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Robert Fortune—Plant Hunter

罗伯特·福琼——植物猎人

David Kay Ferguson



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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

罗伯特·福琼:植物猎人=Robert Fortune—Plant Hunter:英文/(奥)戴维·弗格森(David Ferguson)著. —合肥:安徽大学出版社,2017.10

ISBN 978-7-5664-1451-9

I. ①罗… II. ①戴… III. ①罗伯特·福琼(1812—1880)—传记—英文 IV. ①K835.616.15

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2017)第 229089 号

罗伯特·福琼——植物猎人

(奥)戴维·弗格森 著

出版发行: 北京师范大学出版集团
安徽大学出版社
(安徽省合肥市肥西路3号 邮编 230039)
www.bnupg.com.cn
www.ahupress.com.cn

印 刷: 安徽昶颀包装印务有限责任公司

经 销: 全国新华书店

开 本: 184mm×260mm

印 张: 28

字 数: 681千字

版 次: 2017年10月第1版

印 次: 2017年10月第1次印刷

定 价: 139.00元(含光盘)

ISBN 978-7-5664-1451-9

策划编辑: 李 梅 李 雪

责任编辑: 李 雪

责任印制: 赵明炎

装帧设计: 李 军

美术编辑: 李 军

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反盗版、侵权举报电话:0551-65106311

外埠邮购电话:0551-65107716

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Preface

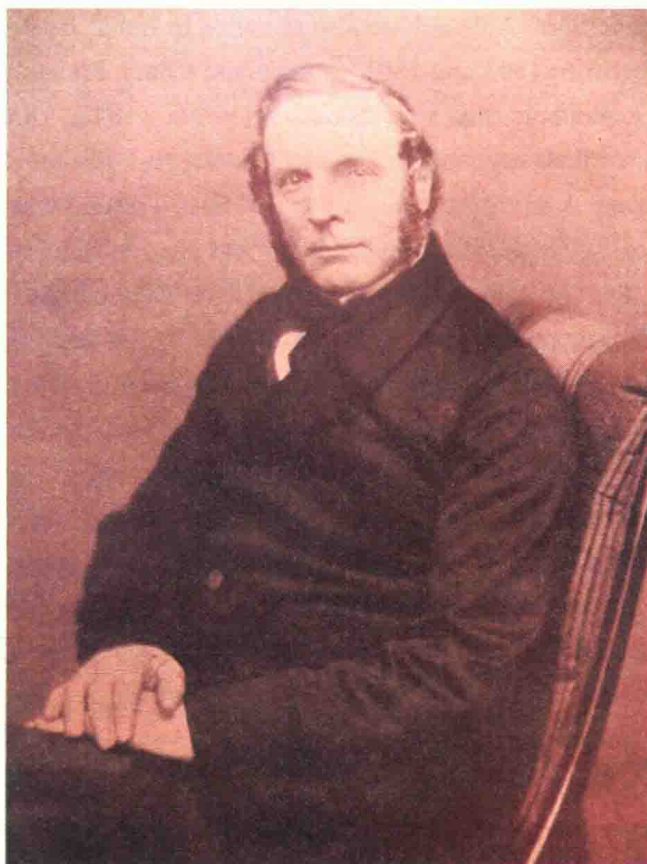
China is known as a botanical bonanza with more than 33,000 species of flowering plants, many of which are of ornamental value. Without them our western gardens would be all the poorer. Robert Fortune (1812 – 1880) was one of the first professional plant hunters to recognize the richness of the Chinese flora. Although he also travelled to India, Japan and the Philippines, he spent most of his time between 1843 and 1861 on mainland China. Probably because Fortune gave a full account of his exploits in the four books he wrote (1847, 1852, 1857, 1863), most biographers have restricted their accounts of the plant hunter to a resumé of his books.

Although he commented on all he saw in the Far East, Fortune was in many ways a very private person. His books give no indication that he was married and sired six children. Some authors have assumed that he was an inveterate bachelor! Unfortunately for the prospective biographer, his personal papers seem to have been destroyed by his family after his death in 1880. By travelling in Robert Fortune's footsteps and documenting what is left of the fast-disappearing local culture, I have attempted to get closer to the man and the emotions he must have experienced.

The present book aims to:

- (1) Summarize Fortune's four books, which come to over 1,640 pages.
- (2) Identify those places which Fortune visited. As Fortune was writing before the Wade-Giles system of transliteration of Chinese names had been invented, he used his own phonetic system. In the present book the official Pinyin System, which is currently used in Chinese publications and maps, has been employed, so the modern traveller should experience no difficulty in following in Fortune's footsteps.
- (3) Give the presently accepted names of the plants and animals which Fortune mentioned. In this way it should be possible to reassess the number of plants Fortune was responsible for introducing.
- (4) Provide background information on the people and events, which Fortune mentioned. Fortune only referred to people by their surname, partly on account of Victorian etiquette, but also because many of these people were well known to his mid-19th Century readership. Throughout the book some 70 potted biographies of Fortune's acquaintances/friends and other personalities are included, along with boxes dealing with important events, and information about six of the ships Fortune travelled on.
- (5) Over the past ten years I have attempted to discover as much as possible about Fortune and his times. While most readers will implicitly assume that this biography has been fully researched, for those critical minds I have documented the sources of information used in the form of numbered notes. These notes and the references are included on the CD-ROM inside the cover of this book. In this way, the reader can pursue certain leads, expose inherent weaknesses, and pinpoint what remains to be done. The author cannot claim to be a specialist in all the fields covered.

(6) Fortune's books contain only a few line drawings. By providing a wide range of illustrations, the present book aims at giving those readers, who have not had an opportunity to visit the Far East, a taste of the countryside through which the plant hunter travelled. Unfortunately, few authors writing about Fortune have ever been to China, Japan, India and the Philippines!



Robert Fortune (1812–1880)

Acknowledgements

The idea for this book started to crystallize in 2006. The next year the author travelled to Scotland to work at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE). With the support of Dr. Ian Hedge and the aid of librarian Graham Hardy, he consulted various sources of information. James McCarthy took him to the National Library of Scotland, where with the help of Rachel Thomas he viewed the ledgers and Fortune correspondence in The John Murray Archive. He also visited Fortune's birthplace, where Rev. Duncan Murray (Chirnside) showed him round the area, and helped him search for relevant tombstones in a number of graveyards. A visit was also paid to Tranent Parish Churchyard to look for the grave of Fortune's youngest daughter, Alice Durie. There Rev. Tom Hogg supplied him with copies of old ordnance survey maps, and suggested he visit Haddington Library. This library proved to be an excellent source of information on the Durie family, thanks to Craig Statham, Bill Wilson and other members of staff. Two other books on local history were kindly lent by Sally and Guy Turner (Elphinstone). I am also grateful to Eric Imery (Edinburgh) for scouring the records for information on Fortune's family.

In London the author was given access to the Minutes of the Garden Committee of the Chelsea Physic Garden at Apothecaries' Hall thanks to archivist Dee Cook, and with the help of Marijke Booth was able to consult the day—books in the archives of the auctioneers Christie's. A visit was also paid to Brompton Cemetery to search for Robert Fortune's grave. With the aid of Jay Roos the weathered stone was finally located. In 2010 this limestone slab was covered by a newly inscribed granite slab.

In the autumn of 2007 the first of a number of excursions was undertaken in China with members of Professor Lǐ Chéngsēn's team from the Institute of Botany in Běijīng. I should particularly like to thank Dr. WÁNG Yǔfēi for financing and leading the trip to Níngbō and the Zhōushān Islands, and Lǐ Jīnfēng and Lǐ Yàméng, who in addition showed me some of the places Fortune visited in and around Běijīng. In 2008 Yàméng accompanied me to various places in Tiānjīn Province, while Jīnfēng acted as driver and guide during another trip to the Níngbō area in 2010. This trip was financed by Dr. LĚNG Qín [Nánjīng Institute of Geology and Palaeontology, now Bryant University, with the help of the CAS/SAFEA International Partnership Program for Creative Research Teams, and The Pilot Project of Knowledge Innovation of CAS (Grant No. KZCX2-YW-105)]. In May 2008 Dr. LĚNG and the University of Vienna jointly paid for an excursion to the tea districts in Zhèjiāng and Fújiàn, which I undertook with my department's photographer, Rudolf Gold. Our guide was WÁNG Lì (Nánjīng Institute of Geology and Palaeontology, now Xīshuāngbǎnnà Tropical Botanical Garden). We should like to acknowledge the help of Jiǎng Yúyīng (Xīn'ānjiāng) during this trip. Thanks are also due to Professor WU Chia-li (Tamkang University) for inviting the author to Táiwān in 2010. There with the help of LIAN Su-chiu and WANG Chao-ping he first set eyes on *Lilium formosanum* and *Tetrapanax papyrifera* respectively.

In April 2009 it was time to visit some of the places in the Lesser Himalayas where Fortune's

tea plants had been cultivated. The excursion was organized by Dr. Sudha Gupta (Kolkata) and Mr. Sandip Aditya (Chandannager). We were accompanied part of the way by Dr. Gupta, her sister Deepa and Dr. Ruby Ghosh (Lucknow). Later that year the author was invited to Japan by Professor OHSAWA Masahiko and his wife Mutsuko, who allowed him to stay in their apartment, showed him round the Tokyo area, and took him to Yokohama and Kamakura. In Yokohama we were guided by KITAMURA Keiichi, in Kamakura by TAMABAYASHI Yoshio. That left Nagasaki, which Fortune briefly visited in 1860 and 1861. In 2012 Professor WANG San-lang (Tamkang University) put the author in touch with Professor MATSUDA Masako (Nagasaki University), who arranged a wonderful team consisting of her colleague Professor MORINAGA Haruno, a Nagasaki guide YAMAGUCHI Fumiko, and a local historian HARADA Hiroji, which enabled him to see more of the port than he had expected in just over two days. MISUMI Koyo kindly showed us round Myo-gyo-ji where Fortune had stayed. The author would also like to thank KUWABARA Setsuko (Berlin) for suggesting a number of improvements to an earlier version of Chapter 8. He also acknowledges the help of JIǎ Hui, who searched the Chinese Internet for additional information, checked the Pinyin spelling of various persons and places, and created maps of India and Japan. Lǐ Jīnfēng was responsible for making the maps of China and London.

In July 2014 the author made another trip to the UK to see those people and places for which there had not been enough time in 2007. In London he visited Battersea Park, what remains of the Cremorne Pleasure Gardens, and thanks to the then curator Christopher Bailes saw round the Chelsea Physic Garden, which Fortune had once run. In Brompton Cemetery he examined Fortune's revamped gravestone, and with the help of Jay Roos looked for the graves of other personalities. John Murray VII kindly showed him the room in Albemarle Street where so many famous writers met. Teresa Magner then drove him to Cranleigh and Woking to see where some of Robert Fortune's descendants had lived, and consult various documents at the Surrey History Centre. He examined the letters the plantsman had written to the 13th Earl of Derby in Liverpool's Central Library, and with the help of Dr. Tony Parker (Liverpool World Museum) photographed the birds Fortune had collected in the Philippines in 1845. In Scotland he had the good fortune to meet Thomas A. Dykes, Ian & Sarah Russell and Martin Steven, the owners of a number of farms once run by Fortune's descendants. They were able to provide him with useful background information. A meeting with Kenneth McLean, Ronald Morrison, and Elizabeth Snow of the Dunse History Society was also highly productive. Alina Varjoghe gave him permission to look round Carberry Tower and Gardens, the seat of the Elphinstone Estate, for which Fortune's eldest son once worked. The trip was rounded off by a week spent in the RBGE Library. I am especially indebted to Graham Hardy for his help.

This by no means exhausts the list of contributors. To save space, other people who supplied specific information have been acknowledged at the relevant place in the text.

It would have been impossible to write this book without the help of many, often anonymous, contributors to the Internet.

(1) The Internet provides a wide range of information in such diverse fields such as genealogy, Asian history, and plant nomenclature. If handled with care it is an invaluable source of

knowledge.

(2) Good web pages such as Wikipedia often cite their sources which can be consulted in libraries, or sometimes found on the Internet itself (e.g. googlebooks, JSTOR).

(3) The Internet has speeded up the search for the necessary literature. One no longer has to passively wait for an interesting book to be offered in a catalogue, but can actively locate a bookseller with the desired title using one of the search machines (e.g. AbeBooks). I am indebted to Mike Park for drawing my attention to this online bookmarket.

The illustrations for this book were selected with the help of my good friend Rudolf Gold. Finally, I should like to thank Dr. Yǐn Jiànlóng (Héféi) for contacting Anhui University Press on my behalf. From the very start the branch proprietor, Lǐ Méi and her team proved very supportive.

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Chapter 1 From Childhood to Manhood in Scotland

1.1 The World at War

At the dawn of the 19th Century, Europe was in a state of turmoil. By a combination of brute force and some heavy-handed diplomacy, Napoleon Bonaparte (1769 – 1821; **Fig. 1.1**) had subjugated large parts of continental Europe between the Russian border and the Atlantic.¹ If it had not been for the Royal Navy, his plans to invade Great Britain in 1803 – 1805 might well have proved successful.² After the Battle of Trafalgar on 21 October 1805, Britain ruled the waves, and brought pressure to bear on Napoleon by blockading European ports from Brest to the Elbe (“Fox’s Blockade”, on 16 May 1806).³ Napoleon countered with his “Continental System” in 1806, whereby British goods were banned from those parts of continental Europe he controlled.⁴ Although Britain’s exports suffered, it did not bring the UK to its knees because the system also acted against the interests of many of the countries in Napoleon’s alliance.⁵ As a result, it was often blatantly flouted.⁶

Portugal, an old ally of Great Britain was unwilling to apply Napoleon’s blockade, so the French felt obliged to invade this country.⁷ With the help of the Spanish, who were interested in regaining at least partial control over Portugal, an attack was launched in 1807.⁸ General Jean-Androche Junot (“The Tempest”, 1771 – 1813) entered Lisbon on 30 November 1807, just too late to capture the regent Prince João (1767 – 1826) and the Portuguese fleet.⁹ French control of Portugal could have continued indefinitely as long as Spain was France’s ally.¹⁰ Underestimating their national pride, Napoleon assumed the Spanish would prefer an “enlightened” regime to their own autocratic monarchy.¹¹ However, when the French turned on their one-time ally in 1808, placing the Spanish royal family under house-arrest, and installing Napoleon’s elder brother Joseph (1768 – 1844) on the throne, the Spanish started a long, drawn-out campaign to rid their land of the French.¹² What the Spanish soldiers lacked



Fig. 1.1 Napoleon Bonaparte (1769 – 1821). In the year that Fortune was born, Napoleon made the fateful decision to invade Russia. This led to his downfall.

in training they compensated by their patriotism.¹³ Although they were beaten countless times, they always managed to bounce back. The French policy of requisition, to save bringing the troops’ rations from France, did not help to win the Spanish hearts and minds, and foraging parties often suffered a horrible fate at the hands of partisans (**Fig. 1.2**).¹⁴ The Spanish and

Portuguese forces were backed by a number of British expeditionary forces under a succession of generals. However, because they were small compared with Napoleon's Grande Armée, they had to act cautiously to keep casualties low.¹⁵

In the meantime the Russians, having lost an important source of revenue since they joined Napoleon's Continental System (Treaty of Tilsit, on 7 July 1807), started to reexport shipbuilding materials (wood for masts and planking, hemp for caulking, linseed and pitch as protectants, iron for cannons, and potassium for gunpowder) to Britain on 31 December 1810.¹⁶ Aware that others might follow the czar's example, Napoleon felt obliged to invade Russia to teach the czar a lesson.¹⁷ In order to assemble a sufficiently large army, he was forced to withdraw 30,000 men from Spain and fight a war on yet one more front.¹⁸

Napoleon's invasion of Russia was doomed to failure from the outset. Due to the immense size of the army, the logistics of organizing the campaign proved immense.¹⁹ By the time the campaign got underway it was already midsummer.²⁰ Owing to their inferior numbers, the Russians dared not face Napoleon's army, but retreated eastwards, drawing the Grand Armée further and further inland with the result that its line of supply became severely attenuated, with increasing numbers of soldiers being transferred to protecting the depots and garrisoning the cities captured.²¹ The very day Napoleon entered Moscow, that is, 15 September 1812, the Russians torched the city, destroying most of its centre.²² By the time Napoleon realized that Czar Alexander (1777 – 1825) was not going to capitulate it was mid-October, and winter was not far off.²³ On 17 October Napoleon ordered his army to start retreating in two days' time.²⁴ A break-out in a southerly direction was contained by the Russians, so the Grand Armée was forced to follow the impoverished route they had taken on the way to Moscow. By mid-November with night temperatures falling as low as -30°C frostbite was common, and many soldiers perished of exposure.²⁵ Others suffered a worse fate at the hands of the peasants, who had been maltreated by the soldiers on their outward journey.²⁶ By the time the Grand Armée finally reached Poland, it had lost at least 83% of its troops.²⁷

1812 also represented the turning point in the war on the Iberian Peninsula. By the late summer the Spanish, with British backing, were able to push the French out of half the area they had occupied since 1808.²⁸ However, it took until 1814 to completely free the country of the French.²⁹ After fighting a number of rearguard actions, the sheer weight of enemy numbers finally forced Napoleon to abdicate on 6 April 1814.³⁰ He was appointed sovereign of Elba, a remarkably mild sentence for someone who was responsible for millions of deaths.³¹ Napoleon's escape from Elba, his defeat at Waterloo, incarceration on St. Helena, and slow death by arsenic poisoning are too well known to require repetition.³²

While the Spanish were fighting their War of Independence, their colonies in America were

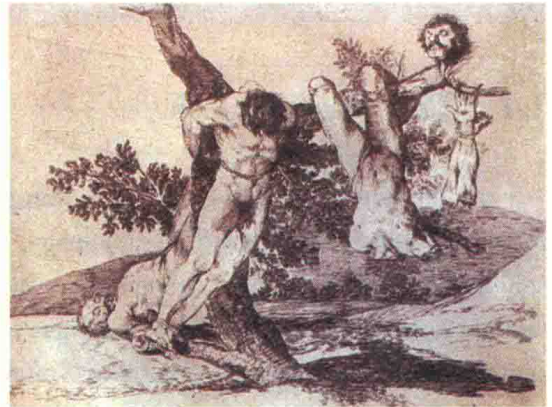


Fig. 1.2 The brutality of the Peninsular War (1808 – 1814) was portrayed in Francisco Goya's "Los desastres de la guerra".

largely left to their own devices. In 1809 when it looked as though the French would gain complete control of the Iberian Peninsula, there was a fear that the Spanish dominions would also fall into their hands.³³ To prevent this from happening, the American colonies established local juntas (committees) to govern the vicerealties in the name of the deposed King Ferdinand VII (1784 – 1833; **Fig. 1.3**).³⁴ Although some dominions became autonomous, at this stage there was little popular desire for complete independence from Spain.³⁵ However, once Ferdinand was freed from his exile in Valençay (C France) in 1814 at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, he reestablished an autocratic rule, reinstated the Inquisition, and organized the reconquest of Latin America by General Pablo Morillo (1775 – 1837) using 10,000+ hardened troops that had fought Napoleon.³⁶ By the end of 1816 only N Argentina remained in the hands of the American “rebels”.³⁷ However, not only had the colonies grown accustomed to home rule, but the reconquest was accompanied by such brutality that it turned the Latin Americans against the monarchy.³⁸ With the antimonarchists outnumbering the monarchists in Latin America, it was only a matter of time before the various vicerealties gained their independence.³⁹ Without a navy since Trafalgar, without funds following the Napoleonic War, and political wrangling at home, Spain was incapable of restoring its control over Latin America.⁴⁰ When some of the soldiers being assembled for the reconquest of Argentina mutinied in Cádiz on 1 January 1820, the revolt spread to other disgruntled units that considered they had been poorly treated for their role in freeing Spain and restoring Ferdinand VII to power.⁴¹ The uprising effectively ended all hopes of a reconquest of the overseas dominions.⁴² By late 1821 all territories except Quito (Ecuador), Peru, Upper Peru (Bolivia), Cuba and Puerto Rico were independent.⁴³ By February 1826 only Cuba and Puerto Rico with their strong Spanish garrisons were still under Spanish rule.⁴⁴



Fig. 1.3 King Ferdinand VII (1784 – 1833). Most of Spain’s South American colonies were lost during Ferdinand’s reign.

Great Britain also came to blows with its former colony, the USA. The Americans were unhappy that the British were arming the native Americans, with the restrictions placed on their trade with continental Europe caused by the Royal Navy blockades, and the fact that some of its citizens were being impressed into His Majesty’s Service.⁴⁵ Impressment took place not only in British ports but on the high seas, leaving some American ships dangerously undermanned.⁴⁶ After the British boarded the USS “Chesapeake” on 22 June 1807 to retake three seamen who had deserted from HMS “Melampus”, British ships were banned from entering US ports.⁴⁷ The USA imposed an embargo on Britain on 22 December 1807, hoping to bring the UK to its knees. While Lancashire cotton mills were forced to cut back or close down, and the Royal Navy had once more to seek new sources of timber for its shipbuilding programme, the loss of trade harmed the US more than Britain.⁴⁸ At the beginning of March 1809, at the end of President Thomas Jefferson’s term, the Embargo Act was finally revoked and replaced by a Non-Intercourse Act closing trade (both exports and imports) with both the British Empire and those areas controlled

by France, and prohibiting their armed vessels from entering US ports.⁴⁹ Thousands of British firms failed, Parliament was petitioned by the manufacturers to rescind the Orders-in-Council, and rioting swept the Midlands in the Spring of 1812.⁵⁰ Although the British had finally agreed in 1811 to release the two surviving American sailors and pay reparations for the Chesapeake incident, the “War Hawks” in the US Government continued to advocate hostilities once the time was ripe.⁵¹ For the bellicose “War Hawks” and “Scarecrows”, who advocated intimidating Britain with sabre-rattling, there was no way back without loss of face.⁵² Moreover, US President James Madison (1751 – 1836; **Fig. 1.4**) was unwilling to admit that he had been tricked into believing that Napoleon had rescinded his Continental System.⁵³ With mixed messages coming out of Washington, nobody in Britain took the US bluster seriously.⁵⁴ Opposition spear-headed by Henry Brougham (1778 – 1868) eventually led the British Cabinet to revoke its Orders-in-Council on 23 June 1812, blissfully unaware that the USA had already declared war on 18 June 1812.⁵⁵

With the Napoleonic Wars raging in Europe, war with the US only worsened an already bad situation.⁵⁶ Many British thought that the USA was taking advantage of their preoccupation in Europe to conquer British North America (Canada).⁵⁷ Britain did not declare war on the USA until 9 January 1813, hoping no doubt that President Madison would rescind his declaration of war.⁵⁸ In a tit for tat both sides captured one another’s ships.⁵⁹ While the Royal Navy’s losses wounded its sense of invincibility, the USA simply had too few ships to gain the upper hand.⁶⁰ On 1 June 1813 the British won a moral victory when they captured the USS “Chesapeake”, which henceforth became HMS “Chesapeake”, before being broken up in 1820.⁶¹

On land, with few troops available and little chance of reinforcements arriving from war-ridden Europe, the Canadian Governor-General Sir George Prévost (1767 – 1816) was forced to take a largely defensive stand.⁶² On the other hand, with US Presidential elections looming on 3 December 1812, the Republicans did not want to raise taxes to pay for a well-equipped force to invade Canada.⁶³ The dream of driving the British out of North America soon evaporated, as the French Canadians and the US settlers failed to welcome the US invaders and rise against the British.⁶⁴ Burning and pillaging by the US troops did not help to endear them to the local populace.⁶⁵ Drafty tents, poor food, disease, irregular pay, and incompetent leadership lowered the soldiers’ morale.⁶⁶ To complicate the issue, some of the US generals like Stephen Van Rensselaer (1764 – 1839) were Federalists, who were set on proving the folly of the “Republican” war.⁶⁷ Moreover, many US militiamen, believing that their service was restricted to defending US territory, refused to cross into British North America.⁶⁸ As a result the war became a bit of a farce, fighting being largely restricted to skirmishes along the US-Canadian



Fig. 1.4 US President James Madison (1751 – 1836), who declared war on Great Britain in the year that Robert Fortune was born. In 1814 he had to flee the White House.

border, during which cross-border trade was temporarily suspended.⁶⁹

Once peace was established in Europe in 1814, more hardened British troops were sent to Canada.⁷⁰ It now became possible for Britain to go on the offensive.⁷¹ However, by then the Americans had become more experienced in combat.⁷² In an attempt to divert US troops away from the Canadian front, Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren (1753 – 1822) and his successor Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane (1758 – 1832) were ordered to launch a series of raids along the US East Coast in addition to stepping up blockades.⁷³ Undoubtedly the most daring of these exploits was an attack against the US capital Washington in August 1814.⁷⁴ In the event resistance proved minimal.⁷⁵ President Madison had to flee the White House, leaving the dining-room table set for 40 guests, and some excellent Madeira, which the British officers drank.⁷⁶ By the time President Madison rode back into Washington on 28 August, the White House was a roofless shell.⁷⁷

With Napoleon's defeat, it was no longer necessary for the British to blockade the French and other ports or impress American sailors into the Royal Navy, so two of the reasons for the war were no longer relevant.⁷⁸ Both sides were weary of the war which affected their respective economies and had brought no clear gains.⁷⁹ In November 1813 the British Foreign Secretary Robert Stewart, Lord Castlereagh (1769 – 1822) sent a letter to the US President proposing peace negotiations.⁸⁰ In January 1814 the US Congress agreed to negotiate a settlement, and sent a delegation to Europe.⁸¹ After some stalling by the British, negotiations were started in Flanders on 8 August 1814.⁸² With the costs of the 1815 campaign threatening to bankrupt the US Government, and New England likely to secede from the USA, the American commissioners gave up their claim to British North America.⁸³ Likewise, the Duke of Wellington advised the British side to make a quick peace, as he saw no prospects of a decisive victory in 1815.⁸⁴ After much wrangling the Treaty of Ghent on 24 December 1814 finally terminated hostilities between USA and Britain, but simultaneously dispelled any aspirations the native Americans may have had of possessing their own state.⁸⁵

1.2 Life in the Scottish Borders

The various wars had a certain impact on rural life in the Scottish Borders, which had become a peaceful region ever since the last Jacobite Rebellion had been crushed in 1746. Now the country was recruiting soldiers to fight Napoleon, and lists of men aged between 18 – 23 were posted on the doors of the local churches.⁸⁶ As a result, manpower on the farms was in short supply.⁸⁷ The presence of French prisoners of war between 1811 and 1814 was a further reminder that the world was not as peaceful as it seemed.⁸⁸ A few families knew this at first-hand, having lost a father or son, but on the whole, life in the villages went on much as before.⁸⁹ With foodstuffs in short supply, there was a drive to drain and fertilize unutilized land to grow crops and raise cattle.⁹⁰

While the landowners begrudged the taxes, that had been levied during the latest wars, many prospered during the period of the Napoleonic Wars because they were able to sell their farm produce at inflated prices.⁹¹ For instance, by 1809 – 1815 oats cost twice as much as in 1770 – 1790,

while the price of sheep had tripled.⁹² The inflation did not affect their farm servants, because they were paid almost entirely in kind, receiving such allowances as oats (for porridge), barley, peas, the keep of a cow (for milk) and ground for planting potatoes.⁹³ Because of import restrictions, there was a certain amount of smuggling of brandy, gin and teas at the turn of the century.⁹⁴

Once the soldiers returned in the aftermath of the various wars (1815), manpower again became more plentiful. However, even before the final showdown at the Battle of Waterloo on 18 June 1815, another disaster struck. On 10 April 1815 Mount Tambora in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) blew its top, ejecting large quantities of sulphur dioxide into the stratosphere and cutting out the sunlight. In 1816 cool temperatures and heavy rains resulted in failed harvests in the British Isles.⁹⁵ Although Scotland was not as badly affected as some parts of Europe, Rev. John Hastie (1762 – 1822) wrote in his diary on 4 October 1816 that “incessant rains with frost occasionally have checked vegetation and retarded all farming operations. This year too much resembles 1799—stock of every kind and almost no market; turnips have failed completely in consequence of the rains and cold—almost NO Sun shine through the whole of what should have been summer and none now—the demon of drizzle ever hangs over our heads in shape of dense black clouds. What farmers will do it is scarcely possible to say.”⁹⁶ There was little need to hire extra labourers to bring in the poor harvest, so many mouths went hungry. Moreover, those landowners who had invested in new technologies, such as threshing machines, required fewer labourers.⁹⁷ As prices for agricultural products fell after the wars, some farmers went bankrupt, and employment became even more difficult to come by.⁹⁸ The economic slump, which started in 1818, led to a commercial crash in 1825.⁹⁹ Alexander Somerville (1811 – 1885) was unable to find a job in November 1827, although he attended the hiring markets in Duns, Dunbar and Haddington.¹⁰⁰ In November 1828 he fared no better.¹⁰¹ This unemployment led some people to search for work in the bigger centres, or even emigrate to North America.¹⁰² Others turned to poaching.¹⁰³

Thomas Lawful Fortune (1786 – 1847), who was born in Ayton, a village 10 km NW of Berwick-upon-Tweed, probably came to Chirnside 7 km away looking for work.¹⁰⁴ He was hired by the Boswalls of Blackadder House.¹⁰⁵ As he was paid in kind, Thomas would have had little money to spend in a public house or at a fair. The servants’ simple amusements, such as singing and dancing, tended to take place within the confines of the farmhouse.¹⁰⁶ It is possible that he met Agnes Redpath (Ridpath; 1784 – 1858), a young woman from nearby Edrom, while she was working for the Boswalls. As Agnes was already in her mid-twenties, she was probably keen to get married and start her own family. One thing led to another. What started with a stolen kiss ended in heavy petting. During the celebrations at the end of 1811, the inevitable happened. By the time Thomas and Agnes married on Wednesday 24 June 1812, it would have been obvious to the minister, Rev. John Hastie, that Agnes was pregnant.¹⁰⁷ It is possible that they were called to stand before the parish for “antenuptial fornication”.¹⁰⁸ In the Church of Scotland this involved the couple having to confess in front of the assembled congregation, and being subjected to formal rebukes and sometimes a fine.¹⁰⁹ As Thomas’ employers not only attended Edrom Parish Church, but were members of the Kirk Session (Church Court), the Boswalls would have been aware of his misbehaviour.¹¹⁰

The grand old lady, Elizabeth Boswall (ca. 1741 – 1830; **Fig. 1.5**), was probably scandalized, and demanded that the culprit, who had brought so much shame on their family, be dismissed once his 6-month contract expired.¹¹¹ The couple were allowed to stay in one of the cottages of Blackadder Toun, a “town” consisting of no more than a few cottages near Blackadder House, until their child was born.¹¹² However, after their son was born on 16 September 1812, Thomas Lawful Fortune lost his job on the Blackadder Estate. As cottages were reserved for farm servants, being unemployed meant that the Fortunes no longer had a roof over their heads.¹¹³ Thomas was therefore all the more grateful to George Buchan Jr. of the neighbouring Kelloe Estate (**Box 1.1**), who had just returned from India, for giving him a job as a hedger in 1813. As a member of the Kirk Session, George Buchan would have been aware of the Fortunes’ plight.¹¹⁴ Thomas was allotted a cottage near Kelloe House (**Fig. 1.11**) on the condition that his wife helped during harvest-time.¹¹⁵ As a married man, he would have been hired on a yearly basis.¹¹⁶ He must have carried out his work to the entire satisfaction of George Buchan Jr., who in turn must have treated him well. Thankful Thomas worked for George Buchan for the rest of his life, making sure the enclosures were well kept.¹¹⁷



Fig. 1.5 Elizabeth Boswall (ca. 1741–1830) of Blackadder House. She probably played a role in the dismissal of Thomas Fortune.

Box 1.1

George Buchan Jr. (1775 – 1856) Eldest son of George Buchan Sr. (1751 – 1813) and Anne Dundas (1752 – 1792), fourth daughter of Robert Dundas of Arniston, the younger (1713 – 1787).¹ He would have been educated by private tutors, including John Hastie.² At the end of 1790 he went to France to study French in preparation for a career with the East India Company.³ On 2 May 1792 he sailed to India in the “Winterton” (1781) commanded by Captain George Dundas, Laird of Dundas (1752 – 1792).⁴ The captain and many of the crew drowned when the ship broke up off the coast of SW Madagascar on 22 August 1792.⁵ After waiting for 7 months for help to arrive from Mozambique, it took the passengers another 10 months to reach Madras.⁶ By then only a third of the original 280 were still alive.⁷ Buchan worked for almost 16 years in India, finally becoming Chief Secretary to the Madras Government.⁸ While he was in India he had a number of close escapes, surviving a second shipwreck, and narrowly avoiding being murdered by Malays.⁹ His father’s declining health required him to return to Scotland in 1810.¹⁰ He managed the Kelloe Estate for the rest of his life, taking an especial interest in the wellbeing of his subservants.¹¹ In the mid 1830s he fell into an ice-pit, and was lame thereafter.¹² His lucky escapes made him believe in Providence, and he served the church in a number of functions.¹³ For many years he took part in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.¹⁴ When internal strife about the right of a patron to appoint a minister of his choice resulted in the Disruption of May 1843, he joined the Free Church of Scotland.¹⁵ He served as