

Heroines.

BY DOUGLAS J. MURDOCK.



ONE of the most interesting of all the Jubilee year exhibits was the Women's Roll of Honour, compiled by Mr. F. Donald Mackenzie, of 2, Savile Row, W. This gentleman, in conjunction with the various philanthropic bodies who grant medals and other awards for life-saving, devoted a great deal of time to the compilation of the Roll; and as the latter contained the names of no fewer than 518 heroines of the Victorian Era, together with a brief outline of each case, it will be seen that Mr. Mackenzie's self-imposed task was no light undertaking.

We propose, in the following pages, to deal with a few typical cases—just enough to show that members of the so-called weaker sex are capable of heroic deeds at least as remarkable as any performed by even the bravest and strongest men.

Our first portrait, then, is that of Mrs. Dorothy D. Pumphrey, who, with the assistance of a boy, saved a little girl of five, named Lilly Coleman, who had fallen down a deep well at Crowborough, Sussex.

The case is a peculiar one. At four o'clock in the afternoon of the 24th of May, 1890, the child, Lilly Coleman, was playing near a well in her mother's yard when she accidentally fell in—emitting, however, a piercing scream before disappearing into the hole. The mother and two other women hastened out to the brink of the pit, and the former's agony may well be imagined when she realized what had happened.

With hardly a moment's delay, Mrs. Pumphrey, one of the two women present, volunteered to go down the well in the bucket. Here it should be mentioned that Mrs. Pumphrey was a particularly nervous, delicate, and shy little woman, whom no one would suspect of latent heroism. Resolutely, however, she stepped into the

crazy bucket and was lowered into the abyss. At between thirty and forty feet the bucket touched the surface of the water. The heroic woman then leaned out of the bucket and grasped the half-drowned child, but no sooner had she done this, than the bucket overturned, leaving her hanging from the chain clutching her precious burden. An awful situation, truly. At length a boy of fifteen was let down by a rope, and he relieved Mrs. Pumphrey of hapless Lilly Coleman. Our heroine then placed one foot in the bucket again, and signalled that she was ready to ascend. But many minutes in that dreadful pit, inhaling its noxious gases, had been too

much for the fragile woman. When the bucket was half-way to the surface, she suddenly fainted. The bucket crashed heavily sideways, Mrs. Pumphrey's right foot caught in the chain, and she fell backwards into the water, which she entered head first. The shock of immersion in the cold water revived her in a most extraordinary way, however, and once more she was able to clamber into the treacherous bucket. She was then drawn to the surface in a very exhausted state.

Like a true heroine Mrs. Pumphrey shrank from publicity, and it was only the pertinacity of eye-witnesses which at length secured for her the Bronze Medal of the Royal Humane Society.

A very different story is that of the services rendered in the cause of humanity by Lady Pigot, during the Franco-Prussian War. She was awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honour by the French Government, and the Bronze Cross by the Belgian Government.

Lady Pigot started with about £400 worth of food, etc., towards the end of October, 1870, to try to bring help to the starving French. She entered Metz with the Prussian troops, and soon got to work under a French doctor, in the capacity of nurse to



MRS. DOROTHY D. PUMPHREY.
From a Photo. by Stuart Bros., Brompton Road.



LADY PIGOT.
From a Photo. by Bassano.

more than eighty wounded men. The work was indescribably laborious. About forty men had to have their wounds dressed as they lay on the bare ground. There was no one to help this heroic lady—not even to fetch clean water. At least twenty times every morning Lady Pigot had to go out across the deep snow to pump and fetch clean water. She visited on behalf of French and English societies every one of the forty-eight ambulances in Metz, including the typhoid and small-pox wards. She only left the great fortress when a scratch on her finger began to develop symptoms of blood-poisoning, and the doctors commanded her to leave at once, in order to save her arm.

Soon, however, she returned to work again, with money, food, and all requisites. Whilst following the Army of the North, she was arrested as a spy by the French, solely because she happened to speak German. On her release she established a hospital in a deserted factory, and started with eighteen frightful cases. This marvellous woman was literally the slave of these poor wretches, assisting at amputations and all minor operations. At the bombardment of Thionville she was nearly shot by the French sentinels, who kept firing incessantly at her companions, two German officers. Another time she fell in with a whole park of German artillery, whose

deafening company she was compelled to keep for miles; with the alternative of passing the whole of a November night in an open carriage. Lady Pigot is still alive.

One of the most interesting and peculiar cases in the annals of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in England is that of Miss Julia Hatcher (now Mrs. Curtis), who was awarded a Bronze Medal, "In recognition of her gallant and devoted conduct, on September 25th, 1883, in rescuing, under circumstances of great difficulty and danger, a boy who had been gored and tossed several times by an infuriated bull."

The Rev. H. J. C. Knight, rector of Marnhull, in Dorset, was good enough to procure Mrs. Curtis's own signed account of the occurrence. It seems that she lived at Hayes Cottage, Moorside, one of two lonely cottages in a field, which lies off the main road running to Blandford. On the day of the occurrence there was no one else in the house except Julia's mother, who was too infirm to work. The girl herself was busily engaged in making gloves, when she heard awful screams outside from a boy whom she knew had just gone milking. She rushed to the door, and was horrified to behold a huge stock bull actually tossing the boy, James Lodder, who was about fourteen



MISS JULIA HATCHER (NOW MRS. CURTIS).
From a Photo. by Adam Gosney, Sherborne.

or fifteen years old. The bull belonged to Mr. Thos. Rossiter, a much-respected yeoman farmer of the district.

This terrible scene was taking place quite close to the cottage. The bull attacked the prostrate boy time after time, lifting him on its murderous horns and hurling him backwards many yards. Without a moment's hesitation Miss Hatcher dashed out to meet the maddened animal, stooping as she went to pick up an apronful of stones from the rough path that led from the main road to the cottage. The young woman's presence of mind was quite wonderful. She remembered that bulls close their eyes when stoned, and she commenced a vigorous onslaught on that particular specimen.

Much of the precious ammunition went wide of the mark, but the heroic girl kept advancing steadily until she couldn't very well avoid hitting the bull. The infuriated beast charged several times, but was met with a sustained fusillade which, literally, "gave him pause." He stopped, thought over things, and then began to retire, his retreat being hastened by an extra volley from the indefatigable Julia. In this way the bull was driven into another field, where some heifers engaged his attention.

Miss Hatcher then picked up the boy, Lodder. He was seriously injured and quite unable to walk; his clothes, too, were torn to rags. Alone and unaided, the girl got him into her mother's cottage, and after roughly dressing his wounds, she went and informed the lad's mother of what had taken place. Then came the reaction, and Miss Hatcher was overcome with nervousness and exhaustion. For some time after she suffered from acute insomnia. This humble heroine does not even know how

the application for the medal was made. Both Miss Hatcher herself and the lad she saved are now married; "and," adds the rector, "one of Julia Curtis's greatest pleasures in life is to see him when he comes into the village."

The next case to be dealt with is that of Miss Alice White, a pupil teacher of Shrewsbury, who was only sixteen years of age when she performed the following splendid act of heroism.

We gather, from a careful perusal of the many documents, letters, and signed statements about the case, that at 12.45 p.m. on January 9th, 1895, several of the girls of St. Mary's Board School, Shrewsbury, were sliding on the canal, near the factory bridge. One little girl of twelve, named Hannah Merrifield, shot away from her companions into the middle of the canal, where, the water being very deep, the ice was thin. Suddenly the ice "starred" in all directions, and with a loud cry for help, poor little Hannah disappeared into 14ft. of water.

Miss White was walking on the towing-path, but one glance revealed everything to her, and her mind was made up. Without waiting to divest herself of a single article of clothing, she slid down on to the treacherous ice and glided towards the big hole, heedless of the horrified protests of those on the path.

The drowning girl had by this time reappeared on the surface. When Miss White felt that she could get no nearer, she lay prostrate on the rotten ice, so as to distribute her own weight. Then, with one hand, she seized the struggling child. Next moment the ice gave way in all directions, and Miss White herself was plunged into the cold, foul water. Then followed a truly magnificent struggle. Disregarding the



MISS ALICE WHITE.

From a Photo. by Stanley Hurst, Shrewsbury.

excited cries of the spectators, who urged Miss White to abandon the little girl and save herself, the heroic young lady turned herself round towards the bank and began to fight her way through the ice. She would break off a big sheet, swim with her charge to the next edge, break that, and so on. This extraordinary struggle went on until at length, bleeding and bruised, the heroic girl reached the bank with little Hannah, and was lifted out in a state of pitiable exhaustion. This was Miss White's second successful attempt at saving life.

A portrait of Mrs. William M. Mellor, of Langdale, Claughton, near Birkenhead, is next reproduced. On April 13th, 1875, Mrs. Mellor received the Silver Medal and Certificate of the Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society. This was the first time in the history of the society that it had the privilege of conferring this honour upon a lady.

We are indebted for an outline of the case to Miss J. E. Mellor, of 16, Devonshire Place, Claughton. Mrs. Mellor (who died in 1894) was a woman of quite extraordinary nobleness of character, and was beloved far and near for her amiability and generosity to the poor.

One morning she was driving in the Oxted Road, Birkenhead, and on turning a bend of the road she suddenly beheld an appalling spectacle. A little girl—a poor, dirty little street Arab—was being worried in a horrible manner by a big retriever dog, which foamed at the mouth and manifested other symptoms of rabies. Close by stood an elderly woman, who fairly writhed in mental agony, but did nothing to save the child. As the carriage rapidly approached the scene, Mrs. Mellor leaned out and cried to the woman, "Suck the wounds! Suck the wounds!" The woman, however, seemed fairly stupefied, and could do nothing but wring her hands and scream in helpless despair.

Quick as thought Mrs. Mellor leaped from her carriage, and dashed up to the child, whose terribly bitten and gory hands she seized and commenced to suck with extraordinary vehemence, so as to extract the

virus without delay. This done, she ran back to the carriage with the wailing child, and drove off without a moment's loss to the nearest chemist's shop, where she herself superintended the cauterization. The woman who stood by turned out to be the girl's grandmother.

"My mother," writes Miss Mellor, "always had a horror of dogs, which, of course, makes her heroism all the greater, since she had to pass close to the mad retriever to get at the child. Strange to say, too, when my mother was a little girl the story that impressed her most was the one telling how Queen Eleanor sucked the poison from the King's arm.

"The day of my mother's funeral, a neat young woman, dressed all in black, came to our house with a wreath, on which was written, 'In grateful remembrance of an act of heroism performed nearly twenty years ago.'" A pretty ending to a beautiful story.

It only remains to be said that all through her life Mrs. Mellor had a nervous horror of publicity and self-advertisement.

Miss Julia Dignam, our next heroine, was presented with her Silver Medal at Marlborough House, and by the Prince of Wales himself, as Grand Prior of the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England.

Miss Dignam lives at St. Doolaghs, Balgriffin, Dublin, and her act of heroism consisted in attempting the rescue of John Sharkey from a burning lime-kiln, into which he had fallen, on the 9th of October, 1890. John, it seems, was suddenly overcome by the gas issuing from the kiln. When the alarm was raised, Julia Dignam, the daughter of a labourer, who chanced to be near the spot, jumped down into the kiln without the least hesitation, although she knew perfectly well the awful risk she herself ran of being overcome by the fumes.

She found the lad lying unconscious at the bottom of the kiln. Absolutely unaided, the heroic girl carried her heavy burden up out of the kiln, but life was extinct, and she herself was in a deplorable state of exhaustion.

At the inquest on the deceased lad, both



MRS. W. M. MELLOR.
From a Painting.

coroner and jury passed a high eulogium on the brave act of this humble girl, whose heroism was also testified by other independent witnesses.

The next case to be dealt with is that of Miss Helen Blyth, now Mrs. Hannah, who was awarded the Silver Medal of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution for helping to save, "by means of her own clothes-line, and at great risk, the crew of four men of the schooner *Burns and Bessie*, of Barrow, which had stranded under the Point of Ayre Lighthouse, Isle of Man, during a strong easterly gale and a very heavy sea, on the 11th of March, 1888."

We are indebted to Mr. Charles Dibdin, the courteous secretary of the Lifeboat Institution, for the loan of the papers connected with this case. Miss Blyth was the daughter of the head keeper of the lighthouse, who was away ill at the time of the rescue. It seems that the schooner *Burns and Bessie*, 86 tons, left Port Glasgow on Saturday, March 10th, with a cargo of coals for Duddon Pier. Next morning came the terrific gale, and when the vessel was three miles off Point of Ayre a tremendous sea struck her on the port bilge, throwing her on her beam ends and washing away the deck-house and boat.

The lighthouse-keepers noticed the incident, and got ready to render what assistance they could. Half an hour later the schooner stranded on one of those terribly steep and dangerous gravel ledges peculiar to that part of the Manx

coast. It was found utterly impossible to throw a line against the wind, so the crew had to jump into the raging sea one by one,

when they were met by their salvors, who were up to their necks in the water, and in imminent danger of their own lives. Often they were washed off their feet, and far beyond their depth. The lives of all virtually depended on sturdy Helen Blyth, who had hold of the shore-end of the line. The force of the gale was terrific, and it blew sleet into the faces of the rescuers with blinding force. The sea too was the heaviest known during thirteen years. The rescue of the captain was the most exciting of all. He was the last to leave the ship.

So benumbed with cold was he, that when he jumped overboard and the running bowline was thrown to him by Miss Blyth, he was unable to pass it round his body. As he jumped he was struck on the head by a falling spar. He

must certainly have perished had not the lighthouse-keeper's heroic daughter dashed into the breakers, passed the line about his neck, and then dragged him ashore insensible and half strangled. Miss Blyth was nearly lost several times owing to the tremendous force of the backwash. The rescued men were taken into the lighthouse, put to bed between warm blankets, and tenderly nursed by Miss Blyth and Mrs. Wallace, the wife of the assistant lighthouse-keeper, who also received a medal.

A Silver Medal was awarded to Miss Annie Pearson by the Royal Society for the Pro-



MISS JULIA DIGNAM.
From a Photograph.



MISS HELEN BLYTH (MRS. HANNAH).
From a Photo. by Mowll & Morrison, Liverpool.



MISS ANNIE PEARSON.
From a Photograph.

tection of Life from Fire. Miss Pearson was employed as mantle saleswoman by Mr. Thomas Mellor, of 19, King Street, Huddersfield. About ten o'clock on the night of November 21st, 1896, a terrible fire broke out in the shop, which not only resulted in the utter destruction of the premises and stock, but also in the death of one assistant and the serious injury of another.

The origin of the fire was clear enough. One of the apprentices went into a big window to draw down the blinds before closing, and he accidentally moved a group of lighted gas-burners under a quantity of muslin that hung in the window.

Soon the whole place was a blazing furnace. Miss Pearson was in the show-rooms above, with her colleagues, covering up the goods, before leaving for the night. Hearing the

uproar below she ran downstairs into the street, and was then surprised to notice that the proprietor and most of the male and female assistants remained in the various departments upstairs, evidently ignorant of the awful peril they ran.

By this time the premises were fairly enveloped in flames, but Miss Pearson most heroically dashed back into the burning building and fought her way upstairs through the fire and smoke. Reaching the first floor she gave the warning to all she saw there, and she then actually ascended to the upper floors, though she was well aware that every moment rendered her own escape less probable.

Miss Pearson's heroic act resulted in the escape of all except Miss Annie Wells, the principal millinery saleswoman, whose charred remains were found on the second floor. Miss S. Jackson, another saleswoman, was shockingly burned, but did ultimately recover.

Miss Pearson was one of the last to leave the burning building, and indeed her escape was quite miraculous, considering the fierceness and rapidity of the flames. When she first left the premises and gained the street she stood in safety, and yet she deliberately went back and entered every department in the place, warning all she met and directing them as to the readiest means of escape.

A portrait of Miss Kate Verity next appears.

She was awarded the Bronze Medal of the Royal Humane Society for the rescue of a little boy named Harold Harker, aged 4½ years, under circumstances of exceptional gallantry.

About 4 p.m. on Sunday, July 28th, 1895, little Harker and another boy were playing on the banks of the River Wharfe, at Linton Falls, near Skipton, in Yorkshire. It should be said here that the appearance of the river at the time was simply frightful; it was swollen to twice its normal size with recent rains, and it raced along with awful rapidity and a noise like deep thunder. Into this stately torrent



MISS KATE VERITY.
From a Photograph.

fell the boy Harker, and in a moment he was swept into the middle and then down the river with great swiftness towards the terrible Linton Falls. The screams of his companion attracted the attention of Miss Verity, who was reading in her room in the mill close by. Her quickness of action and readiness of resource were alike amazing. In a few moments, she was out and across the bridge above the falls.

Then commenced an exciting race down the river after the drowning boy, who had by this time been carried over a hundred yards. Miss Verity came level with him not 30ft. above the falls, over which the swollen river tumbled with a deafening roar on to the huge sharp rocks below. The river here is deep as well as swift, but Miss Verity dashed headlong into it, first calculating where she would meet the boy. Then came a terrible struggle. As the girl threw the child's head over her shoulders, both were swept onwards towards the falls with almost irresistible force. It was now only a question of a few moments. Slowly Miss Verity fought her way to the side, often crashing heavily against a rock. At length she got near enough to be dragged from the raging river, bleeding and almost insensible, but still clutching little Harker with one arm.

The judgment displayed by this seventeen-year-old girl was marvellous. Had she leaped into the river a little sooner, the child would have been carried over the falls, and dashed to pieces on the rocks below. Among those who witnessed the rescue (and did nothing) were several trippers from Bradford, who came solely to see the River Wharfe in flood and listen to the roar of the falls.

The case of Miss Mary Elizabeth Lester follows next. She was awarded the Silver Medal of the Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society for a deed of heroism performed on September 30th, 1881.

Miss Lester's mother sends in the following

account: "We were out walking one day in Litherland, when we heard cries of children in distress. My daughter at once ran across a field in the direction indicated, and came upon a little child screaming at the edge of a deep pit. She had no time to divest herself of her heavy clothing, because a little girl of about eleven years rose struggling and fighting for life amid the green, slimy water of the stagnant pool.

"My daughter at once plunged into the filthy water and with great difficulty (owing to the weeds) reached the drowning child. Then followed a terribly exhausting struggle to reach the bank, for the pond was very wide and deep, and was, moreover, simply caked with vegetation and refuse.

"However, she got safely out with the little girl. The latter—poor, plucky little soul—had undressed and gone into the pit to save her little brother, who had fallen in whilst black-berrying. In trying to reach him she had gone far beyond her depth, and was rapidly drowning when my daughter plunged in.

"By this time Mr. James Jones, the schoolmaster of Litherland, had arrived on the scene, and on learning that the little boy was still under the water, he very

courageously jumped in and brought him to land nearly lifeless. The child was, however, resuscitated, to the great delight of his brave little sister, who refused to leave him until she saw signs of returning animation."

It was at Marlborough House, on July 23rd, 1890, that the Prince of Wales presented the Silver Medal of the Grand Priory of the Order of St. John to Mrs. Margaret Irving, of Holywell, whose portrait is next reproduced.

On September 14th, 1889, Mrs. Irving chanced to be at Bagillt Railway Station, in Flint. Suddenly she noticed with horror that a cripple, named Owen Jones (who was also quite deaf), was limping slowly across the line, right in front of the mail



MISS MARY E. LESTER.
From a Photo. by Slater, Llandudno.



MRS. MARGARET IRVING.

From a Photo. by A. Loner & Co.,
Brisbane.

train, which was thundering along at fifty-five miles an hour. For a moment Mrs. Irving doubted whether she could do anything, so far was she from the man and so apparently hopeless was his position. She made up her mind to try, however, and she flew down the platform, leaping on to the rails right under the great train. The force of her onslaught must have greatly surprised the decrepit Owen. It also hurled him and his preserver right into the six-foot way. Here Mrs. Irving held the cripple for a few awful moments, until the last coach of the express flew past with a mighty roar.

This act of extraordinary judgment, presence of mind, and heroism was testified to by the railway officials who witnessed it. They, of course, thought that both Jones and Mrs. Irving would be cut to pieces beneath the train.

The next portrait is that of Mrs. Donald Mackay, who actually saved, virtually single-handed, the whole crew of a ship. It was a Danish vessel, the *Grana*, which stranded on the coast of the Island of Lewis, in the

Hebrides, on October 21st, 1896. Mrs. Mackay was at home at the time of the wreck, the only other person in the house being her eldest boy. Nevertheless, she heroically went forth into the storm with her young son, and her gallant exertions resulted in the establishment of communication with the ship, by means of which the whole crew were saved from certain death.

Mrs. Mackay then took the men into her own house, and cared for them with almost maternal tenderness, nursing them for several days. By way of acknowledging this gallant conduct, the Danish Government presented

Mrs. Mackay with a clock, suitably inscribed.

Thanks to the heroic action of Miss Marie L. Evans, of Hythe, near Southampton, no fewer than three lives were saved. Walking on the pier one Sunday evening after church, Miss Evans saw a boat with three occupants (a man and two women) suddenly capsize, throwing all three into very deep water. Merely pulling off her gloves, Miss



MRS. DONALD MACKAY.

From a Photograph.



MISS MARIE L. EVANS.

From a Photo. by Chalkley, Gould, & Co., Southampton.

Evans plunged into the sea, grasped one of the women, who was nearest, and immediately brought her safely to the pier steps. Then, seeing that the man was struggling wildly in the water with the other girl, who was clinging to him and preventing him from swimming, Miss Evans unhesitatingly plunged in again to their assistance, and was thus the means of rescuing all three. This took place at 8 p.m. on June 2nd, 1895; and it is satisfactory to learn that the Royal Humane Society awarded Miss Evans their Silver Medal. This heroine is an accomplished swimmer; and the spectators were, of course, amazed to see the tastefully attired young lady plunge twice into the deep sea, diving time after time, and generally negotiating her helpless burdens in the water in a manner that filled the beholders with amazement.

The group of young ladies seen in our next photo. are the Misses Prideaux-Brune, of Prideaux Place, Padstow, Cornwall. Each was awarded the Silver Medal of the Lifeboat Institution, together with a copy of the vote inscribed on vellum.

The key to the group is as follows: Commencing on the left-hand side we have Miss Mary K. Prideaux-Brune; then comes Miss Gertrude; next Miss Prideaux-Brune herself, and the fourth sister in front on the extreme right is Miss Beatrice.

On the 9th of August, 1879, three men and a boy took out for a sail down Padstow harbour a small 13ft. punt belonging to Patrick Sharky, a pensioner.

Patrick's permission was *not* asked. About half an hour after leaving, when in the vicinity of Bray Hill, the boat capsized in a squall, owing to improper management. For one thing, she was carrying too much sail.

All the occupants were, of course, thrown into the water, there being a very strong ebb and a choppy sea on at the time.

The accident was observed by the Misses Prideaux-Brune, who were in their own pleasure-skiff, the *Chough*, towed by a fishing-smack. The moment the eldest girl realized what had happened, she asked to be cast off, and then, as an eye-witness afterwards stated, "the girls rowed like tigers to the rescue."

As a fact, this crew of ladies showed extraordinary gallantry and determination, as well as marked ability in the management of their amateur lifeboat. They ran extremely great risk in dragging the drowning sailor, Edward Smith, into their frail craft, which, as it lay to, was swept again and again by the big waves. The fishing-smack which had had the ladies in tow succeeded in rescuing the boy Morrissey, but the other two were drowned.

It is a noteworthy fact that the man, Edward Smith, who was saved by the Misses Prideaux-Brune, formed one of the crew of the schooner *Salamander*, of Padstow, which had been run down and sunk off Hartland Point only a few days previously.

On this occasion also Smith had a very narrow escape. Plainly he was not born to be drowned.



THE MISSES PRIDEAUX-BRUNE.
From a Photo. by the London Stereoscopic Company, Cheapside.