

AMAZONS.

Women Who Have Won Renown on the Battlefield.

History Repeats Itself—The Female Volunteer Corps Not the Only Example of Feminine Soldiering—Masquerade as Men.

During the recent campaign in Madagascar we heard a good deal about the Dahomey Amazons and their prowess in war; and a few months ago a daily paper asserted that a female volunteer corps was in the process of being formed, to be officered, of course, by some extreme disciples of the "New Woman" cult. In the latter instance the idea of a woman usurping man's place on the battlefield was looked upon as being something quite original; whereas it would simply be a case of history repeating itself, for that there have been many such heroines the following particulars will prove: Mrs. Christine Davies, commonly called "Mother Ross," is a well-known example, she having served as a foot soldier and dragoon in several campaigns under William III. and the duke of Marlborough, acting as a squadron leader of the Scots greys at Blenheim and Ramillies. She died July 9, 1739. Hannah Snell was another female worthy, who, having been deserted by her husband, adopted male attire, and traveled to Coventry in search of the runaway. She there enlisted in Col. Guise's regiment of foot, and marched with them to Carlisle at the time of the Scotch rebellion of 1745. She afterward enlisted in Fraser's regiment of marines, and proceeded to Portsmouth, whence she sailed in Admiral Boscawen's squadron for the East Indies. There she assisted at the siege of Pondicherry, when she received 13 wounds. Through all her adventures, including a couple of floggings, she managed to preserve the secret of her sex, and concerning the application of the "cat" it was said:

"Hannah in breeks behav'd so well,

That none her softer sex could tell."

At the close of her military life, however, she revealed her secret, and was awarded a pension of £18 5s. per annum. Later on she started a public house under the sign of "The Widow in Masquerade," and did such a roaring trade that a comfortable old age was assured to her.

There is Mary Anne Talbot, a fine, comely young woman, to judge by an extant portrait, who served four years as a soldier and sailor in the name of John Taylor, and took part in Lord Howe's glorious victory on June 1. She died February 4, 1808, aged 30 years. One print represents her holding a cutlass in one hand, and a Frenchman's head in the other; another in which she is representing a press gang. Coupled with the memory of Fontenoy, 1745, there is that of Phoebe Hessel, whose monument in a Brighton churchyard states that she was born at Chelsea in 1713; that she served for many years as a private soldier in the Fifth regiment of foot in different parts of Europe, and received a bayonet wound in the arm at the above engagement. Living at Brighton, her case became known to George IV., then prince regent, who sent to ask her what sum of money would render her comfortable. "Half a guinea a week," replied old Phoebe, "will make me as happy as a princess." This, therefore, by his majesty's command was regularly paid her till the day of her death, which took place December 12, 1821, when she attained the age of 108 years.

Again, there is Mary Dixon, who was nearly 16 years in the army, and fought at Waterloo. She was still living in 1865, when she was described as "a strong, powerful old woman." Above all, there is the remarkable, if not unique case of Dr. Barry, who died at Corfu in July, 1865. This lady, said to have been the legitimate granddaughter of a Scotch earl is surmised to have adopted male attire and the medical profession from attachment to an army surgeon. Never in her lifetime had anyone the slightest suspicion of her sex. While staff surgeon to the cape garrison, she most successfully treated the governor, Lord Charles Somerset, fought a duel, and was considered to be of a most quarrelsome disposition. The doctor was frequently guilty of flagrant breaches of discipline, and on more than one occasion was sent home under arrest, but somehow or other, the offenses were always condoned at headquarters. The late earl of Albemarle relates in his reminiscences, that on sitting next to her at mess, he noticed "a certain effeminacy in his manner, which he seemed to be always striving to overcome, while his style of conversation was greatly superior to that one usually heard at a mess-table in the days of non-competitive examinations." In Hart's Army List for 1865, the name of James Barry, M. D., stands at the head of the list of inspectors general of hospitals. In the July of the same year, her death was announced, and the next day it was officially reported to the horse guards that the doctor was a woman. It is singular that neither the landlady of her lodging, nor the black valet, who had lived with her for years, had the vaguest notion of her secret.—Admiralty and Horse Guard's Gazette.