

# INTRODUCTION

To  
THE HISTORY OF THE FIFE PITCAIRNS  
By  
CONSTANCE PITCAIRN



There is, I believe, a desire in the minds of many to know something, however fragmentary, of the lives of their fore-fathers. My original idea in writing a history of the Pitcairns who lived in the old Kingdom of Fife, from 1250 was the hope that it might interest various members of our family; but inasmuch as the Pitcairns were mixed up with the social and political life of the times in which they lived, and as Fife in the olden days saw many stirring scenes and events of national importance (Falkland Palace and Dunfermline Palace in Fife being for long the favourite abodes of the kings of Scotland, and St Andrews the centre of religious life and leaning), it is possible others may care to read the history of an old Fife family, and the doings of a bygone time.

The Pitcairns being a family of some distinction in Fife, and for six hundred years having lived on their estates at Innernethy Pitlour, Pitcairn, and Forthar, they naturally inter married with many of the well-known county families.

The Ramsays, the Balfours, the Beatouns of Balfour, the Lindsays of the Byres, and the Lindsays of Kirkforthar; the Murrays of Balvaird, the Seatons, the Murrays of Ochertyre, the Ruthvens of Red Castle, the Douglasses of Glenbervie, the Erskines, the Melvilles, the Anstruthers, the Aytouns, and the Hamiltons, were all connected by married at one time or another with the family.

The Pitcairns were a peaceable race, they seem to have done few doughty deeds of valour, but lived as simple Scottish country gentlemen on their own lands, taking their part in the ordinary life of the day as magistrates and sheriffs of the county. One of the Pitcairn, Robert, Secretary of State during the Regency and in the reign of James VI a notable man of his time, was much at Court, Commendator of Dunfermline, and Ambassador to Queen Elizabeth. Others had the hereditary honour of being chief falconers to the king, with the right to a sleeping chamber in the palace at Holyrood. Two or three were gentlemen of the bed-chamber to King James VI and Charles I. Two of the Pitcairn descendants on the female side were Lord Chancellors, four were famous doctors.

But although few were distinguished in battle or in arms, it appears to me that a golden tread ran through the lives of many of the race. They were remarkable for their kindliness and charity, for their affectionate loyalty to friends and relations, and especially for their devotion to their king and country. - Andrew Pitcairn and seven sons were killed at the battle of Flodden Field. Some were ardent Jacobites, their estates being confiscated in consequence. Few were soldiers, but many had literary tastes. Some were clergymen, others practised medicine; not a few lived noble lives, and tried to serve God and do good in their generation.

It seemed therefore a good thing that a record should be written of them; for it is not, after all, where a man is placed, or how great his possessions are, which makes him of interest to his fellow-men, but what his character is, and the good he does with the means at his disposal in the times in which he lives.

To be a patriot, a philanthropist, to have the welfare of others at heart, to alleviate suffering, to minister to those in sorrow, is, to my thinking, in so far as men try to carry it out, worthy to be recorded for future generations.