

## The Authorship of the "Historie of the Kennedys"

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The *Historie of the Kennedys* is one of the unrecognised master-pieces of Scottish vernacular literature. The probable reason why it is so little known is that the only publication of it was 130 years ago in a small edition never reprinted and now become extremely rare.<sup>1</sup> Another possible explanation is that it is incomplete and so cannot be judged as a finished work. The only manuscript of it, which is in the National Library of Scotland, breaks off in mid-paragraph at one of the most exciting moments in the story.

Incomplete though it is, it is an historical memoir of the highest value. The author, obviously himself a Carrick man and acquainted with many of the principal figures in his story, narrates the rise of the Kennedys in Ayrshire, the elevation of the Kennedys of Dunure to be first Lords Kennedy and later Earls of Cassillis, and then, in careful and vivid detail, the saga of their great feud with their kinsmen the Kennedys of Bargany. The surviving text fortunately includes the climax of the struggle—the battle of Brockloch, near Maybole, on 11 December, 1601, in which the young laird of Bargany, Gilbert Kennedy, was mortally wounded, and its sequels of revenge, the murder of Sir Thomas Kennedy of Culzean and the burning of the house of Auchinsoull. There is no fuller contemporary account of any of the great family vendettas which bedevilled the Scotland of the late 16th century.

The *Historie* has naturally been used as a source-book by James Paterson, the historian of Ayrshire, and by everyone since his time who has written on the county's early history. It has also had some literary progeny. Crockett's romance *The Grey Man* and Robertson's *The Kings of Carrick* and *The Dule Tree of Cassillis* owe a great deal to it, and William Routhead drew on it for some details of his study of "Auld Auchindrayne."<sup>2</sup>

These borrowings are not surprising, for the unknown author has a fascinating style. He writes in Scots, in the tongue which was in his day losing ground in literature but was still generally used in legal documents and all private correspondence. He has a racy vocabulary and a pithy turn of phrase contrasting strongly with the rambling periods of some of his contemporaries. His

<sup>1</sup> It was issued in "a limited impression." Pitcairn's *Criminal Trials in Scotland*, 1833, III, p. 125, note.

<sup>2</sup> In *The Riddle of the Ruthvens and Other Studies*, 1919, pp. 121-144.

style generally is colloquial, not quite that of a letter but rather of a man talking; yet on occasions he rises to a studied eloquence, notably in his account of the fight at Broekloch, which is a really magnificent battle-piece, full of sharply observed details and vivid touches of characterisation.

As history particularly, the work is illuminating to those who know the historical map of Carrick. The district has been very little changed by modern industrial or housing developments, and even to-day the countryside is full of visible memorials of the stories of the Kennedy feud. The old castles of Bargany and Blairquhan and Culzean have vanished, it is true, having all been rebuilt. Dunure and Craigneill, Baltersan and Thomastoun are only shells, and Ardstinchar a mere fragment, though each of them retains some ghostly grandeur of its past. But the Earl of Cassillis's great houses in Maybole and at Cassillis itself still stand inhabited and scarcely altered. Beside the old moorland road from Maybole to Dailly, now only used by shepherds and gamekeepers, you can still see, somewhat subsided into the heather, the cairn marking the spot where Kennedy of Girvanmains ambushed and slew the laird of Drummochreen. You may still pass the high-arched bridge of Doon over which young Bargany rode to his death nearly three hundred and sixty years ago. And in the kirkyard of Ballantrae, below the steep craig on which his castle of Ardstinchar stood, is the aisle containing the "glorious tomb," somewhat weathered but now well preserved, which Bargany's widow made for him and in which her body was so soon afterwards laid beside his in September, 1605.

Every page of the *Historie* shows that its author knew the topography of Carrick intimately. He is moreover an obvious partisan of the Bargany family. His affection for them appears several times. On the death of the old laird of Bargany, in the key year of 1597 when the final and fatal phase of the great feud begins, he gives a long and dignified eulogy of "the nobillest man that ever was in that cuntry in his tyme." On the death of the old Lady Bargany, too, he commemorates her as "ane nobill womane . . . maist nobill in all hir effairis." Young Bargany, the only person whose physical appearance he describes, is obviously the hero of his whole story, and his widow, as I shall explain later, is treated with particular sympathy. On the other hand the author makes no secret of his loathing for the fifth Earl of Cassillis and of his contempt for Bargany's pusillanimous kinsmen Bennan and Ardmillan. The whole story is seen through the eyes of a devoted, loyal and even prejudiced Bargany supporter.

This is the essential point to take into account in that speculation about our author's identity which is my subject.

Yet it has been underestimated in the only two theories of authorship which have yet been suggested. The learned and industrious Robert Pitcairn who edited the *Historie* for publication in 1830 gave reasons why he was "at one time convinced" that the author was that sinuous politician John Mure of Auchindrane, Bargany's brother-in-law, because of his prominence in the narrative and the frequent reproduction of his exact words in conversation.<sup>3</sup> Pitcairn does not say why he changed his opinion, and there is another explanation, as I shall show, for Auchindrane's prominence in the story. James Paterson, in his *History of the County of Ayr*,<sup>4</sup> disagreed, on the grounds that Auchindrane could not have been a well enough educated man to have written the *Historie*, and put forward the theory that the author was Auchindrane's kinsman Mr. Robert Mure, the schoolmaster of Ayr. There is no evidence of any kind to support this fancy. But Paterson was on the right track. The author of the *Historie* was undoubtedly an educated man, and this narrows the field of inquiry to a very encouraging degree.

There is, however, no help to be got from the manuscript itself. Examination of it makes it quite clear that it is not the original but a contemporary copy by some other hand. It is rather strange that Pitcairn should have either failed to notice this or not thought it worth mentioning.

The copyist was plainly not a Carrick man himself; for he makes several mistakes in copying place-names,<sup>5</sup> leaves a few blank spaces where he has failed to read others, and dates the Earl of Cassillis's return from France, which was in 1597, as in 1565 (which would be about three years before he was born). In many places he has evidently been unable to read the manuscript before him and has omitted words and even whole phrases, leaving blanks never filled in. His handwriting is very bad and not at all easy to read. Pitcairn's own transcript is far from perfect and cannot have been collated, for he miscopies some words, omits some others, often vital to the sense, and in one place leaves out a whole line. In fact, a new edition of the manuscript is much to be desired.

The history of the copy-manuscript is itself something of a puzzle. There is no indication why the writing should break off where it does—whether the original really stopped at that point or the copyist simply became tired of it. The writing ends a little way down the verso of a page, and somewhat lower down

<sup>3</sup> *Historie of the Kennedys*, Preface, pp. iv-v.

<sup>4</sup> *History of the County of Ayr*, 1847, I, p. 105.

<sup>5</sup> e.g., "Kirkdall" for Knokdaw, "Caragell" for Corsraguell, "Schalzle" and "Keilzeny" for Kilhenzie, "Grimak" for Grimet, "Camiltoun" for Cairltoun. The copyist fares no better with Galloway names, reading "Feocht" for Freuch, "Barnebarony" for Barnebaroch, "Gairslan" for Gairthland, and "Kirkcalffy" for Craigcalffy.



there begins, in a different handwriting, an account of the state and government of Spain. Finally, to add to the mysteries, the two outer leaves enclosing the manuscript, on the back of one of which the last part of the description of Spain is written, are part of an English legal document in an English hand.

But examination of the manuscript, including those parts of it which, as they are not concerned with the Kennedys, Pitcairn did not print, does make clear that the author was, to the best of his ability, a serious historian. His writing of the *Historie* was a deflection from the task on which he originally set out, and is really a very long parenthesis in it. The manuscript begins with the title "The Descriptioun of Scotland with ane Cronickell off the Kingis thair Lyff and Descent," and continues with about thirty closely-written pages of annals, beginning with the reign of the mythical King Gatheilus—the husband of the equally mythical Scota, the supposed ancestress of the Scots. Then follow eight pages of more detailed history and another sixteen of annals of the author's own time brought down to 1611, which year is thus a *terminus a quo* by which to date the whole composition. The last episode actually described is the reorganisation of the Privy Council after the Earl of Dunbar's death, which was on 20 January, 1611.

We then get thirty-five pages of miscellaneous matter. There is a list of the sheriffdoms of Scotland, short lives of the Regents, a topographical description of Scotland similar to Buchanan's but not copied from him, and, lastly, an account of the origins of the principal Scottish families or "names," the material for which the author states to have been taken from "my copy quhill I drew out of the blak buik of Skoun." It was this section of the work which, so to speak, led the author astray. When he arrives at the name of Kennedy—to which he has already given significant attention in his brief account of the country of Carrick—he embarks on his long diversion, with this excuse: "Seeing that thair is sum noittis for memory heirefter to follow off the name of Kennedy I thocht gude to conteyne heir thair beginning and how thay roiss to be gritt and sa furthe to this hour."

Now the author has obviously read Buchanan and other historical writers. He mentions a "Chronicle," otherwise unidentified. He has had access to the lost Black Book of Scone and copies out much of it. He knows what he calls "Wallace buik." A chance allusion among the family histories shows that he has read Chaucer. Further, the details he gives of the deaths of both young Bargany and his wife suggest that he had some pretensions to a knowledge of medicine.

It can be said without hesitation that there were extremely few men in Carrick in the early 17th century—indeed a mere handful—likely to be so well read.

In considering who was our author, we may leave out of count the schoolmaster of Maybole and the seven parish ministers, or rather the three—Mr. David Barclay at Dailly and later at Maybole, Mr. John Macquorn, first at Maybole and later at Straiton, and Mr. John Cunynghame at Girvan—who were in their charges throughout the events described, and we may also leave out the various notaries, who were men of moderately good education. For it is abundantly clear that the author was, if not a laird himself, a member of one of the principal landed families of Carrick, acquainted with the chief characters in his story and moving as an equal among them, and his view of his subject is certainly not that of a minister, nor of a notary.

I assume as a probability amounting to a certainty that our well-read author was a man with a University education. Not everyone in those days who went to a University proceeded to graduate, but if our author did so we have not far to look for him; for a careful listing of Carrick lairds and their kinsmen living between 1595 and 1610 who could claim this qualification narrows the field to only six possible names.<sup>6</sup> They are, of course, all distinguished in contemporary documents by the prefix "Maister" or "Master," written as we write "Mr."; and this short leet can without difficult be reduced to one man.

I eliminate first Master Lambert Kennedy of Kirkmichael, who made singularly little mark on his times. He is nowhere mentioned in the records of Parliament or of the Privy Council, and though he occasionally figures in documents as a witness he practically never appears as tutor, arbitrator, cautioner or executor. He certainly took no part in public life in Carrick, and I deduce that he was either an invalid or a recluse.

Master Alexander Boyd, brother of the laird of Penkill, was a man of great learning, a traveller, and a poet, but he died in 1601, before half the events in the *Historie* had taken place. Master John Fergusson of Kilkerran, on the other hand, did not graduate till 1610 and was only a boy during most of our period. Master John Chalmer of Sandifurd, a kinsman of the Boyds of Trochrig and Penkill, was undoubtedly a Cassillis adherent;<sup>7</sup> and so was Master Christopher Cockburn, who was in the Earl of

<sup>6</sup> A recorded list of heritors and "weill landit men" in the parish of Kirkoswald in 1607 contains not one "Mr." among 20 names, though they include several prominent local lairds. (*Register of Deeds*, ccx. ff., 158-60.)

<sup>7</sup> *Privy Council Register*, VI, pp. 652, 760.



Cassillis's service and was among his party in the crucial battle in 1601.<sup>8</sup>

There is left, therefore, only one possible candidate among these six, Master Robert Cathcart of Nether Pinmore, second son of John Cathcart of Carleton. Not much can be discovered about him. He appears a few times in the *Register of the Privy Council* as a witness to various documents recorded in the Books of Council and Session, and in two or three testaments. But the contexts in which his name appears nearly all connect him with some of the leading figures in the *Historie of the Kennedyis*, and I believe him to have been its author.

Let us again summarise what we have hitherto deduced about this author's position, personality and attitude.

He was a gentleman and well educated. He belonged to Carrick and was specially familiar with the country around and between its two rivers—the Water of Girvan and the Water of Stinchar. He does not seem to have been himself a Kennedy; for though he often refers to the cadets of the Bargany family, calling them "the Freindis"—that is, the Kinsmen—he never says "we." Yet he was intimate with the family of Kennedy of Bargany and knows their history well; for he gives what may be called the Bargany version of the roasting of the commendator of Crossraguel in Dunure and of his rescue thence by Bargany's men; he has detailed knowledge of old Bargany's dealings with the fourth Earl of Cassillis and with the lairds of Culzean and Auchindrane; he has witnessed the lordly housekeeping in the castle of Bargany in the old laird's time; and, as already mentioned, he loves and idealises the young laird Gilbert who came so early to a tragic end.

Further, the author plainly has, for Gilbert's sake, a particular interest in his wife Jonet Stewart. Their marriage had been imposed on the family in 1597 by King James's order, which to a great baron like old Bargany, who might expect to choose his own alliances, was humiliating. It was, says the author, "ane gritt wrak to his hous," but he adds "uthier nor he gatt ane gude womane." He pays close attention to young Lady Bargany's fortunes after her husband's murder. He describes her "great anger" at the Earl of Cassillis's evading of all penalty for Bargany's death; her efforts to organise revenge for it, her fatal illness, the exact date and place of her death, which are recorded nowhere else, and her funeral. On all these points, wherever he can be checked, he is strikingly accurate, as indeed

he is on a large number of others in the *Historie*, a circumstance which makes one the more inclined to trust him where he is the sole witness.

Next, the author is, as Pitcairn noted, very intimate with the laird of Auchindrane and remarkably conversant with his movements and actions. He is equally well informed about the laird of Carleton, John Cathcart, and his eldest son (Master Robert Cathcart's father and brother). The latter was present at a vital conference of the Bargany faction in Ardstinchar castle, and also commanded Bargany's main body in the battle at Brockloch. He could have been the author's informant regarding both occasions which are described in great detail.

Finally, though the author tells us nothing directly about himself, we can infer his principles in Church matters; for he calls Quintin Kennedy, the last abbot of Crossraguel, "ane gude man, and ane that feiritt God efter the maner of his religione"; and of old Bargany, who was an active Reformer, he says that he "wes fra the beginning on the rycht syd of religioun."

It does not seem that the *Historie* was meant for a wide audience. It makes virtually no reference to national affairs—not even to King James's succession to the English Crown and his departure from Scotland. It is local history, indeed family history, written obviously for readers who already know the scene and the chief characters. My guess is that it was intended for the family charter-chest at Killochan, and that, but for the destruction of those archives about fifty years ago, the original might have been found there. But at any rate the attitude of the author to his theme and his audience emphasises the certainty that he was a Carrick man.

To show how Master Robert Cathcart's career fits into the framework we have deduced for the author, it is best to describe what is known of his life from the beginning. He was born in all probability at Killochan, the home of his father John Cathcart of Carleton, whose wife was Helen Wallace. Killochan stands to-day just as it stood then, unaltered, occupied and admirably preserved. It lies near the Water of Girvan, about three miles from its mouth, little over a mile from the old castle of Bargany and about an hour's ride from Maybole. Robert's parents were married about 1563,<sup>9</sup> and he was born probably in 1565, certainly not more than a year or so later. He was thus about 32 in the momentous year of 1597 when old Bargany died and the young Earl of Cassillis came home from France, and about 36 when young Gilbert Kennedy of Bargany met his end.

<sup>9</sup> They were married by 24 Sept. in that year (*R.M.S.*, IV, 1485).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 349, 694.



He must have taken his Master of Arts degree at Glasgow, but the University's records are deficient for this period, so that we do not know the date but can presume it to have been about 1582, the year in which Edinburgh University was founded. He married soon afterwards, at the age of about 20.

Master Robert's wife was Agnes Kennedy, a widow with a young family, and she was perhaps a little older than himself. Her first husband, who had died in February, 1581, was John Eccles of Kildonan, and he left her with one daughter of her own, Agnes, and the guardianship of his other daughters by an earlier marriage and one bastard daughter. The Eccles and Cathcart families must have been on friendly terms, for the laird of Kildonan's will includes the sentence, "Item he levis the young laird of Cairltoun his hagbut and twa pistolattis."<sup>10</sup> This acquaintanceship easily accounts for Master Robert's having married Kildonan's widow, Agnes Kennedy, and settled down with her at Kildonan in the Stinchar valley, where we next hear of him in 1593. Three days before Christmas in that year Agnes died.

Master Robert's marriage had lasted only some eight years (presuming that he married at about 20). The terms of Agnes Kennedy's will suggest that it had been a happy one. She appointed her husband her sole executor, left him to divide her personal property among their children, and committed to him the tutorship of his step-daughter Agnes Eccles, "faitherlie to governe hir as his awin." The testament mentions "barnes" (in the plural) of hers and Robert's, but names only the eldest son John.<sup>11</sup>

Within the next five years Master Robert bought the small estate of Nether Pinmore a little further up the Stinchar, and he is always described hereafter as either "of Nether Pinmore" or "of Pinmore." It may have been about this time that he formed a friendship with a young neighbour of the Cathcarts, Master Robert Boyd of Trochrig, who went to France in 1597 and there won celebrity as a philosopher and theologian, returning to Scotland in 1614 to become a famous Principal of Glasgow University; for on Master Robert's death Boyd mourned him as an old friend and as "a man of great piety and experience in the way and life of God."<sup>12</sup>

During the four crucial years of the Kennedy feud, from 1597 to 1601, Master Robert Cathcart is scarcely on record at all. His name is at no time mentioned in the *Historie*. His father and

eldest brother, however, appear in it frequently, and, as I have already remarked, would have been first-hand sources for many of the principal events in the feud. Indeed, the house of Killochan is admirably placed to have been a centre for the hearing and reporting of news—close to Bargany, not far from Maybole to the north-east or the bridge of Girvan to the south-west, just opposite the end of the hill road by which the Girvan and Stinchar valleys communicated, and forming one link in that chain of towers and manor-houses, nearly all belonging to Kennedys, which stretched all down the Girvan Water for more than a dozen miles.

In the battle of 11 December, 1601, when Bargany got his mortal wound, Master Robert's elder brother, John, commanded the main body of his followers, wearing, perhaps, the pistols he had inherited from the laird of Kildonan. It is in the weeks immediately following that tragedy that Master Robert appears on record again, and it is these appearance that seem to me significant.

"The Lady Barganie," says the writer of the *Historie*, "raid to Edinburgh and maid hir complent to the King and Queine, bot wes littill the better . . . for scho wes compellit to by the ward of hir sone, and to gif threttene thousand markis for the same." That she was compelled to buy the wardship of her own son is perfectly true. The payment of the composition is recorded in the unprinted Accounts of the Lord Treasurer, and the grant of the ward in the unprinted Register of the Privy Seal, dated 14 January, 1602, just five weeks after Bargany's death. But the sum which the Lord Treasurer received, or at any rate the sum for which he accounted, was not 13,000 merks but 10,000.<sup>13</sup>

But Lady Bargany's total expenses on this unrewarding journey to Edinburgh may very well have included another 3,000 merks. There would be her travelling and lodging expenses, some legal fees to pay, and not improbably some *douceurs* necessary to reach Royalty's unsympathetic ear—even though she had been one of Queen Anne's maids of honour less than five years before. What is certain is that while she was in Edinburgh, six days after the grant of the wardship, she had to borrow the large sum of £816, equal to over 1,200 merks.<sup>14</sup> And there was one man well placed to know her financial difficulties at this very time—Master Robert Cathcart; for he was one of the witnesses to the bond for £816 that Lady Bargany signed in Edinburgh on 20 January, 1602. It seems to me an inescapable inference that he, a friend and neighbour of the Bargany family but one who had not been

<sup>10</sup> *Edinburgh Testaments*, XIV, ff. 210-1.

<sup>11</sup> *Edinburgh Testaments*, XXVII, ff. 63-4.

<sup>12</sup> *Bannatyne Miscellany*, I, p. 288.

<sup>13</sup> *Treasurer's Accounts*, 1601-4, f. 18v; *Register of the Privy Seal*, Vol. LXXII, sub. 14 Jan., 1602.

<sup>14</sup> *Register of Deeds*, LXXXVI, ff. 103-4.



of the Earl of Cassillis or the Privy Council, had ridden to Edinburgh with the widowed Lady Bargany to stand by her in her trouble. active in the feud and so was not being pursued by the vengeance

The authorities took note of his sympathies a few months later. In the interval, on the 12th of May, 1602, Lord Cassillis's uncle, Sir Thomas Kennedy of Culzean, had been murdered by Bargany's young brother, Thomas Kennedy of Drummurichie, and his friend Walter Mure of Cloncaird, in revenge for Bargany's death. The murderers were outlawed, and all the prominent men of the Bargany faction were required by the Privy Council to find caution not to reset them—that is, not to give them shelter or countenance. They almost all complied, for “thair wes ane gritt feir in all mennis hairttis,” according to the *Historie*. One of those from whom this guarantee was demanded was “Mr. Robert Cathcart of Penmoir.” He and Fergus Kennedy of Knockdaw, who had been at Bargany's side in the battle till within a few minutes of his mortal wound, were mutual cautioners for each other, both their bonds being signed at Killochan on 22nd September.<sup>15</sup>

This is not the only indication in this year of 1602 where Master Robert's sympathies lay. On 28th January, only seven weeks after the battle and while Lord Cassillis was in Edinburgh justifying himself before the Privy Council,<sup>16</sup> Master Robert had returned to Ayrshire and was at the house of Auchindrane in company with Cloncaird (the future assassin of Sir Thomas Kennedy of Culzean) and Auchindrane himself; for he and Cloncaird were two of the witnesses to a bond which Auchindrane signed on that day.<sup>17</sup> This was another time when Master Robert could have heard first-hand accounts of the battle, for both Cloncaird and Auchindrane had been prominent in it on Bargany's side. Cloncaird had killed Lord Cassillis's master of household, and Auchindrane had received a severe wound from the shot of a hackbut. It is noteworthy that the *Historie* describes how Auchindrane got his wound, his danger from it, and the relations in the next few weeks between him, Cloncaird, Drummurichie, and Lady Bargany, who, it says, was “dealing with” Cloncaird and Drummurichie to achieve Culzean's murder. If Master Robert was not himself concerned in these plots he was undoubtedly in very close contact with those who were. And the writer of the *Historie* certainly knew and liked Cloncaird. “He was bayth stout and kynd,” he says; “and giff that he had had dayis, wald have beine ane verry fyne man.”

There was another episode about this time of which Master Robert might have been an eye-witness. It also happened while

Lord Cassillis was still in Edinburgh. For some time after the fight of 11 December, 1601, Auchindrane was laid up, recovering from his wound; but he was evidently up and about again when Sir Thomas Kennedy of Culzean sought his help. Culzean was connected with Auchindrane since they were cousins by marriage and moreover Auchindrane's eldest son had married Culzean's daughter only a little over a year before.<sup>18</sup> Auchindrane himself was married to Bargany's sister. He therefore had a foot in both camps, and Culzean quite reasonably asked him to act as a mediator between himself and Drummurichie and Cloncaird, who he had heard were plotting at Lady Bargany's instigation to murder him.

Auchindrane agreed to do his best, procured proposals from both sides for a kind of treaty of future neutrality in the feud, got Drummurichie and Cloncaird to come to his house, and then invited Culzean to dinner to meet them. When Culzean arrived, Auchindrane talked to him in the hall, having persuaded the other two to wait upstairs “in ane chalmer.” But Culzean changed his mind and said he could not enter into any agreement without his chief's knowledge and consent. He left the house and Auchindrane politely saw him home almost all the way to Culzean.

Now this whole episode is reported in great detail, with the actual conversation of Auchindrane and his guest, which gives a very strong impression indeed of being the account of an eye-witness, that is to say that the writer of the *Historie* was himself present. We know that Master Robert Cathcart was on visiting terms with Auchindrane at just this time. We know that on one occasion at just this time he was in Auchindrane's house in company with Cloncaird. He may therefore very well have been the person who witnessed and reported this abortive attempt to limit the progress of the Carrick vendetta.

The Cassillis party, however, had the upper hand by this time, and Master Robert's father, the laird of Carloun, “maid moyane,” says the *Historie*, “nocht to be trubillt nor to trubill.” In the spring of 1603 occurred the last attempt of the Bargany faction to revenge their lost chief. They besieged Lord Cassillis's wife and brother with their attendants in the house of Auchinsoull on the Stinchar and very nearly caught the man who had actually given Bargany his death-wound, but he got away under cover of the smoke from the burning house. This episode, most vividly described in the *Historie*, took place only four miles up the Stinchar from Master Robert's house of Pinmore, so that he could have had ample opportunities of hearing its details from his neighbours.

<sup>15</sup> *P. C. R.*, VI, p. 754.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 347-50.

<sup>17</sup> *Register of Deeds*, XCII, ff. 291-2.

<sup>18</sup> *Register of Deeds*, XXXIV, ff. 216-8.



We find record of him next in 1605, and again in close association with the widowed Lady Bargany. Early in July she was in Edinburgh. She was now a dying woman, suffering from what was probably tuberculosis—called in those days a hectic fever, or in the words of the *Historie* “the eittik.” She was about to set out for London to consult the Queen’s physician, Dr. Martin;<sup>19</sup> and before her departure she assigned the management of all her affairs to her brother, Josias Stewart of Bonnytown. She was “very far gevin over to his counsell,” says the *Historie*, and there is evidence suggesting that his advice concerning the management of the Bargany estates was unbusinesslike.<sup>20</sup> The author of the *Historie* writes of it somewhat critically. Master Robert Cathcart was in a position to know something about it for he was a witness to the five documents Lady Bargany signed in Edinburgh on 6 July.<sup>21</sup> The same day she made her testament, bravely describing herself as “haill in bodie and spreit (praisit be God)” and nominating her brother, Josias, her sole executor.<sup>22</sup> To this document also Master Robert was a witness. Then she set out for London, accompanied by Josias. But the Queen’s doctor could do nothing for her; “quhairfoir,” says the *Historie*, “scho wald have beine att hame.” But she was never to see Ayrshire again. On the homeward road, at Stilton, sixty miles from London, she died on the 16th of August. Josias brought her body by the Sanquhar road to Ayr and on 15 September<sup>23</sup> the bodies of her husband and herself were solemnly conveyed to Ballantrae and buried in the tomb Lady Bargany had prepared. Three Earls, four Lords and a thousand gentlemen on horseback formed the procession, which included a banner of revenge borne by Auchindrane’s son showing Bargany’s portrait “with all his woundis” and the motto “Judge and revenge my cause, O Lord.” It was all done “verry honourabillly,” as the author of the *Historie* says, and no doubt very expensively too, helping to contribute to the ruin of the Bargany fortunes which followed in a few years.

These matters are described with a detail which, admittedly, many people in Carrick would have known; but the close attention paid to the circumstances of young Lady Bargany’s death suggests again that the writer was a close friend and probably companion of hers.

Little more is known of Master Robert Cathcart. His father died in 1612 and he himself in 1616, for it was in October of that year that his friend the Principal of Glasgow recorded hearing the

news. I was once inclined to doubt this as a false rumour, for five years later there is recorded an allusion to the marriage contract of Robert Cathcart of Neddir Pinmoir and Auchindrane’s daughter Elizabeth Mure,<sup>24</sup> and I had assumed that this indicated a late second marriage of Master Robert to a child of his old associate (who, with his eldest son, had been executed for murder in 1611).<sup>25</sup> But as this Robert Cathcart is not designated “Master” either in this reference or in his appearance as a witness in 1617,<sup>26</sup> I think he must have been one of Master Robert’s sons. We know from Agnes Kennedy’s testament that there were other children besides John the eldest. Anyhow, this marriage supplies one more fragment of evidence connecting Master Robert’s family with that of Auchindrane.

Shadowy though his personality must remain—Robert Boyd’s tribute to his piety is the only evidence of his character—it is, I think, striking that almost every record of his life associates him with the families of Bargany and Auchindrane. That he did write the *Historie of the Kennedyys* cannot be proved; but that he could have done so, and was better qualified to do so than anyone else, may, I believe, be regarded as certain.

<sup>24</sup> *Ayr Sasines*, II, ff. 216-7.

<sup>25</sup> *Ayrshire Collections*, Vol. 4, p. 137.

<sup>26</sup> H.M. Gen. Register House; Kennedy of Bannan MSS, No. 42.

<sup>19</sup> *Calendar of State Papers (Domestic)*, 1603-10, pp. 205, 233.

<sup>20</sup> *Register of Deeds*, CVII, ff. 39-41, 129-30, etc.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, CX, ff. 134-8.

<sup>22</sup> *Glasgow Testaments*, XVII, ff. 114-6.

<sup>23</sup> The year 1605, left blank in the MS, is confirmed by *Ayr Burgh Accounts*, p. 228.