

**POPULAR GENEALOGISTS;
OR, THE ART OF PEDIGREE-
MAKING**

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Popular Genealogists; Or, the Art of Pedigree-Making by George Burnett

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GEORGE BURNETT

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'Falsum committunt viri docti, qui hominibus de plebe nobilitatem, insignia et antiquitatem generis adfingunt. . . . Et potest profecto debetque mercenariorum illorum pena tunc, quam respublica valde per eis nocitum, atque fides monumentorum et historie turbata est, ad ultimum supplicium preferri.'

LEYSERUS, *Meditationes ad Pandectas*, Sp. DCXVI. 3. 4.



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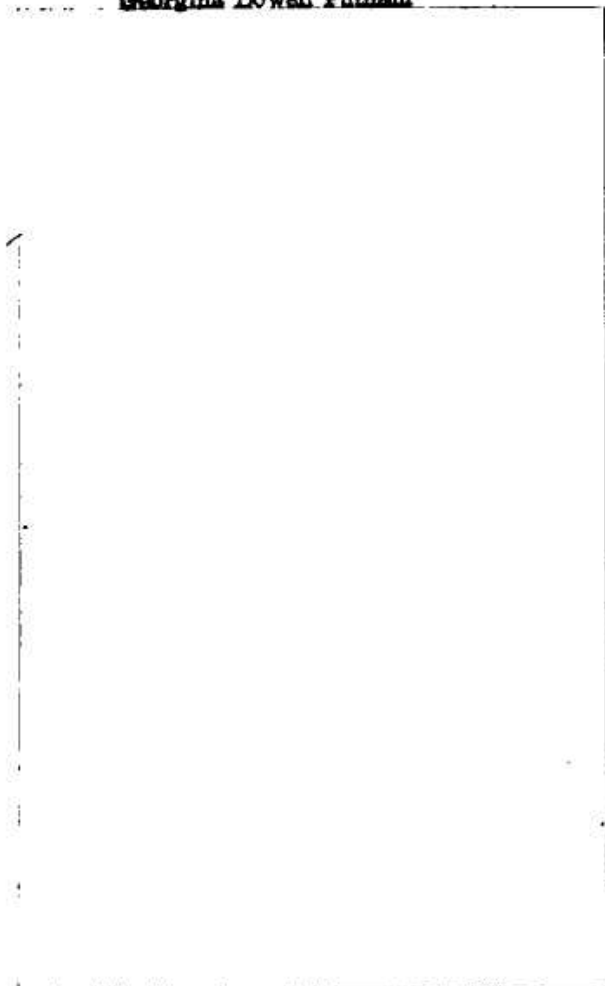
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Georgina Lowell Putnam



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It was the fashion among the wits and philosophers of last century to throw ridicule on the subject of pedigree; and the sarcasms of Voltaire, Walpole, and Chesterfield may in a measure be excused, when we take into account the mixture of pedantry, fiction, and flattery which in their day so largely usurped the place of historical truth. Since that time, however, genealogical studies have entered on a new phase. It has become an admitted fact that the history of the leading families of a country is an important part of the history of that country. A race of learned and accurate investigators have sprung up, who, approaching genealogy in a critical spirit, have brought

entirely new resources to bear on it. Rejecting all that is not borne out by authentic evidence, they have applied themselves to the patient examination of the national records, the archives and chronicles of the monasteries, and the contents of private charter-chests. Each source has yielded its quota of facts, and these facts have been woven into genealogical biographies. Heraldry itself, after having been abandoned to coach-painters and undertakers, has again come into favour, having been found to be a valuable, if not indispensable aid to the knowledge both of family and of national history.

England and Scotland have produced a succession of more or less excellent family histories, some published and some privately printed, in the foremost rank of which must be placed Lord Lindsay's delightful record of the House of Lindsay, the model for all family histories in time coming. In this change which has come over the spirit of genealogy, it is pleasant to find that Scotland, once notorious for looseness and credulity in matters of pedigree, has taken a prominent part. It would not

be easy to overrate the value of the muniments which have been preserved and carefully edited by the Maitland, Bannatyne, and Spalding Clubs.

While this genealogical revival cannot fail to be extremely gratifying to every lover of historical truth, I propose in these few pages to make it matter of inquiry, how far it has as yet extended to genealogical literature of a more popular kind, such as the Peerages, histories of the 'Landed Gentry,' and similar works, which are in the hands of every one, and daily referred to by the general public.

By far the most voluminous of our popular writers on genealogical topics is Sir Bernard Burke, Ulster King-of-Arms. His *Peerage and Baronetage* appears annually, and professes to furnish an account, past and present, of each family belonging to either order, with a verbal blazon and drawing of their arms. Sir Bernard is also the author of a similar volume or volumes, appearing at occasional intervals, regarding the *Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland*. Three volumes of *Heraldic Illus-*