which she captured is still preserved at Beauvais, the date of her death is uncertain, and no incident of her life after her second marriage has been recorded.

Passing from the siege of Beauvais to the siege of Saragossa, we find another woman warrior distinguishing herself. The name of

resources he successfully withstood the French until British movements in their rear obliged them to retire. As for the performances of the woman warrior whom the siege produced, that is, perhaps, best told in the words of Dr. Vaughan, Radcliffe Travelling Fellow of the University of Oxford, who visited Saragossa shortly after the siege and published a thirty-



THE MAID OF SARAGOSSA.

the Maid of Saragossa is, thanks to Sir David Wilkie's famous picture, familiar to every one; the story of her exploit, and the circumstances of the siege itself are perhaps less widely known. The incident is chiefly memorable, from a military point of view, as furnishing one of those

two page pamphlet on the subject in 1809. He writes:—

“The sand-bag battery before the gate of the Portillo was gallantly defended by the Aragonese. It was several times destroyed, and as often reconstructed under the fire of the

enemy ; the carnage in this battery throughout the day was truly terrible. It was here that an act of heroism was performed by a female to which history scarcely affords a parallel. Augustina Zaragoza, about twenty-two years of age, a handsome woman of the lower class of the people, whilst performing her duty of carrying refreshments to the gates, arrived at the battery of the Portillo at the very moment when the French fire had absolutely destroyed every person that was stationed in it. The citizens and soldiers for the moment hesitated to re-man the guns ; Augustina rushed forward over the wounded and slain, snatched a match from the hand of a dead artilleryman, and fired off a twenty-six pounder, then, jumping upon the gun, made a solemn vow never to quit it alive during the siege ; and having stimulated her fellow-citizens by this daring intrepidity to fresh exertions, they instantly rushed into the battery, and again opened a tremendous fire upon the enemy. When the writer of these papers saw this heroine at Zaragoza, she had a small shield of honour embroidered upon the sleeve of her gown, with 'Zaragoza' inscribed upon it, and was receiving a pension from the government and the daily pay of an artilleryman."

The feminine touch here is to be found, perhaps, in the stopping to register a

solemn vow at a moment when it was more important to get the cannon loaded and fired as quickly as possible ; but Augustina finished her vow and got back to business so quickly that it would be grossly unfair to press the point.

In modern times the majority of women warriors have been *cantinières* of the French army. One reads in the books consecrated to such subjects how they have rescued wounded soldiers, how they have repulsed cavalry, how they have received the honorary rank of corporal or sergeant, and also how they have married and been more precious than rubies to their husbands. But none of these heroines, not even Thérèse Jourdan, who was attached to the army for seventy-nine years, excites our

admiration quite so much as does brave Mademoiselle Juliette Dodu, who, in the Franco-Prussian struggle, risked her life in order to give information to her country's generals.

Mademoiselle Dodu was a Creole, born at Réunion in 1850. In 1870 she was employed in the telegraph office at Pithiviers. The Prussians came there, and, of course, seized the wires and used them for their own purposes, sending Mademoiselle Dodu to her room, so as to have her out of the way. It happened, however, though they did not know it, that the wire passed through the room ; and it occurred to Mademoiselle Dodu that she might as well tap the wire and find out what the Prussians were doing. Taking down an important message in this way, she conveyed it to the sub-prefect, who had it translated into French and despatched to the French general in time to

save his army corps.

It was a daring exploit, and Mademoiselle Dodu nearly paid the penalty of it with her life. Tempted by the prospect of Prussian gold, a servant-girl denounced her. She was arrested, tried by court-martial, and sentenced to be shot ; but at the last moment Prince Frederick Charles intervened and pardoned her, and even went so far as to



JULIETTE DODU.

congratulate her on her courage and patriotism. Whether a man who had done the same thing under the same circumstances would have been pardoned and congratulated on his courage and patriotism may be doubted ; but the age of chivalry is not dead, and, in spite of the leading case of Jeanne d'Arc, men have nearly always found it difficult to be very hard upon a woman warrior, or to insist upon her playing the game in strict accordance with the rules.

But one must pass from the women warriors who have occupied subordinate positions and only distinguished themselves by happy accident, to those who have figured as leaders, and sought the glory of the general officer rather than that of the private of the line,

Jeanne d'Arc, unless one goes back to Boadicea and Semiramis, may be taken as the parent of these; but her career is too well known to be handled here. The principal question that arises is, whether the Marquise de La Rochejacquelein can properly be included among her heirs, or whether it is necessary to pass straight on to that more marvellous woman, Marie Caroline Louise de Bourbon, Duchesse de Berry.

Let it be granted, at any rate, that Marie Louise Victoire de Donnissan, who first married M. de Lescure, and afterwards Louis du Verger de La Rochejacquelein, was a woman warrior whose unimpeachable courage interfered in no way with her romantic disposition. She drove away from Paris amid cries of "*Ce sont des aristocrates,—à la lanterne!*" She got to Vendée, where the temper of the country had just been typified by the case of a peasant who had slain a *gendarme* with a pitchfork, shouting at him, "*Rendez-moi mon Dieu!*" When her first husband put himself at the head of the revolt, she bravely acted as his aide-de-camp; when the battles were proceeding, she knelt near at hand and prayed Heaven to grant the victory to his arms; when M. de Lescure was wounded, she nursed him in the Château de La Boulaye, and only left his side when he insisted that she should ride round the neighbouring parishes, sound the tocsin, and harangue the peasants. And, even in the



THE DUCHESS OF BERRY.

field, amid the hardships and exertions of campaigning, she still remained so much a woman that she feared a *fausse couche* as the consequence of these mental agonies and physical fatigues. Nor is the account, which she gives in her memoirs, of her interview with the surgeon the confession of any but a thoroughly womanly woman.

"Never shall I forget that man, whose name I did not know, and who did not know me. He was young, nearly six feet high, and had four pistols and a large sword in his belt. I had lost my wits, and I told him to be careful, as I was afraid of being bled. 'Ah! well, I'm not afraid,' he answered; 'I've killed more than three hundred men in the war, and this very morning I cut a *gendarme's* throat, so that I'm not afraid of bleeding a woman.' Without answering I stretched out my arm to him."

In spite of her panic, and in spite of her husband's death, Madame de Lescure continued to follow the Vendéen army until the rout of Savenay. In order to avoid arrest she had to disguise herself as a shepherd, but she ultimately got to the Château de Drémeuf, where she was delivered of twins. Later, after the amnesty, she married M. de La Rochejacquelein, and, living in retirement, wrote her fascinating memoirs. She did not die until 1857.

Beyond question, however, the most fascinating



MADAME ROCHEJACQUELIN.

of all the many fascinating lady adventurers is Caroline Ferdinande Louise de Bourbon, Duchesse de Berry, whose mad escapade of the year 1832 is now so nearly forgotten that it is not an unknown thing for fairly intelligent people to confuse her with Madame Dubarry, than whom she was so much greater and more glorious.

The widow of the heir to the throne of France, a young woman remarkable alike for her beauty and her high spirits, the Duchesse de Berry, had accompanied Charles X. in that journey into exile which was to end in destitution, religious mania, and the hair shirt of the eremite. But, though she went with him to Holyrood, she was not satisfied to stay there. The spirit of adventure stirred within her. Since Charles X. had abdicated at Rambouillet, her son Henry V. was the rightful heir to the throne of France, and she herself was the rightful regent. And, since she could not possibly establish her boy on the throne by force of argument, there was nothing for it but to go to France and foment the necessary insurrection. So she travelled across the Continent, took ship from Italy, and landed near Marseilles, with two attendants, to defy the armies and overthrow the government of Louis Philippe.

It is impossible to follow the history of this mad escapade in detail, or to do more than single out the incidents which, in the midst of hardships and hazards, bring out the true womanliness of the heroine. Here is one such incident.

The Duchesse was approaching Montpellier and she wanted a passport so that she might journey safely to La Vendée, where the insurrection was to be started. So she dismissed her attendants and walked boldly into the Château de Bonrecueil, where the Mayor of the Commune lived, and asked for him.

"Sir," she said, "you are a Republican, I know, but no political opinions can be applied to a proscribed fugitive. I am the Duchesse de Berry, and I come to ask you for an asylum."

"My house is at your service, madam."

"Your office enables you to provide me with a passport, and I have depended on your getting one for me."

"I will procure you one."

"I must to-morrow proceed to the neighbourhood of Montpellier; will you afford me the means of doing so?"

"I will myself conduct you thither."

"Now, sir," continued the Duchesse, holding out her hand to him, "order a bed to be got ready for me, and you shall see that the

Duchesse de Berry can sleep soundly, even under the roof of a Republican."

This, certainly, was an excellent beginning. The story of it reads more like romance than history; and the nearest historical parallel to it is, perhaps, the collapse of the walls of Jericho in response to the blast of a trumpet. A male warrior, we may be sure, would never have ventured upon an act of such desperate audacity; and from the point of the dramatic fitness of things it is a thousand pities that an adventure so gallantly inaugurated should not have ended in a glorious success.

For, truth to tell, the expedition was a lamentable failure. The Duchesse did, indeed, raise the Vendéen peasantry, but Louis Philippe promptly sent his soldiers after them. For a few months the Chouans conducted a campaign which principally consisted of strategic movements to the rear. The Duchesse ultimately took refuge in a house at Nantes, where she was hidden in a secret retreat behind the chimney. She was quite safe there until the gendarmes, who were searching for her, happened to light the fire. The heat scorched the fugitive, and the smoke nearly suffocated her. She endured the discomfort as long as she could, but at last she had no alternative but to step out and surrender. She was arrested and locked up in the Château de Blaye.

The climax of the story, however, is still to come. No sooner was the Duchesse de Berry safely under lock and key than certain grave suspicions began to spring up in the minds of her gaolers. It was evident to them—it became every day more evident—that their prisoner was about to be confined. Seeing that she was a widow, and that a dozen years or so had passed since her husband's death, the scandal of the situation was obvious; and the reigning dynasty was resolved to make the most of it. A long official correspondence was exchanged upon the subject, and every arrangement was made for obliging the Duchesse to confess her shame. But, to the surprise of every one, there was no shame to confess. While engaged in her arduous preparations for raising the banner of revolt in France this dashing woman warrior had, nevertheless, found leisure to contract a secret marriage, of a morganatic character, with Count Hector Lucchesi-Palli, an Italian nobleman, descended from one of the most ancient and honourable families of Sicily. This child was the offspring of that union—a very proper and charming climax to the career of the most dashing and delightful of all the women warriors.