

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE FAMILY OF DE FORBIN AND SWEDISH FORBESES.

As already stated in the preliminary chapter, the theory that the family of Forbes came originally from France has no foundation, but on the other hand a well-established branch has flourished there since the fourteenth century.

“ Peter Forbes, son of Alexander,” fled from the siege of the Castle of Urquhart in 1305, and betook himself to France. He was well received, as were so many soldiers of fortune in the sister kingdom in those days ; the “ Auld Alliance ” between Scotland and France was already in good working order and King David Bruce himself enjoyed French hospitality for seven years. Young Peter Forbes seems to have made friends from the first, and before he had been twenty years in Provence he contracted a brilliant alliance with Françoise d’Agout, a daughter and heiress of one of the oldest families. Shortly after this he was “ *qualifié miles et chevalier* ” and his will made at Avignon, January 26th, 1362, describes him as “ the noble Prince, Pierre de Forbin.”

His son was Guillaume de Forbin, a citizen of Marseilles, who appears in the civic records there. The son of Guillaume, Jean I. de Forbin, who died in 1380, sank his own ship in Marseilles harbour in order to block it, when Alfonso of Aragon was besieging the town in the time of Louis III. of Anjou, titular King of Naples and brother of the better known King René. The eldest son of Jean I. de Forbin was the notable Palamède, Comte de Forbin, who became Councillor and Chamberlain to King René, and was the chief negotiator of the union between France and Provence, and was granted this motto with the title of Count, by the grateful René Count of Provence—“ *Regem ego comitem, me Rex comitem.* ” “ *J’ai fait le comte roi, le roi me fait comte.* ”

Previously, the motto of the family had been “ *Quo fortior mitior.* ”

Palamède’s son, François de Forbin, married an illegitimate granddaughter of King René.

The Provençal poet, Mistral, says of this family—in the Provençal dialect :

“ *E li Fourbin que toujours novo
Maintenon sa noublesso.* ”

From Palamède descends the branch of Forbin de Sollies; from his brother, Jean II., the branch Forbin de Janson which ended with the famous and saintly Cardinal Jacques de Forbin, Archbishop of Arles, born in Paris, August 23rd, 1673, and archbishop from 1711 to 1741, which period included the time of the terrible pestilence of 1720. In his youth Jacques de Forbin had wished to be a Trappist monk, but he was reserved for a more active and strenuous life. He expressed the desire that the following inscription should be placed on his grave:—

“ Ci gist Jacques le pêcheur
Qui gouverna ce diocèse
Tellement quellement.”

(James, a sinner, who ruled his diocese as well as he could.)

The third brother was Jacques, ancestor of the branch of Forbin de Gardanne, now also extinct, but there is still a Marquis de Forbin who owns the lovely château des Issarts near Avignon and other members of the family own those of St. Marcelle, of La Barben near Arles, and La Verdière near Aix-en-Provence. There have been several distinguished politicians, prelates and scientists in the family, but the best known is of course the Admiral Claude de Forbin, who has left an account of his own life in *The Mémoires du Comte de Forbin, chef d'escadre—Chevalier de l'ordre militaire de Saint Louis*, which were published in Amsterdam in 1729. They have never been translated, and afford most amusing reading.

He begins naïvely by stating that those who write their own memoirs have only one end in view, viz., to glorify themselves, and he relates his own exploits with undisguised pleasure. He was born at Gardanne, near Marseilles, in 1656, so that at the date of his life best remembered in British history, viz., the time of the abortive Jacobite expedition of 1708, he was 52 years old. The great hardships of his early life, his many campaigns and numerous wounds, had made of him an old man before his time, and the bitter controversies as to the failure of that brief campaign and subsequent quarrels with his chiefs in the French Ministry of Marine led to his retirement at the comparatively early age of 56, although he lived to be 77.

When only 21, he accompanied the French Ambassador to the Court of the King of Siam, that monarch being imbued with the desire to make his country both Christian and civilised, and welcomed the assistance in the latter project of this enthusiastic young officer whom he created General and Admiral, but Forbin only remained two years in those remote parts, returning in 1687 to resume his duties in the French Navy.

His family seems to have been on friendly terms with the exiled Stuarts from the time that unfortunate family took up its residence at St. Germain. In all the wars which ensued between France and England, Claude de Forbin took a distinguished part, and very effectually interfered with English commerce. On one occasion he was taken prisoner by the English and conveyed

to Plymouth. It is not stated whether he was put in jail or merely confined in a private house, but he astonished his colleagues at the Ministère de la Marine in Paris by suddenly appearing amongst them—"D'où venez vous? Mais de l'Angleterre, Monsieur." "Mais comment êtes vous échappé? Mais par la fenêtre, Monsieur."

In the Treasury papers, under date August 23rd, 1689, there is recorded a "Complaint against Mr. Charles Warren, customer of Plymouth, for negligence in letting the two French commanders escape, who were brought in by the *Nonsuch* frigate, and were committed to his care. The escape was effected by filing through an iron bar an inch square and by a small boat or yawl. The two prisoners were the Chevalier de Forbin and Monsieur Burt."

Forbin was full of resource and should have made an excellent leader of what was in fact a filibustering expedition, but his heart was not in it.

His description of the preparations for the descent on Scotland is full of humour. He was convinced, and probably with truth, that Louis XIV. embarked upon this venture partly to satisfy the importunities of the Queen Mother of England, Mary of Modena, widow of James II., and partly as a diversion to occupy the English, and without any very real hope of setting the young James Stuart on his throne. The 6000 troops under the command of the Comte de Gacé who were to be embarked upon the vessels to be collected by Forbin, were looked upon by the latter as inevitably destined to fall a sacrifice to the English, if disembarked anywhere on the coast of Great Britain. As a matter of fact, had proper dispositions been made for concerted action with the Scottish Jacobites, the expedition had a very good chance of success, for Scotland was at that time almost wholly denuded of Government troops. But misfortune, as always, dogged the Jacobite cause. Young James developed measles, and the start had thus to be delayed for some days, so that the English navy had time to get ready. Disputes occurred between the French naval and military leaders as to the right moment to weight anchor. When the Comte de Gacé urged an immediate start in spite of the bad weather, Forbin replied doggedly that in that case the soldiers would inevitably be drowned, "as for me I can swim, so I don't care." When the departure was eventually effected, terrible weather overtook them, with the result that the military men were very seasick and Forbin correspondingly amused. He reached Scotland too late to avoid Byng's squadron and could only flee successfully before it. He takes great credit to himself that he brought his squadron back to Dunkirk with the loss of only one vessel (the *Salisbury*, a former English prize) and seems chiefly interested in relating the great care he took of the person of James Stuart (then first called the Chevalier de St. George) and the excellent arrangements he had made for catering for all those on board his flagship, and the provision of bullocks, calves, sheep, pheasants and partridges, as well as fresh fruit and vegetables, which he had carried with him, and the further thoughtful

provision of stew pans and small ovens, so that all the different tables to be served on his ship might each have their soup, their ragout and their roasts at the proper time. One cannot but feel that he scarcely tried to make a success of this expedition, of which he had disapproved from the first. In fact, when first told of it, he enquired roughly, "who is the idiot responsible for such a plan?"—though it was obvious that it had been devised jointly by the King of France and Monsieur de Pontchartrain, the Minister of Marine. Much was forgiven him on account of his earlier exploits in harrying British commerce in the Channel and his spectacular escape, but after 1708 he was not employed again, and retired, as has been said, in 1712, to his country house near Marseilles, after forty-four years of continuous service.

It was in the house of a member of the Forbin family that James Stuart, the old Chevalier, once found shelter at Arles, on his way to Avignon in 1716. The house, which has a beautiful eighteenth century doorway, stands in the Rue de la Republique and is now occupied by the Societé Générale.

The arms of the family—three leopard's heads—bear some resemblance to the three bears of the Forbes coat, and relationship to the ancient Scottish family is proudly claimed.

A good deal of correspondence has taken place between the families, some of which is given under the 14th Lord Forbes (see p. 245) and the present Marquis de Forbin was known to the late Lord Forbes who visited Les Issarts.

Besides the well-known and existing family of Forbin, there were numerous other scions of Forbes who sought their fortune in France and formed part of the renowned Gens d'Armes Ecosais, which existed from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. Their last battle was fought in 1747 at Lawfeldt.

In the Rev. W. Forbes-Leith's *Scots Men at Arms*, an illustration is given "Copied from the Gaignières Collection in the Bibliothèque Nationale" of a kneeling knight in full armour, with the following inscription:

"Cy gist Samuel de Forboys, escuyer en son vivant, Seigneur de Presles et de Villiers le Bacle en partie et premier homme d'armes de France, commandant en la Garde escossoise du corps du roy, qui décéda le cinq d'Octobre 1590.

"Que Dieu luy fasse miséricorde."

(Etched plate by Major de Grandmaison.)

A note on this picture says, "Thomas de Forboys, who appears on the muster rolls of the Scots Guards as lieutenant in 1589, bought the estate and lordship of Villiers le Bacle in 1586."

The complete muster rolls for 1589-1612 are missing, but Samuel de Forbois elder and younger occur in 1600-04.

"The functions of the First Man at arms prove the importance of the office he held, he ranked immediately after the Captain and Lieutenant of the Corps. On the day of a battle the King gave him a horse and he commanded a certain number of the Guard. It once happened in the reign of King Henry IV. that, during an engagement, the lieutenant of the company was killed, when im-



COLONEL ARVID FORBES (OBRISTER FORBUS).

(See page 469.)

*(From the portrait in Sweden, by permission from the National
Museum, Stockholm.)*

SWEDISH FORBESES

mediately the King, satisfied with the service and pleased with the person of the First Man at arms, named Forbois, gave him the leadership of the company." The white scarf was the distinctive badge of the guard of Henry IV. and remained so even after his death. Samuel de Forbois, as depicted in the engraving, is wearing this white scarf and beside him are his arms on some kind of hanging—the three bear's heads on a shield with the supporter a greyhound and a savage.

Other Forbes who served in this corps were :—

		Page
1450	Johannes Forbes	—
1507	Woulley Fourbois	181
1554	Thomas Forbys	191
1663	John Forbes, Patrick Forbes	195

A cavalry regiment was raised in 1635 for the French service, and commanded by one Colonel N. Forbes. It served in Germany, was decimated and disbanded in 1638.

SWEDISH FORBESES.

By the kindness of Baron Ungern-Sternberg of Lojo, Finland, the following table of Swedish Forbeses is given, from the Svenska Adeln's Attartavlor.

" Noble family of Forbes—Introduced 1638, extinct *circa* 1700. Branch of an old Scottish family from Aberdeenshire. They came to Finland through Mecklenburgh. "

The tree begins with William, 3rd Lord Forbes, who married Christian Gordon, and Duncan Forbes of Corsindae is given as his son. Duncan was actually the younger *brother* of William, 3rd Lord Forbes, both being sons of James, 2nd Lord. (See p. 295.) Duncan Forbes of Corsindae had a son, Jacob, who went to foreign countries and married Helena Lundi, daughter of the Baron of Cusiknai.

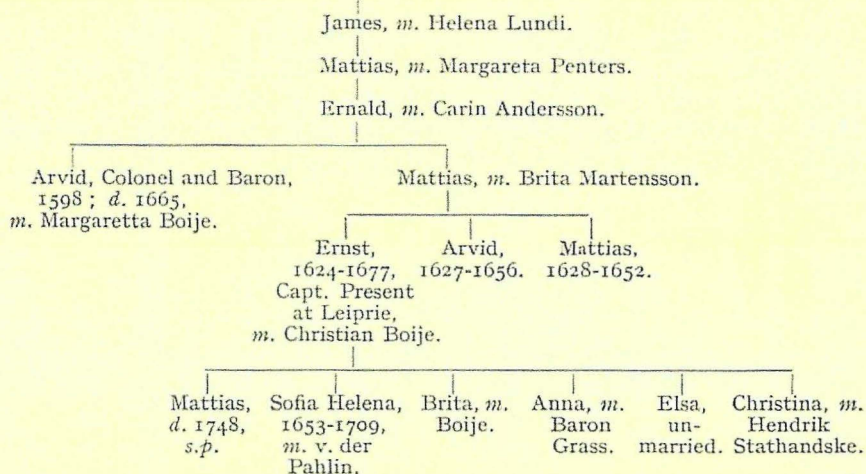
Jacob's son, Mattias, married Margareta Penters, daughter of Mattias Penters of Ruchitz.

Ernald, son of Mattias, a rider in Andreas Boike's regiment, married Carin Andersson and had two sons, Arvid and Mattias. Arvid (whose portrait is here reproduced) was born 1598 and served in the army of Gustavus Adolphus. Was Governor of Stralsund in 1641, and Vice-Governor of Pomerania 1648. He was created a baron in 1652 but he left no surviving son by his wife, Margareta Boije.

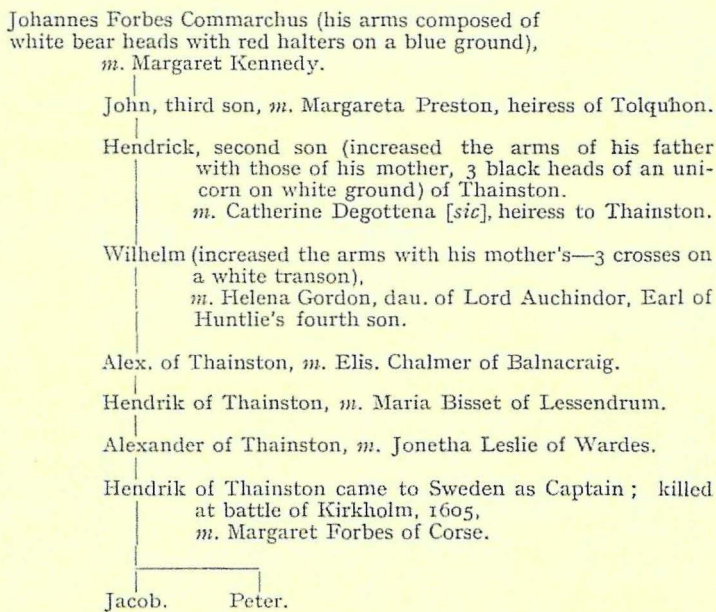
He died in 1665 and she in 1668. Both are buried in beautiful copper coffins in the church of Riddarholm in Stockholm. His brother, Mattias, was also a colonel in the German wars and died in 1641. In 1634 he obtained his pedigree from Aberdeen, signed by twenty-five Forbeses of the family, but the Propinquity books now in Aberdeen do not go back so far. He married Brita Martensson, and left three sons, Ernst, Arvid and Mattias.

THE HOUSE OF FORBES

No. 30. Duncan Forbes of Corsindae.

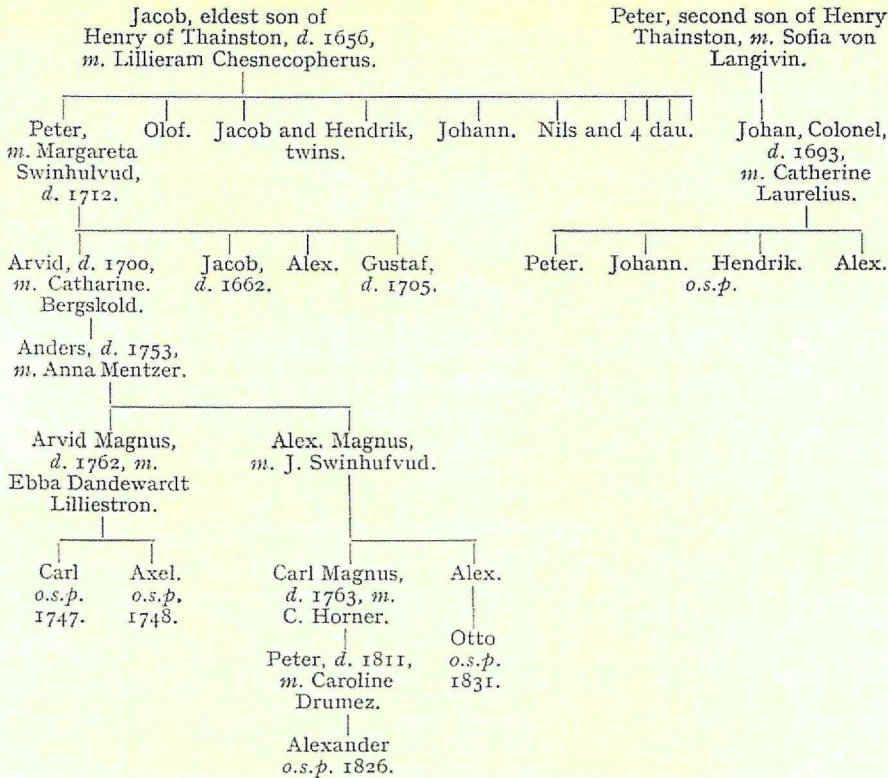


Another branch of the Forbes family in Sweden descends from the Forbeses of Tolquhon, and is thus chronicled in the Swedish records :—



Thus far the tree is somewhat similar to that given on page 402.

SWEDISH FORBESSES



A good many younger sons and daughters have been omitted for lack of space.

From *One Year in Sweden* : Horace Marryat. Scots in Sweden.

Forbes. Early in the reign of Charles IX. (d. 1604) Jacobus Forbescus, a Scots Calvinist, arrived at Upsala for the express purpose of disputing with the Swedish Lutheran divines on the doctrine of transubstantiation. The learned Scot harangued a full assembly of preceptors and students. To his arguments the Swedish clergy replied at full length, but he never answered, and to this day there exists in the Royal Library at Stockholm a copy of the Swedish treatise, each paragraph concluding with "Adhuc Forbescus nihil"—which sentence passed into a proverb.