'CAROLINE HERSCHEL,

From an original oil-painting by M. G. Tielemann, now in the possession of Sir William Herschel, Bart.

CAROLINE LUCRETIA HERSCHEL.

SISTERS have played an important part in the world's history.

Though eclipsed by their more brilliant brothers, there were none more ready to acknowledge their indebtedness than William Wordsworth, William Herschel, Charles Lamb, and others, whose names stand out prominently in the literary roll-call of England.

And of these sisters, perhaps the one whose personal history is the most interesting is Caroline Herschel, without whose invaluable aid the success of her brother would have been hindered, if not prevented.

In the early part of the seventeenth century the Protestants of Moravia fled from the persecutions which were rife in that part of the Continent, and took up their abode in other less conservative quarters.

Among these refugees were three brothers, Herschel by name, who settled in Saxony. One

of these—Hans—was a brewer at Pirnau, near Dresden, and the great-grandfather of William and Caroline. Their grandfather was Abraham Herschel, landscape-gardener to the King of Saxony, and his youngest son Isaac, born in 1707, was their father.

Abraham was most anxious that Isaac should succeed him in the same honourable and probably lucrative calling, but the young man early developed a passion for music, and his father's persuasions were of no avail. Devoting himself to the study of the hautboy (oboe), he speedily—in 1731—was installed as player of that instrument in the Royal Hanoverian Band. This was no slight honour for a young man of twenty-four, as no ordinary performer, even on a drum, was admitted; and a year later he felt justified in marrying.

The woman of his choice was Anna Ilse Moritzen, a typical "hausfrau," who doubtless took a vague pride in her husband's achievements, but had very strong views as to the mission of women. Their large family was mostly born before the battle of Dettingen in 1743, which was destined to affect the after-life of all the family, and during these ten years Isaac Herschel was the acknowledged leader of the musical circle in Hanover.

The Hanoverian line having been established on the English throne, the Germans naturally joined with the English in fighting for Maria Theresa,

who, as the only daughter of the Emperor Charles II, claimed the Austrian throne.

George II. in person conducted the advance of his 30,000 men, assisted by his son the Duke of Cumberland, but on the 27th of June 1743 they found themselves face to face with a French army of 60,000 under the Duc de Noailles, who were encamped on the opposite side of the river Maine.

Feeling the inadequacy of his numbers, the king thought it best to retreat, but the van of the French army outmarched him, and when he reached the village of Dettingen he saw that they were rapidly coming up on his flank. It was a clear case of "Hobson's choice," for a retreat would have been no less hazardous than an advance. Fortunately, however, a narrow pass lay between the opposing armies, down which the French, relying on their superior numbers, rushed with characteristic impetuosity. English stability now rose to the occasion, and with dogged bravery we, with the assistance of the Hanoverians, were able to withstand even the onset of such a vast force.

Up and down the lines rode George II, amid the roar of cannon and the snapping of musketry, encouraging and commanding, and by his own personal valour inciting his army to fresh effort and redoubled resistance. The result was a decisive victory for the Allies, after a short but desperate fight. The loss of life was enormous, the French

sacrificing 6000 men and the Allies about half that number. This signal victory—of which it is said that "the conduct of George deserves the highest praise; and it was undoubtedly through him, and through his son far more than through any of his generals, that the day was won"—is notable in the annals of our national history as being the last occasion on which a King of England exposed himself under fire. Many a time since have royal personages distinguished themselves on the battlefield, but at present George II. enjoys the distinction of being the last English monarch who personally conducted a campaign.

So ended, from an historic point of view, the famous battle of Dettingen, but the result to the poor leader of the Guards Band, who was present throughout, was most disastrous. From the effects of lying all night in a wet farrow Isaac Herschel never recovered, and, though he kept his position in the army for seventeen years afterwards, he was never again as he had been, and suffered incessantly from acute rheumatism, which ultimately caused his death.

Shortly after Dettingen he was ordered to England with the Regiment of the Guards, but his absence from Hanover was not of long duration, and there, two years later (1745), Caroline was born.

In 1755 Lisbon was decimated by one of the

most awful earthquakes that have ever convulsed the face of nature. Even as far north as Hanover the shock was severely felt, and it is not surprising that to the end of her life Caroline still remembered the look of utter helplessness and awe depicted on the faces of her father and mother as the ground quivered with horrible distinctness, and each one wondered what the next moment might bring. Thus far and no farther did the phenomenon go—then all again was still

All the children, except the eldest daughter Sophia Elizabeth, very early exhibited distinct musical talent, but Caroline's gifts in that direction were almost entirely neglected,—writing and reading being, in her mother's estimation, the only necessary accomplishments for a woman. During her father's lifetime he supplied her with occasional lessons on the violin, and to him may be traced the musical and scientific tastes which distinguished his children. When asthma and rheumatism finally necessitated his retirement from the army in 1760, it was his great delight to discuss musical and scientific matters with them; but after his death in 1762 Caroline was entirely relegated to the kitchen, and to the manifold duties which accrue to a servantless household.

But Caroline Herschel never thought of herself; she had a "royal instinct for serving others," and to be useful in the narrow sphere of a modest Ger-

man home was as much a religion to her as was afterwards the loving service which she devoted to her brother in England.

Entirely devoid of self-consciousness, with an hereditary spirit of discipline running in her veins, united with an instinctive love of self-sacrifice for the sake of duty, there is a nobility and a "divine enthusiasm" about Caroline Herschel which invests all her deeds with an enduring grandeur which she herself would have sincerely deprecated.

For many years the daily routine of cleaning and cooking and knitting went on, but at last the relief came, in the shape of a request that was almost a command, from her beloved brother William, that she should go back with him to England, where he had been promoted from Halifax parish church to the post of Organist to the Octagon Chapel at Bath, then recently consecrated.

Travelling in those days was a very dismal process, and for six days and nights the "little lady," then aged twenty-seven, rumbled along in the old post-wagon from Hanover to Hellevoetsluis, and, after a disastrous sea passage, was literally tossed upon English shores at Harwich in August 1772.

But before leaving Hanover she busied her nimble fingers in behalf of the family at home, and made stockings enough for her mother and "little Dietrich" to last them for two years. This at an average computation of human wants would mean

a work of considerable length and labour, and it is rather pathetic to read, in an earlier account, that the first stocking she made for the elder boy Alexander reached from the door to her chin, so diminutive was her stature. Eighty years later she was known as the "little old lady." The wages of a servant to take her place were defrayed by William, to whom her loving devotion was now to be wholly dedicated. "Little Dietrich," as she called him, was of all her family the one least able to appreciate his sister, and the one next to William to whom, by a strange perversity, she gave most of the love with which her nature overflowed. Even when in Bath, the labours of her brother and herself were disturbed for several weeks by frantic tidings from Hanover that Dietrich and "another young idler" had run away from home. The strong family love which distinguished William induced him to forego his own pursuits and to start off immediately for London, where after much anxiety, in a disreputable corner of Wapping, he found the runaway, dangerously ill. He was thence brought to Bath and nursed back to health on roast apples and barley-water. On a later occasion (1809) he again gave them great trouble, and for four years the devoted sister had not a day free from secret anxiety on his account. Of this time her only remark is, full of pathetic self-distrust, "I hope that I have acquitted myself

to everybody's satisfaction, for I have never neglected my eldest brother's business; and the time I devoted to Dietrich was taken entirely from my sleep, or from what is generally allowed for meals, which were mostly taken running, or sometimes forgotten entirely."

At the time of her arrival in England (1772) she could only read and write, so we may well believe that it was with mingled delight and diffidence that she entered upon her new life at Bath. From being a maid-of-all-work in Hanover to being the coadjutor of a man like William Herschel was indeed a change which our imagination "boggles at"; and had she been a woman of less heroic mould, she might have given herself up to alternate moods of exaltation and despair, without our feeling any reasonable wonder.

But Caroline was made of true Teutonic stuff, and this was soon made manifest in her everyday life with the "Hanoverian fiddler" whose scientific discoveries and deductions subsequently electrified the whole civilised world. Seven years his junior, disliking publicity, and a "hausfrau" bred if not born, it is simply amazing to watch the loyalty and devotion with which she followed and smoothed every step of the path which her brother elected to pursue.

Strait was the gate and narrow was the way, but no stumbling-block was allowed to interfere, no

difficulties discouraged. An innate spirit of obedience enabled her to perform what seem almost like miracles; and the young woman whose acquirements would now be sneered at by many a girl in her teens, was thereby made capable of carrying through schemes, both musical and scientific, which at first sight must have seemed well-nigh impossible, had such a word ever occurred to her in connection with any of her brother's desires or designs.

Housekeeping in England was a very different thing from housekeeping in Germany, even in 1772, and the frugal and simple-minded Caroline was often disturbed by what seemed to her the unwarrantable extravagance of an ordinary English household. Her account of the hot-tempered old Welshwoman who was her aide-de-camp in the kitchen is as pathetic as Mrs Carlyle's experiences of dishonest and incorrigible Betties; and no doubt she often thought, as did Mrs Carlyle, with a "chastened vanity," of the superiority of her own management. In her case the difficulties were at first increased by her partial ignorance of the English language, which, however, her musical ear soon enabled her to conquer, as regarded conversation, though never was she able to write and spell it correctly. However, as some one quaintly puts it, a woman who discovered eight comets may surely spell a word as she likes!