

dencaple House, and Inverary Castle. He was a man of extensive knowledge in his profession, both in regard to its theory and practice. After a long career of distinguished employment, he died May 5, 1811, in his seventy-eighth year, at the New River

Head, London, where he had long resided as engineer to that company, and was interred in Westminster Abbey, near the tomb of Sir Christopher Wren. By his wife, Miss Mary Home, whom he married in 1770, he had nine children, five of whom survived him.

## N.

**NAIRN, CAROLINA, BARONESS.** This amiable and talented poetess was the third daughter and fifth child of Laurence Oliphant, of Gask; her mother was Margaret Robertson, daughter of Duncan Robertson, of Struan, and granddaughter of the fourth Lord Nairn. The family of Gask was distinguished for its Jacobitism, and the poetess was named Carolina in honour of Charles Edward, the young Chevalier. She was born in the family mansion of Gask, county of Perth, on the 16th of July, 1766. In her youth Carolina was so distinguished for her beauty, that in her own district she was commonly termed "The Flower of Strathearn." But her early talents were still more remarkable than her beauty, while the picturesque scenery of her birth-place, and the romantic incidents with which the history of her ancestors had been connected, tended to direct them towards poetry. It is not impossible also that the example of her kinsman Robertson of Struan, the distinguished Jacobite chief and poet, may have aided this tendency. Carolina Oliphant was also one of the many proofs that poetry comes by birthright rather than acquirement, for her precocious talents, even in early girlhood, expressed themselves in numbers, and some of her songs, which became popular, were written at a time of life when others of her sex and station have not yet been freed from the governess or the school-room.

It was not, however, enough for Miss Oliphant to win the renown of a successful and popular songwriter. High as that ambition may be in the eyes of those who would rather be the authors of a country's songs than its laws, her ambition was loftier and purer still. Scotland was already a country of songs; but however ennobled they might be by the charms of poetry, they were also in many cases disfigured by licentiousness; and what the ear so alluringly heard, the heart was too ready not only to tolerate but adopt. Thus it was in the days of the Wedderburns, and thus it was until the close of the last century; so that the popular songs and ballads of the olden time furnished in their practical effects abundance of repulsive work for the discipline of the kirk session. Not merely new songs had therefore to be created, but the old driven out; and to supersede the latter not only by a purer morality but a higher attractiveness was the aim of Carolina Oliphant. And nobly and well did she fulfil her task. She led the way of a great national reformation which others have continued to the present hour, so that not only in the excellence and abundance, but also the morality, of its songs, Scotland may vie with any nation whatever. And what has become of the old national ditties which were equally popular in hall and hut, and sung alike by princes and peasants without a blush? The ear can no longer endure them, the popular suffrage has condemned them beyond repeal, and they can only be found among the recollections of the past or the repertoires of the antiquary.

Her first composition in Scottish verse that

obtained publicity is supposed to have been *The Ploughman* [Ploughman], which she sent anonymously to the president of an agricultural dinner in the neighbourhood. The song was publicly read and applauded, and speedily set to music. A series of others followed during the course of her long extended life, which, in consequence of being given without her name, it would be as difficult to enumerate as to identify; but it is enough to state that, notwithstanding the disadvantage of being unacknowledged productions on the part of their author, they established themselves as popular melodies, and have thus continued to the present hour. We have only to mention in proof of this, her *Laird o' Cockpen*, and *The Land o' the Leal*, which were as popular at the close of the last century as they are in our own day. Another was *Caller Herrin'*, which Niel Gow has set to such exquisite music, and which is still as fresh in popularity as when it welcomed the coming of the first creel from Newhaven to Edinburgh. Another was the Jacobite song *He's ower the Hills that I lo'e weel*, which still stands by its own merits, although the subject of its eulogy is no longer cared for. Of the same class is *The Hundred Pipers*, a song descriptive of the young Chevalier and his army crossing the Esk; and dancing their clothes dry when they had reached English ground on the opposite side.

While the young and beautiful poetess was thus charming a whole nation with her lyrics, there were many suitors for her hand; but she remained unmarried to the age of forty, when, in 1806, she accepted William Murray Nairn, her maternal cousin, who was a major in the army, and held the office of assistant inspector-general of barracks in Scotland. He would have been Baron Nairn, but for the attainer of the title on account of the Jacobitism of its previous holder. The time, however, had arrived for the reversion of these harsh sentences; and George IV., on his visit to Edinburgh, having learned that the song of *The Attainted Scottish Nobles* had been written by Mrs. Nairn, restored her husband's title by act of parliament in 1824. Only a short time, however, was this restitution enjoyed, for on the 9th of July, 1830, he died, and the baroness, who had proved an affectionate wife, was left in widowhood. One consolation remained to her in her son William, her only child, born in 1808, who at the age of twenty-two succeeded to his father's title, and to whom she was affectionately devoted. A severe attack of influenza in 1837 induced him to try the remedy of a change of air upon the Continent, and he repaired with his mother to Brussels; but there he was seized with a violent cold, which carried him off in six weeks. Bereaved of those whom she had most tenderly loved, and left in her old age to solitude, she wept, but not as those who have no hope; and while she bewailed her loss in the language that was natural to her by more than one mournful lyric, she addressed herself to the performance of those Christian duties in which she found her best consolation.