

# James, 17th Lord Forbes

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### JAMES OCHONCAR, 18TH LORD FORBES.

Born, 1765. Succeeded, 1804. Died, 1843.

" JAMES OCHONCAR was born on the 7th March, 1765, the eldest son of James the sixteenth [*sic*]<sup>1</sup> Lord Forbes, by Catharine, only daughter of Sir Robert Innes, Bart. He was for twenty-six years an officer in the Coldstream Regiment of foot guards, of which he had an ensigncy 1781, and a Lieutenancy 1786. In April 1793, when senior Lieutenant, he joined the first battalion of the regiment, then serving under the Duke of York in Flanders, and was engaged in the Battle of Famars, the storming of Valenciennes, and every other action of importance. After the action of Lincelles in August in the same year he succeeded to the Captain-Lieutenancy, with the rank of Lieut-Colonel, vacant by the fall of Lieut Col Bosville ; and in October he succeeded to a company, by the death of Lieut-Col Edd, who was killed at Dunkirk, and obtained the brevet rank of Colonel, the 3rd of May 1796.

" In 1799 Lord Forbes, then commanding the Grenadier company of the Coldstream regiment, accompanied the force under Sir Ralph Abercromby, destined to attack the Helder ; and was present at every action but one which took place in that country during that short but active campaign.

" The 29th of April 1802, Lord Forbes received the rank of Major-General ; and in the same year he was placed on the staff in command of the troops stationed at Ashford in Kent, where he remained for two years, and was then removed to the charge of the garrison at Dover, where he continued three years, occasionally commanding in the Kent district in the absence of Sir David Dundas and of Lord Ludlow.

" On the appointment of Sir John Stuart in 1808 to be commander of the forces in the Mediterranean, Lord Forbes was named second in command of that army (then consisting of 17,000 men and afterwards increased to about 20,000) and accordingly proceeded in the early part of that year to Sicily, where, soon after his arrival, he received the rank of Lieut-General, 23rd April 1808. He took part in the operations which attempted to replace the Bourbon King on the throne of Naples or the Two Sicilies, from which he had been ousted by Napoleon. Only Sicily was retained by the Allies for King Ferdinand.<sup>2</sup>

" Lord Forbes remained three years and a half in the island, and was recalled (soon after the discomfiture of the attempt at invasion of Sicily by the enemy

<sup>1</sup> By the revised numbering he is now the 17th.

<sup>2</sup> From whom he received the decoration of the Order of St. Januarius, the patron saint of Naples. It was at this period also that Lord Forbes acquired the portrait of brother Archangel. (See page 145.)



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*(From portrait at Castle Forbes.)*

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under Murat actual King of Naples) in consequence of the resignation of Sir John Stuart, and the appointment of Lord William Bentinck to the command of the army in Sicily.

“On his return to England, Lord Forbes was placed on the staff in Ireland, in command of the Cork district, where he was for four years, and three years in Dublin in command of the eastern districts. On his promotion to the rank of general, the 12th August, 1819, he was removed from the staff of Ireland. He became Colonel of the 3rd garrison battalion in 1808, of the 54th Reg. in September 1809, and of the 21st or Royal Scots Fusiliers, in June 1816.

“Lord Forbes succeeded to the peerage on the death of his father July 29th 1804, and was elected a Representative Peer of Scotland.”

The above is largely taken from the obituary account appearing in the *Gentleman's Magazine* at the time of his death, which occurred at Bregenz, on the lake of Constance, May 4th, 1843—he was aged 78.

There is a picture, at Bregenz, of him—in plain clothes, wearing spectacles, with an Order round his neck and one on his left side, and a broad pink band across his chest. There is a faint line of hills in the right hand background.

James Ochoncar, 18th Lord Forbes, born 1765, died 1843; he was Knight of the Royal Sicilian Order of St. Januarius, a General in the army and Colonel of the 21st Scots Fusiliers, married at Crailing, June 2nd, 1792, Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Walter Hunter of Polmood, Peebles, and by her, who died October 11th, 1830, had issue:—

1. James, born April 9th, 1796, Lieut.-Colonel, Coldstream Guards, died suddenly in Italy, February 25th, 1835. (See page 285.)
  2. Walter, 19th Lord, born 1798.
  3. Frederick, born 1803; died, 1826.<sup>1</sup>
  4. William, born and died, 1805.
  5. John, born, 1806; died, 1835.
  6. Robert, H. E. I. Co.'s service, born, 1808; married Frances Hodges. He left 8 sons and 2 daughters, from whom there are numerous descendants. (See tree, page 342.)
1. Caroline Elizabeth, born 1818; married, George Fairholme.
  2. Charlotte Elizabeth, married in 1825 Sir John Forbes of Craigievar and died 1883.
  3. Mary Stuart, married Charles Lee Mainwaring.
  4. Elizabeth Jane, died unmarried, 1891.
  5. Isabella Drummond, married Baron Ernest de Poelnitz.

The 18th Lord Forbes was Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly on four occasions—1825, 1826, 1829, and 1830, which fact is referred to by Sir Walter Scott in his Diary.

<sup>1</sup> “Buried in one of the dormitories below St. John's Chapel, at the West End of Princes Street, with military honours.”

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May 23rd 1829.

"Went today to call on the Commissioner, and saw, at his Grace's Levee, the celebrated divine, soi-disant prophet, Irving.<sup>1</sup>

"Waited on the Commissioner at five o'clock, and had the pleasure to remain till eight, when the debate in the Assembly was over. The question which employed their eloquence was whether the celebrated Mr. Irving could sit there as a ruling elder.<sup>2</sup> It was settled, I think justly, that a divine, being of a different order of officers in the Kirk, cannot assume the character of a ruling elder, seeing he cannot discharge its duties."

July 4th 1830.

"We are to dine with the Skenes today. Which we did accordingly, meeting Mr. and Mrs. Strange, Lord Forbes, and other friends." . . .

16th Oct. 1831.

". . . A visit from the Honorable John Forbes,<sup>3</sup> son of my old and early friend Lord Forbes, who is our fellow-passenger. The ship expects presently to go to sea. I was very glad to see this young officer and to hear his news. . . ."

The 18th Lord Forbes was devoted to his woods, and between the years 1805 and 1814 planted no fewer than 6,888,360 trees on his property. They were of various kinds as Larch, Scots Fir, Spruce, Oak, Elm, Beech, Alder, Balm of Gilead Fir, Rowan, Ash, etc.

In 1805 he planted	.	.	.	480,920
„ 1806	„	.	.	564,000
„ 1807	„	.	.	60,960
„ 1808	„	.	.	1,704,200
„ 1809	„	.	.	957,840
„ 1810	„	.	.	641,400
„ 1811	„	.	.	703,440
„ 1812	„	.	.	505,560
„ 1813	„	.	.	703,200
„ 1814	„	.	.	566,840
				6,888,360

Thus nearly rivalling the second Lord Fife, who, in the end of the 18th century twice received the Gold Medal of the Royal Agricultural Society for his exertions in afforestation.

The only papers connected with the 18th Lord in the family charter chest are a few personal letters—one is from Lord Amherst.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Edward Irving, minister of the Scottish Church in London, was deposed March, 1833, and died December, 1834, aged 42. Scott says he had "a diabolical squint," and "madness in his eye"; he founded the Catholic Apostolic Church.

<sup>2</sup> That is, as a lay-member of the General Assembly of Church of Scotland.

<sup>3</sup> Fifth son of above.

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“ Palermo, 16th May 1809.

“ My dear Lord,

“ I have many thanks to return your Lordship for your kind letter and for your congratulations on our arrival in Sicily. We come here at a very critical and interesting moment, when the prospect opens of the restoration of the Kingdom of Naples to its rightful owner and principally by means of a British Force. We look with great anxiety to the progress of the Austrians in the North of Italy on which operations in the South must entirely depend. The Neapolitan account of the battle in Germany will I trust turn out to be a gross violation of the truth, for the Governor of Trieste sends us word here that after 4 days fighting Buonaparte was completely beaten by the Archduke. The affair of Fontana Fredda appears to have been a brilliant one and the French I believe are certainly retreating towards the Adige. Our home news does not seem to be less encouraging, but I find it was our Dover friend Col. Congreve and not Lord Cochrane that achieved the destruction of the French ships in Basque Road. Lady Amherst and I have both been in Italy but Sicily is new to us. All that we have yet seen of Palermo delights us . . . I assure you it would give us the greatest pleasure to have an opportunity of seeing you here and I hope you will give us that satisfaction unless indeed you should obtain a footing in Naples and then we will come and see you.

“ Your faithful and obedient servant,

“ Amherst.”

And one from himself, written from Cork, April 18th, 1813, to Peter Farquharson of Whitehouse, about the amalgamation of the parishes of Tough and Keig. Farquharson was a heritor of the former parish and Lord Forbes promises him that in the new church to be built with the assistance of a Government grant, “ every attention in so far as depends on me shall be paid to your interest and accommodation and that of your tenants.” He further refers to the new bridge to be built over the Don near the manse of Keig, “ to the great improvement of our district.” The magnificent arch of this bridge was designed by Telford.

TO THE 18TH LORD FORBES FROM THE DUKE OF GORDON.

“ Gordon Castle.

“ Wednesday, July 24 1822.

“ My dear Lord,

“ I received your letter by the return of my bearer. With regard to the road through my estate of Rhynie to Alford I beg leave to refer your Lordship to the correspondence enclosed, which I hope will be satisfactory. I propose to leave home the first week in August, as I have certain information that the King is coming to Scotland.<sup>1</sup> I shall have some company here on Tuesday next, the 30th, among others Colonel and Mrs. Grant from Cullen House, to eat a turtle which my friend Cluny sent me who I also expect, and nothing could gratify me

<sup>1</sup> George IV., on his famous visit to Edinburgh.

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more than your Lordship and Lady Forbes being so obliging as to join the company with Mr. and Mrs. Fairholme. I beg to offer my kind remembrances to Lady Forbes and your Lordship's family and have the Honour to be, my dear Lord, Yr Lordship's very sincere and faithful servt.

"Gordon."

APPENDIX FOR JAMES OCHONCAR, 18TH LORD FORBES.

In the time of this Lord Forbes was built the present Castle Forbes, on the site of the old House of Putachie.

THE STATEMENT OF JAMES FORBES RESIDING AT WOODBURN COTTAGE, WHITEHOUSE, PARISH OF TOUGH, ABERDEENSHIRE, RELATIVE TO THE BUILDING OF CASTLE FORBES.

"I was born in 1795, I remember the foundation of this Castle being laid on the 15th June 1815. There was no ceremony on the occasion. A stone was prepared for the purpose but not being required was ultimately used in the building. The late Lord Forbes was then in Ireland. Some time afterwards ten pounds were sent over to be distributed amongst the work people.

"The Architect of the Castle was a Mr. Simpson of Aberdeen, but he made some mistakes in the construction of the North Staircase which being communicated to Lord Forbes, led to an architect (whose name I do not remember) being sent from Edinburgh, and Mr. Simpson was then discharged and succeeded by Mr. Smith of Aberdeen under whose superintendence the building was completed in about six years. The family came to reside in the Castle before it was finished, but only for a time.

"My Father occupied a farm called Bogenthort, now known as Woodlands, and being somewhat pinched in circumstances owing to two successive bad seasons, to help him I came to the Castle to work as a Mason and labourer, and remained till it was finished.

"The greater part of the stone used in building the Castle was brought from the wood down near the present saw mill (Craigpot), the rest came from Bennachie and being of a better description was used for the mouldings of the windows etc.

"I remember the old house of Putachie, the entrance front of which it was originally intended should form part of the present building, but as there was a difficulty in making the old and new windows correspond it was finally pulled down.

"The old house was nothing like so large as the present one.

"The stones of which the staircase is constructed and also those with which the Hall is paved (in the present building) came from the South.

"Lord Forbes did not come to inspect the Castle till he came to reside here. He was to have come over when the foundation was laid, but something happened just then to prevent him.

"During the building of the Castle, only one man was hurt from a fall which broke his leg.

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" A large ash tree, which stood very near where the present one stands by the terrace, was cut down and used as a beam in the dining room. I remember when I was occupied in pulling down the former kitchen Wall I came upon a stone set in the wall upside down which I broke with my pick, the pieces of which now lay under a tree close by the terrace.

" We sent for the Schoolmaster to decipher the inscription and made out that it came from Drumminor. The kitchen wall appeared to be very old.

" The mason who contracted for the building of Castle Forbes was Mr. Alexander Wallace of Drumnabeg, Cluny, Aberdeenshire.

" Under the left hand window in the round room is the foundation stone of the tower.

" There is a very old stone, a rude representation of a boar's head, which was taken out of the wall above the back gate of the old house of Putachie. Lord Forbes wrote from Ireland to beg that it might be preserved.

" It was found at Logie-Braes of Forbes.

" The said James Forbes already mentioned remembers having seen at the Castle Forbes a small gold mounted sword bearing the following inscription :

" ' In the name of God, my country and King James the fifth.'

" He also remembers hearing the following anecdote—Flora Macdonald after her trial in London on her way home through Aberdeen being at a ball there Lord Forbes danced with her, which gave great offence.

" (Sgd) James Forbes. Sept. 11th 1867."

*Note.*—The above is taken from a book of notes, press reports, photos, etc., made by the Hon. Charlotte Forbes, daughter of General James Ochoncar, 18th Lord Forbes, and wife of Sir John Forbes of Craigievar. The account of the building of Castle Forbes is in her handwriting, the signature of James Forbes and date—written on a separate piece of paper—being gummed on.

The broken inscribed stone referred to is the coat of arms, now built into the wall by the side door, (See illustration, facing p. 45).

The stone, a rude representation of a "boar's" head is obviously the *bear* stone. (See Preliminary Chapter, page 8.)

The sword is not a gold mounted weapon but a steel claymore. The inscription: "For God, my Country and King James 8th," and on the reverse side "Prosperity to Scotland and no Union."

There is also a gold-mounted presentation sword, and no doubt James Forbes was confusing the two.

INSCRIPTION ON THE GRAVESTONE IN THE ENGLISH CEMETERY AT LEGHORN OF  
LT. COL. THE HON. JAMES FORBES, WHO DIED 1835.

" Sacred to the memory of Lt. Colonel the Hon. James Forbes of H.B.M. Coldstream Regt. of Guards, eldest son of General Lord Forbes of Scotland who in the prime of life and at a moment of participation in the splendour and festivities of a ball in the Pitti Palace at Florence on the 25th of February 1835 was suddenly removed from this world by an attack of apoplexy in the 38th year of his age,

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thus affording an awfully striking instance of the instability of human enjoyment and of the uncertainty of human life. His afflicted family have caused this stone with this simple record of his untimely fate which it bears to be placed over his grave."

James Forbes had been more than twenty years in his regiment and served at Waterloo with his brother Walter.

MEMORANDUM BEQUEST BY JOHN FORBES ESQ<sup>r</sup> LATE OF SKELLATER, IN HIS OWN HANDWRITING. DECEMBER 27TH, 1825.

"I hereby Will and Bequeathe unto General, The Right Honorable James Ochochar, Lord Forbes, and to his immediate Heir and Successor, the Portrait in oils, of the late Marshal General Forbes of Skellater, together with the Frame, and the large Case belonging to it—the above-mentioned Portrait remaining during her lifetime in Mrs Urquhart of Meldrum's possession.<sup>1</sup> John Forbes."

The picture is still at Castle Forbes.

<sup>1</sup> James Urquhart of Meldrum, *b.* 1750, *m.* 1788, Helen, daughter of William Forbes of Skellater. He (James Urquhart) died in 1835.