

William, 13th Lord Forbes

CHAPTER XIV.

WILLIAM, 14TH LORD FORBES.

Born, *circa* 1687. Succeeded, 1716. Died, 1730

WILLIAM, the 14th Lord Forbes, eldest son of the 13th and Anne Brodie, was a man of a very different nature from his father and grandfather. He and his brother James formed part of that most interesting group of "Mystics of the North East," of which such a fascinating account by Professor G. D. Henderson was published by the Third Spalding Club in 1934.

Of his early life very little is known. On April 5th, 1698, the two boys—William, Master of Forbes, and his brother James were made Burgesses of Aberdeen.

While Master of Forbes (until his father's death in July, 1716) William lived very largely in France, and between the years 1710 and 1715 was one of the faithful who gathered round the famous Madame Guyon in her house at Blois until her death.

He was obviously entirely out of sympathy with the traditions of those members of his family who had been Covenanters and Whigs, and in especial with his father, the 13th Lord, who was an ardent Hanoverian of 1688-89; had been appointed by George I. as Lord-Lieutenant of Aberdeenshire and took an active part in the suppression of the Jacobite Rising of 1715. William, the Master, was abroad during the few months that the Rising lasted and was thus spared the trial of divided loyalty to a Whig father and two Jacobite brothers. He was himself friendly with the Earl of Mar and had closer spiritual ties with Lord Pitsligo¹ and the two brothers, Dr. James and Dr. George Garden, all sufferers in the cause of the Old Chevalier, James Stuart. He was also an Episcopalian, was married in Chelsea Old Parish Church, and had his children baptized there. According to Professor Henderson, he had decided leanings towards Roman Catholicism and even (before his marriage) to a religious life, but Madam Guyon, as was her invariable habit, discouraged changes of faith on the part of her followers, counselling them rather to become true Christians in the Church in which they found themselves. His wife appears to have shared her husband's

¹ It is interesting to note in Lord Pitsligo's Diary at Fettercairn that the 14th Lord Forbes had made, unsolicited, in 1717 an effort to get Lord Pitsligo included in the general amnesty, or at least for permission for him to return home; but this was unsuccessful.

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love for quietism, and their third daughter, Jean Marie, born at Aix-la-Chapelle, had a French godmother.

Lord Forbes returned from France in the spring of 1716, partly on account of the illness of his father, who was then in London, and partly moved by anxiety for his two brothers, James and Archibald, both political fugitives, though they escaped arrest. William remained in England, as far as is known, until 1725, when he was again in France.

He had succeeded to the title in July, 1716, and to estates much embarrassed, and in 1720 he married Dorothy or Dorothea Dale, the daughter of a successful merchant, William Dale of Covent Garden, with whom he got a fortune of £20,000, all of which was eventually lost in the South Sea Bubble and other rash ventures.

" July 2, 1720. By a contract of marriage betwixt William Lord Forbes and Dorothea Dale he obliged himself to resign the estate of Forbes etc. in favours of himself and the said Dorothea Dale and longest liver of these two in Liferent for the said Dorothea her liferent use allenary and to the Heirs male lawfully procreate betwixt them, whom failing to the said Lord Forbes his other heirs male whatsoever." (Abstract at Castle Forbes.)

(In her old age Dorothea seems to have given a good deal of trouble to later holders of the title. She died in Edinburgh on October 29th, 1777.)

Lord Forbes offered himself twice for election as a Scottish representative Peer, but was not chosen. It is said on account of his piety.¹

The 14th Lord Forbes was perennially short of money, as the two following documents show :—

LETTER ADDRESSED IN 1704 TO JAMES BRODIE, ON BEHALF OF WILLIAM, MASTER OF FORBES, HIS GRANDSON, AFTERWARDS 14TH LORD FORBES. (*From the Brodie Charter Chest.*) [The Master was then 17.]

" Sir,

" When we consider the noble appearance the Master of Forbes, your grandchild, makes, by the goodness of his person and the promising hopes he gives by the vivacity of his spirit, by his adiction to and love of virtue, goodness and piety, we ar alured into ane admiration and love of him : And by consequent we are engaged to bear all respect and honour to your family and you his grandfather, and which on all occasiones we will cheerfully express. The assurances given to my Lord, your son-in-law, of advanceing him a considerable summ at this time for the credit of his affairs, confirmes us mightily in the esteem and love we bear unto you and has obliged us to cooporat with you and to advance moneys according to our sēäll powers in this difficult time ffor maintaining the honour and

¹ He had also been accused by the Presbytery of Deer of " being tainted with the corrupt doctrines of Bourignonism," as preached by Antoinette Bourignon. (Dr. George Garden, the Quietist, was similarly charged.) Two ministers were appointed to visit the Master of Forbes in June, 1710, and remonstrate with him upon his errors, but they reported " that, upon some weighty considerations, they did not go to him, whereupon they were excused and the matter let fall." (*Presbytery Records.*)

saving the intrest of my Lord Forbes ffamily, which for so long a continuance by the favour of God, have flourished no less in real honesty than in vigour and power. What you act [is] presently to the advantage of so noble a family ; and truly your own is the most applauded by us because it is so suiteable and consonant to the laudable and prudent actings of your father, my Lord Brodie, whose name will be allways in veneration with the wise for his extraordinary goodness and wisdom and particularly for his care to promote the good of all the families descended of his. What we act at this tyme will be insufficient without you and comes far short of our affections, but does the turn, and gives all a great deall of delight because we have well grounded hopes that we and our children will not only see the family of Forbes flourish and prosper but rise to a Lustire and grandeur and renown for wealth and power, amity and uprightness in the person of the Master, your grandchild, whereby the two names will be linked together in a perpetuall endearment thorowout all posterity—nor will the family of Lothian be forgott which gave so worthy a grandmother to our apparent and hopeful chief.

“ We wou’d be too long if we shou’d mention all the kindly thought we duely intertain of your worth and generosity as a father and grandfather and therefore we forbear and only give assurances that ye may haply believe us to be in all sincerity, Sir

“ your most affectionate obliged and faithful
friends and servants

“ Wm. Forbes of Monymusk.	Pitsligo.
W. Forbes of Craigivarr.	Will. Forbes, Tolquhon.
Ar. Forbes of Brux.	Sam Forbes, Foveran.
Arth. Forbes of Breda.	John Forbes of Boyndlie.
J. Forbes of Balfluig.	Wm. Forbes of Lutwharn.
John Leith of Whythaugh. ¹	Tho. Forbes of Gavill.
D. Forbes of Leslie.	Alexr. Forbes of Ludquharn.
Ar. Forbes.	Alexr. Forbes of Rayne.
Arth. Forbes of Echt.	Alex. Forbes of Blacktoun.
Thos. Forbes of Wattertoun.	Robert Forbes of Auchinhove.
— Forbes of Balfour.	Alex. Forbes of Ballogie.
John Forbes of Knapernay.	Will. Forbes of Disblair.
	Arthur Forbes of Schives.”

Letter addressed “ To the Right Honourable the Laird of Brodie,” and endorsed “ Missive by my Lord fforbes Kinsmen, To The Laird of Brodie intreating of him to give some money for the better support of the estate and family of fforbes.”

PETITION—[Undated, but about 1718.]

“ TO THE KING’S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

“ MOST HUMBLY SHEWETH.

“ THAT the late William Lord Forbes my Father did very early appear and in a most remarkable manner distinguished himself at the late happy

¹ An uncle, husband of the Master’s aunt Elizabeth.

Revolution whereby he incurred the Malice and ill Will of his Neighbours in the Country in so much that the Rebels then in Arms Committed great Wast upon his Estate, disabl'd his Tenants to pay their Rents and oblig'd his Family to remove from, and leave his Country Seat Several times.

“ THAT the aforesaid Disorder brought upon his Private Estate and Affairs, together with the Great Charge he was at in Attending the Affairs & Service of the then Government, both at home and in Flanders, involved him in great Debts which Still lye a heavy Burden upon the Estate he has Left.

“ THAT his Kinsman Sr. Robert Forbes a little before the Union bought the Post of one of the Clerks to the Council in Scotland estimated worth near £300 p. Ann. from Robert Pringle Esq^r. and when by an Act of the First British Parliament the Council in Scotland was taken away ; The Lords of Council in Scotland recommended Sr. Robert's Case to her late Majestic that consideration might be had of his Loss. The Queen refer'd Sr. Robert's Memorial and Case to the then Lord High Treasurer, But Sr. Robert in the Course of his Sollicitations entangled himself, and the Lord Forbes at Several times lent him above £1,000, for which he neither had nor ever could recover of Sr. Robert any more than a Right to his Claim for that Post which Sr. Robert had lost and thus the affair continues still, nothing being done or given in consideration of Sr. Robert's claim, nor any part of the money which was lent him recover'd.

“ THAT it is well known how Zealous the said late Lord Forbes had always been for the Protestant Succession in the Illustrious House of Hanover.

“ THAT Your Majesty soon after Your happy accession to the Throne, was graciously pleas'd to Settle and allow to him a Pension of £200 p. ann. besides other marks of Your Royal Favour, and after his Death to continue a Pension of £100 with Yo^r. Pet^r., who after Examining into the Condition of his Father's affairs finds himself Exceedingly Straitned whether to Suffer that ancient Family (First Lord Baron in Scotland) to Extinguish without a Representation, or Subject himself to a Burden heavier than he foresees he will be able to bear. But finding in himself a great willingness to Serve YOUR MAJESTY, and to Exert himself in the best manner he can for the Support of Your Majesty's Interest. THEREFORE and in Consideration of the Premises, He humbly Prays

“ THAT it may Please your MAJESTY to Grant to Your Petr. such a Pension, or other Mark of Your Royal Bounty as may Enable him to preserve his Family from being Extinguished and to Serve Your Majesty in a Measure more Suitable to his Inclinations than his present Circumstances can possibly Allow of.

“ AND your Petr. shall Ever Pray, &c.”

That he did at one time receive a pension of the peculiar sum of £460 per annum is shown by the following entries in the Treasury Accounts : “ In December 1729 William Lord Forbes £115 for his *quarter's* allowance to Midsummer 1728.” This seems afterwards to have been reduced, for in March 1730 he received £100, and from March 25th to June 26th of that year his executors received £101 IS. 11D.

A pension of £200 was also granted to his children, “ to the hands of Archibald Earl of Islay and George Campbell,” and paid for several years.

This may be the same sum of £200 alluded to as paid to his widow. (See page 260.)

Lord Forbes appears to have had a home in London both before and after his marriage, as his three eldest children were born and baptized there, and the two following letters from Dr. Cheyne, a fellow mystic of Aberdeenshire, though undated, are obviously subsequent to the birth of several of his children. The religious work alluded to, written by Lord Forbes, has not been traced. Although Lord Forbes cannot have been more than about 40 at this period, he appears to have been somewhat of a valetudinarian. He was also much troubled by financial matters, and needed all his religious resignation to reconcile him to life as he found it.

Dr. Cheyne was in Bath in 1717 and 1718. He was one of the correspondents of Dr. James Keith, and a well-known physician, though unable to combat a tendency in himself to abnormal stoutness, which has caused Dr. Bulloch to describe him as "A Scottish Falstaff."¹ He is said to have weighed 32 stone and Dr. Keith reports him, in one letter, to be "extremely fat, but in good health."

The letters from Dr. Cheyne to Lord Forbes are as follows:—

"My noble and dear Lord,

"I do not care one farthing whether you write to me or not. I believe you think it an act of sanctity in yourself and a great piece of mortification to your friends not to let them hear of you and I am entirely of the same opinion as to you, but not as to me, and therefore to encrease your merit I pester you with this to let you know I am bodily as well as my time of life ought reasonably to expect, and as to other things *non Liquet*.² I must beg your advice, as my testator, when I tell you all I can say of myself is that I think the Book you were so kind as to produce into the world one of the best, most clear, demonstrative, Convincing, and Edifying I ever met with or ever hope to see while my eyes are open and that's all I can honestly say of myself. As to what Robinson says of your Lordship, isn't not a wonderful thought?"

In a *second* letter Dr. Cheyne offers Lord Forbes his professional advice.

"Some things I could suggest to you in the conduct of your body, might preserve the clearness and use of your faculties and the Tranquility of your spirits longer than possibly you should otherwise. I flatter myself my long experience in nervous diseases would enable me to do this in some measure, but that will be as is best for your Lordship."³

¹ *Aberdeen University Library Bulletin*, 1930. He must have somewhat resembled James the Gross, 7th Earl of Douglas, who was said by a contemporary to "have in him four stone of tallow."

² "It is not clear to me" (a phrase used by the Roman judges if unable to say either "I absolve" or "I condemn").

³ Dr. Cheyne's specialities were gout and nervous diseases, on both of which subjects he wrote voluminously. He also published a treatise on "Health and Long Life," and died in 1743 at the age of 72.

" When you write to your sweet good-conditioned Brother Mr. James, I beg my most humble respects and most warm good wishes to him, his lady and family, and I beg the same to your Lordship's Lady and family and am My Lord
 " Your Lordship's most affectionate faithfull humble servant,

" Geo. Cheyne.

" To the right Honourable

" The Lord Forbes at Mr. Bebane

" ' an Apothecary in Plough Court,'

" Lombard Street, London."

William, 14th Lord Forbes, and his wife, Dorothy, had the honour of naming two of the daughters of the Rev. Alexander Orem, Minister of Forbes, after themselves—Forbesia and Dorothea. Orem was minister from 1757-75.

The family papers in the *Registrum* referring to the 14th Lord are few in number ; in 1719 he had a new Precept of Clare constat from the Duke of Gordon, as heir of his father (see page 247) and granted to his brother :

" Instrument of Sasine, James Forbes of Putachie £256 annually, representing the sum of £4,266 13. 4. remaining of the principal sum and 10,500 marks (£13,000) on the estate.

" William Lord Forbes, witness." His uncles, Arthur of Breda and Archibald of Putachie, guarantors, Craigievar and Foveran also.

" Dated at Putachie 17 Nov. 1718."

William, 14th Lord Forbes, married on September 3rd, 1720, Dorothy Dale (see page 240) and had the following children :—

1. Francis, 15th Lord, born at Chelsea, December 19th, 1721, died August 8th, 1734, and buried there, in the old churchyard.
2. Anne, baptized Chelsea, June 10th, 1724 ; died young.
3. Mary, baptized Chelsea, Nov. 3rd, 1725 ; buried Nov. 9th, 1734.
4. Jean Marie, named after Madame Guyon, born *circa* 1728 ; married, April 22nd, 1748, Colonel James Dundas of Dundas ; died July 28th, 1774 ; had a son, George, Captain of an East Indiaman, and a daughter, Dorothy, married in 1769 George Brown of Elistoun, Roxburghshire.
5. Elizabeth, born January 5th, 1730, married Professor John Gregory of the famous Aberdeen family, grandson of the astronomer James Gregory. She had three sons : another Dr. Gregory (James) ; William, of Balliol College, Oxford ; and John, who died young, and three daughters. Dorothea married the Rev. Archibald Alison ; Margaret married John Forbes of Blackford and was the great-grandmother of Alexander Forbes-Leith, Lord Leith of Fyvie ; and Elizabeth, who died unmarried.

The 14th Lord Forbes died in Edinburgh, June 26th, 1730, and was buried in Holyrood, June 28th. He was not an old man when he died, but always had poor health.

Four months before his death he wrote the following very interesting letter to the Comte de Forbin in France :—

“ London, Feb. 4, 1730.

“ Dear Sir—I had the favour of yours only last post, it being sent up to me from Scotland. I am mighty glad you have recovered your health and wish I were with you under the mild influence of a more southern climat. As for what you write about the family of Forbin, it is no new discovery to me, for we have had a constant tradition that the family of Forbin in France was really Forbes and went from Scotland long agoe during the strick alliance and frequent intercourse between the two kingdoms. I remember to have heard my father say they were Forbesses, and in 1708, that he was glad his cousin (the Chevalier de Forbin, who commanded the French fleet) did not honour us with a visit! And Sir Samuel Forbes of Foveran told that, when he was in Paris about forty or fifty years agoe, he was acquainted with some gentlemen of that name who told him they came originally from Scotland and lately, when I was in France in 1725, the Archbishop of Arles, who is a Forbin, did me the honour to call me his cousin, owned they came from Scotland and their name Forbes. The Archbishop was particularly civil to a friend of mine upon that score and did him a real piece of service. I did design to have waited upon the Archbishop, but was obliged to leave France sooner than I intended upon my wife's account, she being big with child. [*His daughter Mary was born in Nov. 1725, in London.*]

“ As for the different pronounciation or termination of their name, nothing is more common in all nations when strangers come in amongst them, than to alter it a little, if it be harsh in their language—we have instances of it every day in London as Cumming and Hays for Cummin and Hay, besides even in Scotland our name is never, in common discourse pronounced sharp and acute Forbes, but is called Forbees or Forbis and I have even seen it written Forbess, which last way if I remember right Ariosto spells it in his Orlando Furioso, when he introduces us as one of the three Scotch chieftains that brought succors to Charlemagne from Scotland. Shall I add another conjecture which I think probable why our name must suffer alteration in France, especially because of the affinity is found betwixt Forbes and *fourbes* which is not a glorious sound in French! ¹ and at London the common people pronounce our name as if it were written Forbs. Thus you have the various readings of our name.

“ As for the arms and exact genealogies, it is not so easy fixing them for tho' all of the Name of Forbes in Scotland bear my arms with a mark of distinction (some of them bearing just such a chevron with the three heads as is in the Forbin arms) and every single individual from the highest to the lowest can tell how and by whom he came off from our house (a particularity which few Names if any in Brittain have) yet the case is not so with my cousins and Namesakes who went abroad, they not having, it may be, any correspondence with their relatives in Scotland or perhaps dying and leaving their children infants in the cradle, who were thereby very probably deprived of many particulars about their original Relations.

“ That the younger sons in Scotland went formerly for the most part to the wars, is very certain you know, and nine in ten of those to France, where they

¹ This remark had been anticipated in the fifteenth century by a contemporary, who, in a list of the particular qualities of the principal nobles, written in the binding of a “ Book of Hours,” had noted “ La Fourberie des Forbin ! ”

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were either knocked on the head or settled there; several old families by this means having few or none descended from them at home; and our house, though we have a tolerable number of namesakes, has not *one* subsisting in Scotland immediately come of the house, these 350 years till my father's time.¹ This you will the easier conceive when I tell you that in Gustavus Adolphus' time there was fourteen field officers besides others, in the Swedish army of the name of Forbes, who were almost all killed or settled in Sweden and Germany. Those in Sweden have kept their name and I believe their arms, but those in Germany have changed both, tho' they own themselves Forbesses as Mr. Forbes who is with the Duke of Newcastle and of Poland tells; the armes they bear is the boars head and they by the people are called Swineheads in High Dutch from their arms. The occasion I fancy has been that by a corrupt way of speaking in the North of Scotland when they call the Swine a *bare* and the *ursa* a Bear, to confirm which you may remember that a friend of yours and mine drove about in his chariot here one winter with boar's heads instead of Bears, and would not be convinced till he saw the Herald's books. There is indeed one family in Scotland that has kept the arms (with distinction) and changed the name, viz. the Lord Rae whose grandfather used when writing to mine to sign himself *Mackay alias Forbes*. The reason of this change of name was that one of the ancestors of this gentleman having killed a man in a duel was obliged to fly and hide himself under an assumed name.

"Our house was not originally French, and we have no tradition either written or oral on that subject. No one either in fable or history owned the land of Forbes before us. Our archives have been badly kept and we have lost several documents by various accidents, as happened even lately, in my father's time, when a charter was lost given by Alexander King of Scotland more than five hundred years ago to one of my ancestors of the land of Forbes, called in it *Tenementum de Forbes*. I myself saw this charter or rather small piece of parchment of two or three fingers breadth, about twenty years ago. I may one day find it again. Craig² the Lord Clerk Register, mentioned it in his *De Verborum Significatione*. My arms are *Azur* three bears heads couped, *Argent*, muzzled Gules, or if you prefer it Saphire, three bears heads couped, pearl, muzzled ruby. Our mantling blue, doubled with white.

"I am sorry my dear Sir, not to be able to give you at present any further information on the Subject as to which you enquire. I should have been delighted to do so, not only to please you, but to throw light upon a fact the truth of which is very flattering for me and does honor to my family.

"I am Sir, with a sincere attachment

"Your very humble and obedient servant

"Forbes.

"I send you my arms, those of Lord Rae, and those of Lord Grenard, as I find them in a manual of heraldry."

¹The two uncles of the writer, Arthur of Auchintoul and Archibald of Putachie, both married in Aberdeenshire, but did not found families—of his eight great-uncles five died as infants and three were unmarried. His four great-great-uncles were killed in Germany.

²Should be Skene.

APPENDIX FOR WILLIAM, 14TH LORD FORBES.

Sasine of Putachie granted to the new Lord Forbes three years after his father's death, May 15th, 1719.

[175] "Preceptum de Clare constat per Alexandrum Ducem de Gordon ad infeoffandum Gulielmum nunc Dominum de Forbes sicut heredem patris Gulielmi Domini de Forbes ultime defuncti. In terris de Putachie dimidietate terrarum magnæ villæ de Keig alias Auchterkeig et terris de Glentoun, jacentibus infra parochiam de Keig, Regalitatem St. Andreae.

"Reddendo £30 17. 4. monetæ Scotiæ annuatim et faciendo tres sectas ad placita capitalia Regalitatis Sancti Andreae tenenda apud Monimusk.

"Testibus Magistro Jacobi Forbes de Putachie."

The instrument of Sasine followed, dated November 14th. This estate seems to have been always enjoyed by the second brother, James.

BIRLEYMEN'S DECISION ON A HORSE: 1725.

"Att Castle forbes this thirty first day of may 1725 the which day ; We Alexr. Hay in Blarindinnie and William Roger In Bogieside, two sworn Birlymen within the Lordship of forbes being Called upon by Mr James Forbes of quihthauch, Factor and sole Administrator of my Lord Forbes affairs, to prise and gett a price upon a Gray short docket ponne, which horse fell in to the bounds in march last and the said horse having been served and proclaimed att several neighbouring parish Kirks yet ther has no person appeared to claim or prove the said horse and the said Mr James Forbes being now to make use of the said horse and to work him, we have by his order and according to our Knowledge and Conscience considered this sd horse and do think him of no better value than twelve pounds scots, in testimony whereof we have signed this day and date above." (*From a loose paper in the Charter Chest.*)