GAYLEY CHARLES MILLS

FRANCIS BEAUMONT: DRAMATIST

Charles Gayley

Francis Beaumont: Dramatist

Gayley C.

Francis Beaumont: Dramatist / C. Gayley — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

Charles Mills Gayley
Francis Beaumont: Dramatist A Portrait, with Some Account of His Circle, Elizabethan and Jacobean, And of His Association with John Fletcher

PREFACE

In this period of resurgent dramatic creativity when once more the literature of the stage enthralls the public and commands the publisher, it is but natural that playwright, play-lover, and scholar alike should turn with renewed and enlightened interest to the models afforded by our Elizabethan masters of the age of gold, to the circumstances of their production and the lives of their imperishable authors. Very close to Shakespeare stood Beaumont and Fletcher; but, though during the past three centuries books about Shakespeare have been as legion and studies of the "twin literary heroes" have run into the hundreds, to Fletcher as an individual but one book has been devoted, and to Beaumont but one.

A portrait of either Beaumont or Fletcher demands indeed as its counterpart, painted by the same brush and with alternating strokes, a portrait of his literary partner and friend. But in spirit and in favour the twain are distinct. In this book I have tried to present the poetic and compelling personality of Francis Beaumont not only as conjoined with, and distinguished from, the personality of Fletcher, but as seen against the background of historic antecedents and family connections and as tinged by the atmosphere of contemporary life, of social, literary, and theatrical environment. No doubt the picture has its imperfections, but the criticism of those who know will assist one whose only desire is to do Beaumont justice.

I take pleasure in expressing my indebtedness to the authorities of the Bodleian Library and the British Museum, to those of the National Portrait Gallery (especially Mr. J. D. Milner), to our own Librarian of the University of California, Mr. J. C. Rowell, for unfailing courtesy during the years in which this volume has been in preparation; to Mr. J. C. Schwab, Librarian of Yale University, for the loan of rare and indispensable sources of information, and to my colleague, Professor Rudolph Schevill, for reading proof-sheets and giving me many a scholarly suggestion. I deplore my inability to include among the illustrations carefully made by Emery Walker, of 16 Clifford's Inn, a copy of the portrait of Beaumont's friend, Elizabeth, Countess of Rutland, which hangs at Penshurst. On account of the recent attempt to destroy by fire that time-honored repository of heirlooms as precious to the realm as to the family of Sidney, the Lord de L'Isle and Dudley has found it necessary to close his house to the public.

Charles Mills Gayley.

Berkeley, California,
December 15, 1913.

PART ONE
BEAUMONT'S LIFE, HIS ACQUAINTANCES, AND HIS CAREER AS POET AND DRAMATIST

CHAPTER I
THE CASTOR AND POLLUX OF ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

"Among those of our dramatists who either were contemporaries of Shakespeare or came after him, it would be impossible to name more than three to whom the predilection or the literary judgment of any period of our national life has attempted to assign an equal rank by his side. In the Argo of the Elizabethan drama – as it presents itself to the imagination of our own latter days – Shakespeare's is and must remain the commanding figure. Next to him sit the twin literary heroes, Beaumont and Fletcher, more or less vaguely supposed to be inseparable from one another in their works. The Herculean form of Jonson takes a somewhat disputed precedence among the other princes; the rest of these are, as a rule, but dimly distinguished." So, with just appreciation, our senior historian of the English drama, to-day, the scholarly Master of Peterhouse. Sir Adolphus Ward himself has, by availing of the inductive processes of the inventive and indefatigable Fleay and his successors in separative criticism, contributed not a little to a discrimination between the respective efforts of the "twin literary heroes" who sit next Jason; and who are "beyond dispute more attractive by the beauty of their creations than any and every one of Shakespeare's fellow-dramatists." But even he doubts whether "the most successful series of endeavours to distinguish Fletcher's hand from Beaumont's is likely to have the further result of enabling us to distinguish the mind of either from that of his friend." Just this endeavour to distinguish not only hand from hand, but mind from mind, is what I have had the temerity to attempt. And still not, by any means, a barefaced temerity, for my attempt at first was merely to fix anew the place of the joint-authors in the history of English comedy; and it has been but imperceptibly that the fascination of the younger of them, of Frank Beaumont, the personality of his mind as well as of his art, has so grown upon me as to compel me to set him before the world as he appears to me to be clearly visible.

In broad outline the figure of Beaumont has been, of course, manifest to the vision of poet-critics in the past. To none more palpably than to the latest of the melodious immortals of the Victorian strain. "If a distinction must be made," wrote Swinburne as early as 1875, "if a distinction must be made between the Dioscuri of English poetry, we must admit that Beaumont was the twin of heavenlier birth. Only as Pollux was on one side a demigod of diviner blood than Castor can it be said that on any side Beaumont was a poet of higher and purer genius than Fletcher; but so much must be allowed by all who have eyes and ears to discern in the fabric of their common work a distinction without a difference. Few things are stranger than the avowal of so great and exquisite a critic as Coleridge, that he could trace no faintest line of demarcation between the plays which we owe mainly to Beaumont and the plays which we owe solely to Fletcher. To others this line has always appeared in almost every case unmistakable. Were it as hard and broad as the line which marks off, for example, Shakespeare's part from Fletcher's in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the harmony would of course be lost which now informs every work of their common genius… In the plays which we know by evidence surer than the most trustworthy tradition to be the common work of Beaumont and Fletcher there is indeed no trace of such incongruous and incompatible admixture as leaves the greatest example of romantic tragedy … an unique instance of glorious imperfection, a hybrid of heavenly and other than heavenly breed, disproportioned and divine. But throughout these noblest of the works inscribed

generally with the names of both dramatists we trace on every other page the touch of a surer hand, we hear at every turn the note of a deeper voice, than we can ever recognize in the work of Fletcher alone. Although the beloved friend of Jonson, and in the field of comedy his loving and studious disciple, yet in that tragic field where his freshest bays were gathered Beaumont was the worthiest and the closest follower of Shakespeare… The general style of his tragic or romantic verse is as simple and severe in its purity of note and regularity of outline as that of Fletcher's is by comparison lax, effusive, exuberant… In every one of the plays common to both, the real difficulty for a critic is not to trace the hand of Beaumont, but to detect the touch of Fletcher. Throughout the better part of every such play, and above all of their two masterpieces, *Philaster* and *The Maid's Tragedy*, it should be clear to the most sluggish or cursory of readers that he has not to do with the author of *Valentinian* [Fletcher] and *The Double Marriage* [Fletcher and Massinger]. In those admirable tragedies the style is looser, more fluid, more feminine… But in those tragic poems of which the dominant note is the note of Beaumont's genius a subtler chord of thought is sounded, a deeper key of emotion is touched, than ever was struck by Fletcher. The lighter genius is palpably subordinate to the stronger, and loyally submits itself to the impression of a loftier spirit. It is true that this distinction is never grave enough to produce a discord; it is also true that the plays in which the predominance of Beaumont's mind and style is generally perceptible make up altogether but a small section of the work that bears their names conjointly; but it is no less true that within this section the most precious part of that work is comprised."

The essay in which this noble estimate of Beaumont occurs remains indeed "the classical modern criticism of Beaumont and Fletcher," and although recent research has resulted in "variety of opinion concerning the precise authorship of some of the plays commonly attributed to those writers" its value is substantially unaffected. The figure as revealed in glorious proportions to the penetrative imagination and the sympathy of poetic kinship, remains, but by the patient processes of scientific research the outlines have been more sharply defined and the very lineaments of Beaumont's countenance and of Fletcher's, too, brought, I think, distinctly before us. Though Swinburne attributes, almost aright, to Beaumont alone one play, *The Woman-Hater*, and ascribes to him the predominance in, and the better portions of *Philaster* and *The Maid's Tragedy*, and the high interest and graduated action of the serious part of *A King and No King*, and also justly associates him with Fletcher in the composition of *The Scornful Lady*, and gives him alone "the admirable study of the worthy citizen and his wife who introduced to the stage and escort with their applause *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*," and implies his predominance in that play, he does not enumerate for us the acts and scenes and parts of scenes which are Beaumont's or Fletcher's, or Beaumont's revised by Fletcher, in any of these plays; and consequently he points us to no specific lines of poetic inspiration, no movements distinctively conceived by either dramatist and shaped by his dramatic pressure, no touchstone by which the average reader may verify for himself that "to Beaumont his stars had given as birthright the gifts of tragic pathos and passion, of tender power and broad strong humour," and that "to Fletcher had been allotted a more fiery and fruitful force of invention, a more aerial ease and swiftness of action, a more various readiness and fullness of bright exuberant speech." Though he is right in discerning in the homelier emotion and pathetic interest of *The Coxcombe*, and of *Cupid's Revenge* the note of Beaumont's manner, he couples with the former *The Honest Man's Fortune* in which it is more than doubtful whether Beaumont had any share. To speak of Arbaces in *A King and No King* as Beaumont's, is mainly right, but not wholly, and to assign to him the keen prosaic humour of Bessus and his swordsmen, is to assign precisely the scenes that he did not compose. To speak of Beaumont's *Triumph of Love* is perhaps defensible; but, with grave reluctance, we now question the attribution. He is justified in withdrawing "the noble tragedy of *Thierry and Theodoret*" from the field of Beaumont's coöperation and ascribing it to Fletcher and Massinger; but he is undoubtedly wrong when he fails to couple the latter's name with that of Fletcher as author of *Valentinian*. Writing as Swinburne did after a study of Fleay's first investigations into the versification of Fletcher, Beaumont,

and Massinger, the wonder is not that once or twice, as a critic, he makes an incorrect attribution, but that his poetic instinct so successfully defied the temptation to enumerate in detail the respective contributions of Beaumont and Fletcher on the basis of metrical tests *par excellence*, – so surprisingly novel and seductively convincing were the tests then recently formulated. Swinburne's mistakes are of sane omission rather than of supererogation. By his judgments as a critic one can not always swear; but here he is, in the main, marvelously right, and a thousand times rather to be followed than some of the successors of Fleay who have swamped the personality of Beaumont by heaping on him, foundered, sods from a dozen turf-stacks which he never helped to build.

But the *chorizontes*– those who would separate every scene and line of the one genius from those of the other – are not lightly to be spoken of. It is only by combining their methods of analysis with the intuitions of the poet-critics that one may hope to see Frank Beaumont plain: "the worthiest and closest follower of Shakespeare in the tragic field; the earliest as well as ablest disciple of Ben Jonson in pure comedy, varied with broad farce and mock-heroic parody." The labour is well bestowed if by its means lovers of poetry and the drama, while not ceasing to admire the elder dramatist, Fletcher, may be led to accede at last to the younger his due and undivided honour, may come to speak of him by unhyphenated name – a personality of passion and of fire, a gracious power in poetry, of effulgent dramatic creativity; – if, like the ancients, they may protest occasionally in the name of Pollux alone.

CHAPTER II
BEAUMONT'S FAMILY; HIS EARLY YEARS: GRACE-DIEU, OXFORD

Francis Beaumont, the dramatist, came of the younger line of an ancient and distinguished family of Anglo-Norman descent in which there had been Barons de Beaumont from the beginning of the fourteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth century. They lived, as did the dramatist later, in the forest of Charnwood in Leicestershire, – part of the old forest of Arden. And it is of a ride to their family seat that John Leland, the antiquary, speaks when in his itinerary, written between 1535 and 1543, he says: "From Leicester to Brodegate, by ground well wooded three miles… From Brodegate to Loughborough about a five miles… First, I came out of Brodegate Park into the forest of Charnwood, commonly called the Waste. This great forest is a twenty miles or more in compass, having plenty of wood… In this forest is no good town nor scant a village; Ashby-de-la-Zouche, a market town and other villages on the very borders of it… Riding a little further I left the park of Beau Manor, closed with stone walls and a pretty lodge in it, belonging of late to Beaumonts… There is a fair quarry of alabaster stone about a four miles from Leicester, and not very far from Beau Manor.[1]… There was, since the Bellemonts [Beaumonts], earls of Warwick, a baron [at Beaumanoir] of great lands of that name; and the last of them in King Henry the Seventh's time was a man of simple wit. His wife was after married to the Earl of Oxford."[2] These barons "of great lands," living in Charnwood Forest, – where, as another old writer tells us, "a wren and a squirrel might hop from tree to tree for six miles; and in summer time a traveler could journey from Beaumanoir to Burden, a good twelve miles, without seeing the sun," – these barons are the de Beaumonts, from the fourth of whom, John, Lord Beaumont, who died in 1396, our dramatist was descended.

The barony ran from father to son for six generations of alternating Henries and Johns, *c.* 1309 to 1460. John, fourth Baron; was grandson of Alianor, daughter of Henry, Earl of Lancaster, and so descended from Henry III and the first kings of the House of Plantagenet. The second Baron, husband of Alianor of Lancaster, was through his mother, Alice Comyn, descended from the Scotch Earls of Buchan, and thus connected with the Balliols and the royal House of Scotland; through his father, Henry, the first Baron de Beaumont, who died in 1343, he was great-grandson of John de Brienne, titular King of Jerusalem, 1210-1225.[3] In a quaint tetrastich in the church of Barton-upon-Humber, the memory of these alliances is thus preserved:

Rex Hierosolymus cum Bellomonte locatur,
Bellus mons etiam cum Baghan consociatur,
Bellus mons iterum Longicastro religatur,
Bellus mons … Oxonie titulatur.[4]

The sixth Baron became, in 1440, the first Viscount of English creation; he married a granddaughter of the Lord Bardolph of Shakespeare's *2 Henry IV*; but with his son "of simple wit," who died in 1507, the viscounty died out. Beaumanoir to the east of Charnwood is seven miles north of Leicester and nine from Coleorton where, west of the Forest, an older branch of the Beaumont family of which we shall hear, later, continued to live and is living to-day; and the old barony

[1] Leland's *Itinerary*, Ed. L. T. Smith, Vol. I, 18-19.

[2] Leland's *Itinerary*, Ed. L. T. Smith, Vol. IV, 126.

[3] Collins, *Peerage of England*, IX, 460.

[4] J. Nichols, *Collections toward the History of Leicestershire* (*Biblioth. Topogr. Brit.*, VII, 534). See, below, Appendix, A.

was revived, in 1840, in a descendant of the female line, Miles Thomas Stapleton, as ninth Baron Beaumont.

The grandfather of the dramatist, John Beaumont, was in the third generation from Sir Thomas Beaumont, the younger son of the fourth Lord Beaumont. John evidently had to make his way before he could establish himself near the old home in Leicestershire; but he must have had some competence and position from the first, for he was admitted early, in the reign of Henry VIII, a member of the Inner Temple; in 1537 and 1543 he performed the learned and expensive functions of Reader, or exponent of the law in that society, and later was elected treasurer or presiding officer of the house. He started brilliantly in his profession. In 1529 he was counsellor for the corporation of Leicester; and, by 1539, he had means or influence sufficient to secure for himself the old Nunnery of Grace-Dieu in Charnwood Forest, which, as an ecclesiastical commissioner he had four years earlier helped to suppress. That he entered into possession, however, only with difficulty, is manifest from a letter which he wrote in 1538 to Lord Cromwell, enclosing £20 as a present and beseeching his lordship's intercession with the king that he may be confirmed in his ownership of the "demenez" as against the cupidity of George, first Earl of Huntingdon, who "doth labour to take the seyd abbey ffrom me; … for I do ffeyre the seyd erle and hys sonnes do seeke my lyffe."[5] He occupied various important legal and administrative positions in the county, and, shortly before the death of Edward VI, was appointed to the high office of Master of the Rolls, or Judge of the Court of Appeal. A year or two later, however, early in 1553, he was removed from his seat on the bench, for defalcation and other flagrant breach of trust. He was imprisoned and fined in all his property, and died the next year. His vast estates were bestowed on Francis, Earl of Huntingdon, by Edward VI, but soon afterward, as a result of legal manœuvre and by the assistance of that Earl and his eldest son, the widow of the Master of the Rolls contrived to retain the manor of Grace-Dieu; and it long continued to be the country seat of the Beaumonts.[6] This prudent, strenuous, and high-born lady, Elizabeth Hastings, was the daughter of Sir William Hastings, a younger son of the incorruptible William, Lord Hastings, whom in 1483 Richard of Gloucester had decapitated. Her grandmother, Catherine Nevil, was daughter to the Earl of Salisbury, who died at Pomfret, and sister to Richard, Earl of Warwick, the King-maker. Elizabeth's aunt, Anne Hastings, was the wife of George Talbot, fourth Earl of Shrewsbury, and her uncle, Edward, was the second Lord Hastings. Edward's children, our Elizabeth's first cousins, were Anne, Countess to Thomas Stanley, second Earl of Derby, and that George, first Earl of Huntingdon, whom, with certain of his five sons, the master of Grace-Dieu "ffeyred."[7] We may conjecture that the feud expired with the marriage of Elizabeth Hastings and John Beaumont, or with the death of the first Earl in 1544; and that the policy of his successors, Francis and Henry, in securing to the Huntingdon family the reversion of the forfeited estates of the Master of the Rolls and, later, releasing a portion of them to Elizabeth, was dictated by cousinly affection.

The great Francis, second Earl of Huntingdon, lived in the castle of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, about an hour's walk from Mistress Beaumont's, and had, in 1532, allied himself to royalty by marrying Katherine Pole, niece of the Cardinal, and great-granddaughter of that George, Duke of Clarence (brother to Edward IV), who was "pack'd with post-horse up to heaven" by the cacodemon of Gloucester. When Edward VI died, Francis declared for Lady Jane Grey and was for a time imprisoned. His daughter was the beautiful Lady Mary Hastings who, being of the blood royal, was wooed for the Czar, and might have been "Empress of Muscovy" had she pleased. From the Huntingdon family Elizabeth Hastings introduced at least one new Christian name into that of the Beaumonts. For the second Earl, she named her oldest son Francis. One of her daughters, Elizabeth,

[5] *Letters relating to the Suppression of the Monasteries*, pp. 251-252, Camden Society, 1843. The editor, Thos. Wright, describes the petitioner as of Thringston, Co. Leicester.

[6] J. M. Rigg, *Dict. Nat. Biog.* art., *John Beaumont*; and Nichols's *History of Leicestershire*, III, ii, 651, *et seq.*

[7] Collins, *Peerage*, VI, 648, *et seq.*; H. N. Bell, *The Huntingdon Peerage*, 1821. See also, below, Appendix, Table B.

became the wife of William, third Lord Vaux of Harrowden, in the adjoining county of Northampton; and thus our dramatist, through his aunt, was connected with another of the proudest Norman families of England, – one of the most devoted to the Catholic faith and, as we shall see, active in Jesuit interests that during the dramatist's life in London assumed momentous political proportions. Aunt Elizabeth, Lady Vaux, died before our Frank Beaumont was born; and her son Henry died when Frank was but ten years of age, – but in an entry in the State Papers of 1595 concerning "the entail of Lord Vaux's estates on his children by his first wife [John] Beaumont's daughter,"[8] several "daughters" are mentioned. These, his cousins of Harrowden, Frank knew from his youth up. In 1605 all England was to be ringing with their names.

John and Elizabeth were succeeded at Grace-Dieu by their son, Francis. He was a student at Peterhouse, Cambridge; afterwards, at the Inner Temple, where like his father before him, he proceeded Reader and Bencher. In 1572 he sat in Parliament as member for Aldborough; in 1589 he was made sergeant-at-law; and in 1593 was appointed one of the Queen's Justices of the Court of Common Pleas. His method of trying a case, technical and merciless, may be studied in the minutes of the Lent assizes of 1595 at which the unfortunate Jesuit priest, Henry Walpole, was sentenced to death for returning to England.[9] His career on the bench was both successful and honourable; and he is described by a contemporary, William Burton, the author of the *Description of Leicestershire*, as a "grave, learned, and reverend judge." He married Anne, the daughter of a Nottinghamshire knight, Sir George Pierrepoint of Holme-Pierrepoint; and their children were Henry, born 1581; John, born about 1583; Francis, the subject of this study, born in 1584 or 1585; and Elizabeth, some four years younger than Francis.[10] That we know nothing of the life or personality of this mother of poets, is a source of regret. Her family, however, was of a notable stock possessed, immediately after the Conquest, of lands in Sussex under Earl Warren. Their estate of Holme-Pierrepoint in Nottinghamshire they had inherited from Michael de Manvers during the reign of Edward I. Anne's ancestors had been Knights Banneret, and of the Carpet and the Sword, for generations. Her brother, Sir Henry Pierrepoint, born 1546, married Frances, the eldest daughter of the Sir William Cavendish who began the building of Chatsworth, and his redoubtable Lady, Bess of Hardwick, who finished it. This aunt of the young Beaumonts of Grace-Dieu, Lady Pierrepoint, was sister to William Cavendish, first Earl of Devonshire in 1611 and forefather of the present Dukes, – to Henry Cavendish, the friend of Mary, Queen of Scots, and son-in-law of her kindly custodian, George Talbot, sixth Earl of Shrewsbury, – to Sir Charles Cavendish, whose son, William, became Earl, and then Duke of Newcastle, – to Elizabeth Cavendish, Countess of Lennox, the wife of Henry Darnley's brother, Charles Stuart, and the mother of James I's hapless cousin, Lady Arabella Stuart, – and to Mary Cavendish, Countess of Shrewsbury, wife of Gilbert, seventh Earl. The son of Sir Henry and Lady Pierrepoint, Robert, born in the same year as his cousin, Francis Beaumont, the dramatist, married a daughter of the Talbots, became in due time Viscount Newark and Earl of Kingston, and was killed in 1643 during the Civil War. From him descended Marquises of Dorchester and Dukes of Kingston, and the Earls Manvers of the present time. Through their mother, Anne Pierrepoint, the Beaumont children of Grace-Dieu were, accordingly, connected with several of the most influential noble families of England and Scotland; and in their comradeship with the cousins of Holme-Pierrepoint they would, as of the common kin, be thrown into familiar acquaintance with the children of the various branches of these and other houses that I might mention.[11] Holme-Pierrepoint is seventeen miles northeast of Grace-Dieu, near the city of Nottingham, in the red sand-stone country along the

[8] *Calendar of State Papers* (*Domestic*), 1595, p. 154.

[9] Challoner, *Missionary Priests*, I, 347.

[10] For the preceding details, and some of those which follow, see the respective articles in the *Dictionary of National Biography*; Dyce's *Works of Beaumont and Fletcher*, Vol. I, *Biographical Memoir*; Grosart, *Sir John Beaumont's Poems*, and the sources as indicated. See also, below, Appendix, Table C.

[11] See Shaw's *Knights of England*; Collins, *Peerage*; and articles in *D. N. B.* under names.

River Trent. The Park is but a two or three hours' drive from Charnwood, and the old house to which Anne used to take her children to see their grandparents still stands, altered only in part from what it was in 1580. It belongs to the Earl Manvers of to-day. In the church is the tomb of the poet's uncle, Sir Henry Pierrepoint, who died the year before Francis.

Since no entry of Francis' baptism has been discovered it is uncertain whether he was born at Grace-Dieu. The probabilities are, however, in favour of that birth-place, since his father was not continuously occupied in London until a later date. As to the exact year of his birth, there is also uncertainty but I think that the records indicate 1584. The matriculation entry in the registers of Oxford University describes him as twelve years of age at the time of his admission, February 4, 1597 (new style), which would establish the date of his birth between February 1584 and February 1585. The funeral certificate issued at the time of his father's death, April 22, 1598, speaks of the other children, Henry, John, and Elizabeth as, respectively, seventeen, fourteen, and nine, years of age, "*or thereaboutes*"; but of Francis as "of thirteen yeares *or more*."

Justice Beaumont was a squire of considerable means. When, in 1581, he qualified himself to be Bencher by lecturing at the Inner Temple upon some statute or section of a statute for the space of three weeks and three days, his expenses for the entertainment at table or in revels, alone, must have run to about £1500, in the money of to-day. He held at the time of his death landed estates in some ten parishes of Leicestershire, between Sheepshead on the east and and Coleorton three miles away on the west, and scattered over some seven miles north and south between Belton and Normanton. In Derby, too, he had two or three fine manors. His will shows that he was able to make generous provision for many of his "ould and faythefull servauntes," besides bequeathing specifically a handsome sum in money to his daughter Elizabeth. He was a considerate and careful man, too, for the morning of his death he added a codicil to his will: "I have left somewhat oute of my will which is this, I will that my daughter Elizabeth have all the jewells that were her mother's." His sons are not mentioned, for naturally the heir, Henry, would make provision for John and Francis.[12] His chief executor was Henry Beaumont of Coleorton, his kinsman, – worth mentioning here; for at Coleorton another cousin, Maria Beaumont, the mother of the great Duke of Buckingham, had till recently lived as a waiting gentlewoman in the household.

Grace-Dieu where the youth of these children was principally spent, was "beautifully situated in what was formerly one of the most recluse spots in the centre of Charnwood Forest," within a little distance of the turn-pike road that leads from Ashby-de-la-Zouch to Loughborough. It lies low in a valley, near the river Soar. In his *Two Bookes of Epigrammes and Epitaphs*, 1639, Thomas Bancroft gives us a picture of the spot:

> Grace-Dieu, that under Charnwood stand'st alone,
> As a grand relicke of religion,
> I reverence thine old, but fruitfull, worth,
> That lately brought such noble Beaumonts forth,
> Whose brave heroicke Muses might aspire
> To match the anthems of the heavenly quire:
> The mountaines crown'd with rockey fortresses,
> And sheltering woods, secure thy happiness
> That highly favour'd art (tho' lowly placed)
> Of Heaven, and with free Nature's bounty graced.

[12] Dyce says that the Judge was knighted; so Rigg (*D. N. B.*) and others. The *Inner Temple Records* speak of him thirty times, but only once, Nov. 5, 1581, as "Sir," though others in memoranda running to 1601 which mention him are given the title. In the codicil to his will he is plain "Mr. Beaumont"; and he is not included in Shaw's *Knights of England*.

And still another picture of it is painted, a hundred and seventy years later by Wordsworth, the friend of the Sir George Beaumont who in his day was possessed of the old family seat of Coleorton Hall, within half an hour's walk of Grace-Dieu: —

> Beneath yon eastern ridge, the craggy bound,
> Rugged and high, of Charnwood's forest ground
> Stand yet, but, Stranger! hidden from thy view,
> The ivied Ruins of forlorn Grace-Dieu, —
> Erst a religious house, which day and night
> With hymns resounded, and the chanted rite:
> And when those rites had ceased, the Spot gave birth
> To honourable Men of various worth:
> There, on the margin of a streamlet wild,
> Did Francis Beaumont sport, an eager child:
> There, under shadow of the neighboring rocks,
> Sang youthful tales of shepherds and their flocks;
> Unconscious prelude to heroic themes,
> Heart-breaking tears, and melancholy dreams
> Of slighted love, and scorn, and jealous rage,
> With which his genius shook the buskined stage.
> Communities are lost, and Empires die,
> And things of holy use unhallowed lie;
> They perish; – but the Intellect can raise,
> From airy words alone, a Pile that ne'er decays.[13]

So far as the "youthful tales of shepherds" go, Wordsworth is probably thinking of the verses of Francis' brother, Sir John, which open:

> A shepherdess, who long had kept her flocks
> On stony Charnwood's dry and barren rocks, —

written long after both brothers had left boyhood behind; indeed after Francis was dead; or he is attributing to our Beaumont a share in Fletcher's *Faithfull Shepheardesse*. Francis, himself, has given us nothing of the pastoral vein, save sweet snatches in the dramas "with which his genius shook the buskined stage."

There is no doubt that from childhood up, the brothers and, as I shall later show, their sister Elizabeth breathed an atmosphere of literature and national life. At an early age John was sufficiently confessed a versifier to be assigned the Prelude to one of the nobly patronized Michael Drayton's *Divine Poems*, and there is fair reason for believing that the younger brother Francis was writing and publishing verses in 1602, when he was barely eighteen years of age. Their father was going to and fro among the great in London who made affairs. The country-side all about them was replete with historic memories and inspirations to poetry. In the Grey Friars' at Leicester, eleven miles south-east, Simon de Montfort allied by marriage to the first Anglo-Norman de Beaumonts, Earls of Leicester, lay buried. There, too, until his ashes were scattered on the waters of the Soar, King Richard the Third. In the Blue Boar Inn of that "toune," – in our young Beaumont's day, all "builded of tymbre," – this last of the Plantagenets had spent the night before the battle of Bosworth. The field itself on which the battle was fought lies but eight miles west of Leicester and about nine south of Grace-

[13] *For a Seat in the Groves of Coleorton.*

Dieu. No wonder that Francis Beaumont's brother John in after days chose Bosworth Field as the subject of an heroic poem:

> The Winter's storme of Civill Warre I sing,
> Whose end is crown'd with our eternall Spring;
> Where Roses joyn'd, their colours mixe in one,
> And armies fight no more for England's Throne.

The Beaumonts were living in the centre of the counties most engaged. Three of their predecessors had fallen fighting for the red rose, John Beaumont of Coleorton and John, Viscount Beaumont, at Northampton in 1460, and a Henry Beaumont at Towton in 1461. In his description of the battle, John introduces by way of simile a reference to what may have been a familiar scene about Grace-Dieu:

> Here Stanley and brave Lovell trie their strength…
> So meete two bulls upon adjoyning hills
> Of rocky Charnwood, while their murmur fills
> The hollow crags, when striving for their bounds,
> They wash their piercing homes in mutuall wounds.

Lovell, himself, was a Beaumont on the mother's side. And the poet takes occasion to pay tribute, also, to his own most famous ancestor on the grandmother's side, the "noble Hastings," first baron, whose cruel execution in *Richard III*, Shakespeare had dramatized more than twenty years before John wrote.

Just south of Charnwood Forest stood, in the day of John and Francis, the Manor House in Bradgate Park where Lady Jane Grey was born, and where she lived from 1549 to 1552 while she was being educated by her ambitious father and mother, the Marquis and Marchioness of Dorset, "to occupy the towering position they felt assured she would sooner or later be called to fill" – that of Protestant queen of England. Here it was that Roger Ascham, as he tells us in his *Schoolmaster*, after inquiring for the Lady Jane of the Marquis and his lady who were out hunting in Charnwood Forest, came upon the twelve-year old princess in her closet "reading the *Phædon* of Plato in Greek, with as much delight as gentlemen read the merry tales of Boccaccio." The grandmother of the young Beaumonts, who was still alive in 1578, may have lived long enough to take our Francis on her knee and tell him of the hopes her Protestant kinsmen of Ashby-de-la-Zouch had fixed upon the Lady Jane, and of how her cousin, the Earl, Francis of Huntingdon, had been one of those who in Royal Council in June 1553, abetted the Dukes of Northumberland and Suffolk in the scheme to secure the succession of Lady Jane to the throne, and how, with these dukes and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and other lords and gentlemen (among them a certain Sir John Baker of Sissinghurst, Kent, whose family later appears in this narrative), he had signed the "devise" in accordance with which Jane was proclaimed Queen. And the old lady would with bated breath tell him of the cruel fate of that nine-days' queen. Of how Francis of Huntingdon was sent to the Tower with Queen Jane, she also would tell. But perhaps not much of how he shortly made his peace with Queen Mary, hunted down the dead Jane's father, and brought him to the scaffold. And either their grandmother or their father, the Judge, could tell them of the night in 1569 on which their cousin, Henry, third Earl of Huntingdon, had entertained in the castle "rising on the very borders" of the forest to the east, Mary, Queen of Scots, when she was on her way to her captivity in the house of another connection of theirs, Henry Cavendish, at Tutbury in the county of Stafford, just east of them.

In the history of culture not only John and Francis, but the Beaumonts in general are illustrious. In various branches and for generations the poetic, scholarly, and artistic vein has persisted. John

Beaumont's son and heir, the second Sir John, edited his father's poems, and lived to write memorial verses on Ben Jonson, and on Edward King, Milton's "Lycidas"; and another son, Francis, wrote verses. A relative and namesake of the dramatist's father, – afterwards Master of Charterhouse, – wrote an Epistle prefixed to Speght's *Chaucer*, 1598; and still another more distant relative, Dr. Joseph, Master of Peterhouse, and author of the epic allegory, *Psyche*, was one of the poetic imitators through whom Spenser's influence was conveyed to Milton. The Sir George Beaumont of Wordsworth's day to whom reference has already been made was celebrated by that poet both as artist and patron of art. And, according to Darley,[14] Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was of the race and maiden name of our dramatist's mother, Anne Pierrepoint. From which coincidence one may, if he will, argue poetic blood on that side of the family, too; or from Grosart's derivation of Jonathan Edwards from that family, polemic blood, as well.

The three sons of Justice Beaumont of Grace-Dieu were entered on February 4, 1597, at Broadgates Hall, now Pembroke, which at that time was one of the most flourishing and fashionable institutions in Oxford. These young gentlemen-commoners were evidently destined for the pursuit of the civil and common law, since, as Dyce informs us, their Hall was then the principal nursery for students of that discipline. But one cannot readily visualize young Frank, not yet thirteen, or his brother John, a year or so older, devoting laborious hours to the *Corpus Juris* in the library over the south aisle of St. Aldate's Church, or to their Euclid, Strabo, Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian. We see them, more probably, slipping across St. Aldate's street to Wolsey's gateway of Christ Church, and through the, then unfinished, great quadrangle, past Wolsey's tower in the southeast corner, and, by what then served for the Broad Walk, to what now are called the Magdalen College School cricket grounds, and so to some well-moored boat on the flooded meadows by the Cherwell. And some days, they would have under arm or in pocket a tattered volume of Ovid, preferably in translation, – Turberville's *Heroical Epistles*, or Golding's rendering of the *Metamorphoses*, – or Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, or Fenton's *Tragical Discourses* out of Bandello, dedicated to the sister of Sir Philip Sidney – Sir Philip, whose daughter young Francis should, one day, revere and celebrate in noble lines. Or they would have Harington's *Orlando Furioso* to wonder upon; or some cheap copy of *Amadis* or *Palmerin* to waken laughter. And, other days, fresh quartos of *Tamburlaine* and *Edward II* and *Dido*, or Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and Lyly's *Gallathea*, or Greene's *Frier Bacon* and *James IV*, or Shakespeare's *Richard II*, and *Richard III*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Love's Labour's Lost*. These, with alternate shuddering and admiring, mirth or tears, to declaim and in imagination re-enact. And certainly there would be mellow afternoons when the *Songs and Sonnettes* known as *Tottel's Miscellany* and *The Paradyse of Daynty Devises*, with their poems of love and chivalry by Thomas, Lord Vaux, – of which they had often heard from their cousins of Harrowden, – and Chapman's completion of *Hero and Leander* or Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, and Drayton's fantastic but graceful *Endimion and Phoebe* would hold them till the shadows were well aslant, and the candles began to wink them back to the Cardinal's quadrangle and the old refectory, beyond, of Broadgates Hall. For the Char and the boats were there then, and all these El Dorados of the mind were to be had in quarto or other form, and some of them were appearing first in print in the year when Frank and his brothers entered Oxford.

We may be sure, that many a time these brothers and sworn friends in literature, and Henry, too, loyal young Elizabethans, – and with them, perhaps, their cousin, Robert Pierrepoint, who was then at Oriel, – strolled northwest from the Cherwell toward Yarnton, and then Woodstock with its wooded slopes, to see the island where Queen Elizabeth, when but princess, had been imprisoned for a twelvemonth, and, hearing a milk-maid singing, had sighed, "She would she were a milkmaid as she was"; and that they took note of fair Rosamund's well and bower, too. They may have tramped or ridden onward north to Banbury, and got there at the same cakeshop in Parsons Street the same

[14] *Works of B. and F.*, XVI.

cakes we get now. Or, some happy Michaelmas, they would have walked toward the fertile Vale of Evesham, north, first, toward Warwickshire where at Compton Scorpion Sir Thomas Overbury, the ill-fated friend of their future master, Ben Jonson, was born, and on by the village of Quinton but six miles from Shakespeare's Stratford, toward Mickleton and the Malvern Hills; and then, turning toward the Cotswolds, to Winchcombe with its ancient abbey and its orchards, to see just south of it Sudely Castle where Henry VIII's last wife, the divorced Catherine Parr, had lived and died, – where Giles, third Baron Chandos, had entertained Queen Bess, and where in their time abode the Lord William. With this family of Brydges, Barons Chandos, the lads were acquainted, if not in 1597 at any rate after 1602, when the fifth Baron, Grey, succeeded to the title. For, writing *Teares* on the death of that hospitable "King of the Cotswolds," which occurred in 1621, John Beaumont describes him with the admiration begotten of long intimacy, – "the smoothnesse of his mind," "his wisdome and his happy parts," and "his sweet behaviour and discourse."

Or, – and how could any young Oxonian fail of it? – they started from Broadgates, down the High, crossed Magdalen Bridge, where the boats were lazily oaring below them, and set out for the climb to Rose Hill; then down by sleepy ways to Littlemore, and to Sandford; then up the two long sharp ascents to Nuneham, – where now, in the fine old manor house, hangs Frank's own portrait in oils, – one of the two contemporary likenesses of him that exist to-day.

CHAPTER III
AT THE INNS OF COURT AND CHANCERY; THE POEMS ASSIGNED TO THESE EARLIER YEARS

The career of the Beaumonts at the University was shortened by the death of their father, some fourteen months after their admission. Henry had been entered of the Inner Temple, November 27, 1597, at his father's request. Some say with John, but I do not find the latter in the Records. Francis may have remained at Oxford until 1600. On November 3 of that year, he, also, was admitted a member of the Inner Temple, his two brothers acting as sponsors for him. We notice from the admission-book that he was matriculated *specialiter*, *gratis*, *comitive*, – because his father had been a Bencher, – was excused from most of the ordinary duties and charges, and was permitted to take his meals and to lodge outside the Inn of Court itself. I gather that, like other young students at the time, he lodged and pursued his studies in one of the lesser Inns, called Inns of Chancery, attached to the Inner Temple and under its supervision: Clifford's Inn across Fleet Street; or, across the Strand, Lyon's Inn, – or, let us hope, by preference, Clement's Inn; where had lain Jack Falstaff in the days when he was "page to Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk," and was seen by lusty Shallow to "break Skogan's head at the court-gate when 'a was a crack not thus high;" where had boozed Shallow himself and his four friends – "not four such swinge-bucklers in all the Inns of Court again"; and where, no doubt, they were talking in Beaumont's day "of mad Shallow yet."

In 1600, the Inns of Chancery lodged about a hundred students each, and served as preparatory schools for the Inns of Court. At one of these lesser Inns[15] Beaumont would acquire some elementary knowledge of civil procedure by copying writs of the Clerks of Chancery, would listen to a reader sent over by the Inner Temple to lecture, and would be "bolted," or sifted, in the elements of law by the "inner" or junior barristers; and he would attend "moots" over which senior or "utter" barristers presided. At the end of about two years or earlier, if he proved a promising scholar, he would be transferred to the Inn of Court, itself. We may assume that about 1602, Beaumont would be sitting in Clerks' Commons in the Hall of the Inner Temple. Bread and beer for breakfast, – provided on only four days of the week. At 12 o'clock he would be summoned to dinner by the blowing of a horn, – "thou horne of hunger that cal'st the inns a court to their manger." For his mess of meat, – in Lent, fish, – on other occasions, loins of mutton, or beef, – he would make himself a trencher of bread. At 6 or 7 o'clock would come supper, – bread and beer again. After dinner, and again after supper, he would enjoy bolts and exercises conducted by the utter barristers, day in and day out through nearly the whole year. As he advanced in proficiency he would appear as a "moot-man" in the arguments presented before the Benchers, or governing fellows, seated as judges. And perhaps he resigned himself, meanwhile, to the proper wear within the Inn, which was cap and gown, "but the fashion was to wear hats, cloaks or coats, swords, rapiers, boots and spurs, large ruffs and long hair. Even Benchers were found to sit in Term Time with hats on."[16]

Whether Beaumont gave promise or not we are ignorant. The routine of the Inn was impeccable; but students and benchers were not. There were not infrequently other exercises than "moots" after supper: cards and stage-plays, revels and sometimes riots. This much we know, that before young Frank could have fulfilled his seven or more years as student and "moot-man," he was already in the rank of poets and dramatists. But, that by no means precludes his continuance for several years, perhaps till 1608, in the juridical university, or his intimate association with and residence in the

[15] *Inns of Court and Chancery* (Lond., 1912), p. 45; W. R. Douthwaite, *Gray's Inn, its History and Associations* (Lond., 1886), pp. 36, 78, 253. For the Beaumonts, and what follows, see, also, Inderwick, *Inner Temple Records* (Lond. 1896), I, 421; II, 435; Introductions, and subjects as indexed.

[16] *Inns of Court, etc.*, p. 163.

stately old quadrangles of what would be his college, – the Inner Temple. And for a young man of his temperament the atmosphere was as poetic as juridical. The young man's fancy was fired by the poetry and the drama that for centuries had enlivened the graver pursuits of the Gothic halls that rose between Fleet Street and the Thames, Whitefriars and Paget Place, – "the noblest nurseries of humanity and liberty in the kingdom," as Ben Jonson calls them in his dedication[17] to the Inns of Court of *Every Man out of his Humour*, first published in the year when Beaumont entered.

According to Aubrey, while the garden-wall of Lincoln's Inn, close by, was building, a Bencher of that society "walking thro' and hearing" a young bricklayer "repeat some Greek verses out of Homer, discoursed with him, and finding him to have a witt extraordinary gave him some exhibition to maintaine him at Trinity College, Cambridge." That young bricklayer was, later, Beaumont's friend and master, Ben Jonson. Lincoln's Inn had long been a nursing mother to dramatic effort. At the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign it was one of its members, Richard Edwardes, who, as Master of the Chapel Children, produced the "tragicall comedie" *Damon and Pythias*, and the tragedy of *Palamon and Arcite*, to the great edification of the Queen, and the permanent improvement of the Senecan style of drama by the fusion of the ideal and the commonplace, of the romantic, the serious, and the humorous in an appeal to popular interest. "He was highly valued," this Edwardes, "by those that knew him," says Anthony Wood, "especially his associates in Lincoln's Inn." And it was in the Middle Temple, just fourteen months after Beaumont joined the Inns of Court, that Manningham, one of the barristers, witnessed the performance for the Reader's Feast on Candlemas Day of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. If Beaumont of the Inner Temple, within a stone's throw, did not hear more than the applause, he was not our Frank Beaumont. We may be sure that he had sauntered through the Temple Gardens many an afternoon, and knew the spot immortalized by Marlowe and that same Shakespeare, as the scene of the quarrel between Plantagenet and Somerset when the white and red roses were plucked, and that he would hear Shakespeare when he could.

But much as the Middle Temple and Lincoln's favoured the drama and costly entertainments on the major feast-days, they were outdone in Christmas revels and masques and plays by the closely affiliated societies of Gray's Inn and the Inner Temple. Between these Houses, says Mr. Douthwaite, the historian of the former, "there appears anciently to have existed a kindly union, which is shown by the fact that on the great gate of the gardens of the Inner Temple may be seen to this day [1886] the 'griffin' of Gray's Inn, whilst over the great gateway in Gray's Inn Square is carved in bold relief the 'wingèd horse' of the Inner Temple." The two societies had long a custom of combining for the production of theatrical shows; and as we shall see, they combined some thirteen years after Beaumont entered the Inner Temple in the production at Court of one of the most glorious and expensive masques ever presented in London, Beaumont's own masque for the wedding of the Elector Palatine and the Princess Elizabeth. They were influential as patrons of the early drama, and as producers of amateur dramatists. For centuries Gray's Inn had permitted "revels" after six o'clock supper of bread and beer; and when Beaumont was of the Inner Temple close by, there was a Grand Week at Gray's in every term. "They had revels and masques some of which," as a member of that society has recently said, "have never been forgotten, and I think cannot be forgotten while English history lasts."[18] From a very early date, perhaps not long after the society was established in Edward the Third's reign in the old manor of Portpool, "they were addicted at the Christmas season to a great outburst of revelry of every kind. The revelings began at All Hallows; at Christmas a Prince of Portpoole was appointed; who was also Lord of Misrule, and he kept things gaily alive through Christmas and until toward the end of January." These and other disguises, masques, and mummeries, are lineal descendants of the mummings of the Ancient Order of the Coif, such as regaled King Richard II at Christmas 1389; and, amalgamated with St. George plays and other folk-shows and

[17] The Dedication first appears in the folio of 1616.

[18] H. E. Duke, K. C., M. P., *Gray's Inn in Six Lectures on the Inns of Court and of Chancery*, 1912.

even with sword-dances, they influenced the course of rural drama throughout the realm. It may be a bow drawn at a venture but I cannot withhold the suspicion that the Lord of Pool of the *Revesby Sword-Play* and of other popular compositions derives from the historic Prince of Misrule of the Gray's Inn Christmas revels. It was George Gascoigne of Gray's Inn who by a translation from Ariosto introduced the Renaissance treatment of the Greek New Comedy and the Latin Comedy into England with his *Supposes* in 1566, and in the same year, with Francis Kinwelmersh, produced at Gray's Inn an English rendering of Ludovico Dolce's *Giocasta*, a tragedy descended from Euripides' *Phoenissae* by way of a Latin version. "Altogether," remarks Professor Cunliffe,[19] "the play must have provided a gorgeous and exciting spectacle, and have produced an impression not unworthy of Gray's Inn, 'an House', the Queen said on another occasion, 'she was much beholden unto, for that it did always study for some sports to present unto her.'" To this house and to Gascoigne, Shakespeare, too, was beholden, for from the *Supposes* proceeds more or less directly the minor plot of *The Taming of the Shrew*. In 1588, Gray's Inn figures prominently again in the career of the pre-Shakespearian drama, with the production by one of its gentlemen, Thomas Hughes, of a tragedy of English legend and Senecan type, *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, played by the society before the Queen at Greenwich. And, in 1594, Gray's Inn connects itself with the Shakespearian drama directly by witnessing in the great hall in the Christmas season a play called *A Comedy of Errors*, "like to Plautus his *Menaechmus*."

It is diverting to note that on the eve of just that season of 1594, a very pious woman, the second wife of Sir Nicholas Bacon, and the mother of Anthony and Francis, is writing to the elder brother "I trust that they will not mum nor sinfully make revel at Gray's Inn." Anthony was not a very strict Puritan, Francis still less so; and Francis, who had been of Gray's Inn since 1575, was, till his fall from power, the keenest devotee and most ardent and reckless promoter of masquing that Gray's Inn or, for that matter, England, had ever known. According to Spedding,[20] the speeches of the six councillors for the famous court of the Prince of Purpoole in 1594 were written by him and him alone. He furnished the money and much of the device for gorgeous masques before Queen Elizabeth; and under her successor he was prime mover in many a masque, like that of the *Flowers*, presented by the gentlemen of Gray's Inn, in 1614, which, alone, cost him about £10,000 as reckoned in the money of to-day. The masques by the four Inns, in honour of the Elector Palatine's marriage, the year before, are said to have cost £20,000, – five hundred thousand dollars in the money of to-day! And it would appear that much of this expense was assumed by Sir Francis Bacon, who in the years of his greatness as Solicitor-General and Attorney-General retained intimate relations with the life of Gray's Inn, and whom our Beaumont during the years of studentship before 1603, when the gallant Sir Walter Raleigh was consigned to the Tower, must many times have seen strolling with Sir Walter in the walks that Bacon himself had laid out for his fellow-benchers of the Inn.

If Beaumont's family had deliberately set about preparing him for his career of poet and dramatist, especially of dramatist who, with John Fletcher, should vividly reproduce the life, manners and conversation of young men of fashion about town, they could not have placed him in a community more favourable to these ends than that of the Inns of Court. As the name itself implies the members were gentlemen of the Court of the King. They must be "sons to persons of quality"; they must be trained to the possibility of appearance before the King at any time; they must be ready not merely as a privilege, but as a function, to entertain royalty upon summons. As Gray's Inn had its flavour of romance, its literary and dramatic history, its Sidney, its Bacon, its Gascoigne; so also the "anciently allied House" of the Inner Temple. There lingered the tradition, to say the least, of Chaucer's stirring poetry; there the spirit of Sir Francis Drake, – stirring romances of the Spanish main; there the memory of the Christmas revels of 1562 at which was first acted the *Gorboduc* of Thomas Sackville (afterwards Earl of Dorset, and connected by marriage with the Fletchers), and Thomas Norton, –

[19] *Early English Classical Tragedies*, Introduction, p. lxxxvi.

[20] Letters and Life of Francis Bacon, I, 342.

whose "stately speeches and well sounding phrases, clyming to the height of Seneca his stile," whose national quality, romantic illumination of classical form, impressive, and novel dramatic blank verse were to influence imperishably the course of Elizabethan tragedy. There, too, had been produced, by five poets of the House, in 1568, "the first English love-tragedy that has survived,"[21] *Gismond of Salerne*, a distant but unmistakable forerunner in tempestuous passion and pathos of plays in which young Beaumont was to compose the major part, *The Maides Tragedy* and *A King and No King*.

Here, in the intervals between moots and bolts in the day time or during the long evenings about the central fire in Hall or in Chambers, a young man of poetic proclivities would find ample opportunity to indulge his genius. And, even after he ceased to be an inmate, the Inner Temple would still be for him a club, in which by the payment of a small annual fee he might retain membership for life. And membership in one 'college' of this pseudo-university implied an honorary 'freedom' of the others. Beaumont would know not only William Browne, the poet of the Inner Temple from 1611 on, and all Browne's poetic fellows in that House, but Browne's less poetic friend, Christopher Brooke, counsel for Shakespeare's company of King's Players, who earlier in the century had entered Lincoln's Inn; and, also, Brooke's chamber-fellow, John Donne, whose secret marriage with the daughter of the Lieutenant of the Tower, in 1609, got the young scapegraces into jail. And at Gray's Inn Beaumont would be even more at home. It was the 'House' of his kinsman, Henry Hastings of Ashby, – in 1604 Earl of Huntingdon, – two years younger than Frank, and admitted as early as 1597; and of Robert Pierrepoint, who had come down with Frank from Oxford and was entered of the Inns at the same time; and, two years later, of Robert's cousin, William Cavendish, afterwards second Earl of Devonshire.

If we could be sure that a poem called *The Metamorphosis of Tabacco*, a mock-Ovidian poem of graceful style and more than ordinary wit, published in 1602, and ascribed by some one writing in a contemporary hand upon the title-page, to John Beaumont, was John's we might regard the half dozen verses in praise of "thy pleasing rime," signed F. B., and beginning,

> My new-borne Muse assaies her tender wing,
> And where she should crie, is inforst to sing, —

as young Francis' earliest effort in rhyme. The dedication of the *Metamorphosis* to "my loving friend, Master Michael Drayton," favours the conjectured composition by John, for he is writing other complimentary poems to Drayton in the years immediately following 1602. But, though F. B.'s lines prefatory to the *Metamorphosis* are not unworthy of a fanciful youngster, they are negligible; as is the evidence of their authorship. Certain flimsy love-poems included in a volume published forty years later, twenty-four years after Beaumont's death, as of his composition, have also been attributed to his boyhood at the University, or at the Inner Temple. Most of them have been definitely traced to other authors, and of the rest of this class still unassigned there is no reason to believe that he was the author. In the same volume, however, there appears as by Beaumont a metrical tale based upon Ovid, called *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, of which we cannot be certain that he was not the author. The poem was first published, without name of writer, in 1602,[22] and was not assigned to Francis Beaumont until 1639, when Lawrence Blaiklock included it among the *Poems*: By Francis Beaumont, Gent., entered on the Stationers' Registers, September 2, and published, 1640. Blaiklock evidently printed from John Hodgets's edition of 1602, carelessly omitting here and there a line, and introducing absurd typographical mistakes. Either because he had private information that Beaumont was the author, or because he wished to profit by Beaumont's reputation, he goes so far as to sign the initials, F. B., to the verse dedication, *To Calliope*, and to alter the signature, A. F., appended to an introductory

[21] Cunliffe, *E. E. Class. Tragedies*, p. lxxxvi.

[22] Reprinted by *Dramaticus, Sh. Soc. Pap.* III, 94 (1847).

sonnet, *To the Author*, so as to read I. F. (suggesting John Fletcher.) These licenses, in addition to the reckless inclusion in the 1640 volume of several poems by authors other than Beaumont, vitiate Blaiklock's evidence. On the other hand, the original publisher, Hodgets, was the publisher also, in 1607, of *The Woman-Hater*, a play now reasonably accepted as by Beaumont, originally alone; and, in Hodgets's edition of the *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, one of the introductory sonnets is signed J. B., and another W. B. The 'J. B.' sonnet is not unworthy of Beaumont's brother John. And if the W. B. of the other verses, *In Laudem Authoris*, is William Basse, – who in a sonnet, written after Beaumont's death, speaks of him as "rare Beaumont," – there is further justification for entertaining the possibility of Beaumont's authorship of the *Salmacis*. For Basse was one of the group of pastoralists to which Francis' friend Drayton, and Drayton's friend, William Browne, belonged, – a group with which Francis must have been acquainted. But of that we shall have more to say when we come to consider Beaumont's later connection with Drayton, and with the dramatic activities of the Inner Temple at a time when Browne and other pastoralists were members of it. For the present it is sufficient to say that Basse was himself issuing a pastoral romance in the year of *Salmacis*, 1602; and that he was by way of subscribing himself simply W. B.

The external evidence for Beaumont's authorship of this metrical tale is, at the best, but slight. As regards the internal, however, I cannot agree with Fleay and the author of the article entitled *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus not by Beaumont*.[23] Both diction and verse display characteristics not foreign to Beaumont's heroic couplets in epistle and elegy, nor to the blank verse of his dramas, – though they do not markedly distinguish them. The romantic-classical and idyllic grace may be the germ of that which flowers in the tragicomedies; and the joyous irony is not unlike that of *The Woman-Hater* and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. The poem is a voluptuous and rambling expansion of the classical theme "which sweet-lipt Ovid long agoe did tell." The writer, like many a lad of 1602, has steeped himself in the amatory fable and fancy of Marlowe, Chapman, and Shakespeare; and the passionate imaginings are such as characterize poetic lads of seventeen in any period. It is not impossible that here we have Francis Beaumont's earliest attempt at a poem of some proportions, and that he was stirred to it by exercises like *The Endimion and Phoebe* of Drayton, probably by that time the friend of the Grace-Dieu family. Francis, indeed, need not have been ashamed of such a performance, for in spite of the erotic fervour and the occasional far-fetched conceits, the poet has visualized clearly the scenes of his mythological idyl, and enlivened the narrative with ingenuous humour; he has caught the figured style and something of the winged movement of his masters; and every here and there he has produced lines of more than imitative beauty:

> Looke how, when Autumne comes, a little space
> Paleth the red blush of the Summer's face,
> Searing the leaves, the Summer's covering,
> Three months in weaving by the curious Spring, —
> Making the grasse, his greene locks, go to wracke,
> Tearing each ornament from off his backe;
> So did she spoyle the garments she did weare,
> Tearing whole ounces of her golden hayre.

The earliest definite indication that I have found of Beaumont's literary activity, and of his recognition by poets, connects him with his brother John, and is highly suggestive in still other respects. John had already written, in 1603 or 1604, verses prefatory to Drayton's poetic treatment of *Moyses in a Map of his Miracles*, published in June of the latter year; and also, in 1605, to Drayton's revision of the *Barrons Wars*. On April 19, 1606, Drayton issued a volume entitled *Poems Lyrick*

[23] *Dramaticus*, (as above).

and Pastoral, which included with other verses a revision, under the name of *Eglogs*, of his *Idea, the Shepheard's Garland*, first published in 1593. In the eighth eclogue of this new edition, Drayton, writing of the ladies of his time to whom "much the Muses owe," adds to his praise of Sidney's (Elphin's) sister Mary, Countess of Pembroke, an encomium upon the two daughters of his early patron, Sir Henry Goodere, Frances and Anne (Lady Ramsford); then he celebrates a "dear Sylvia, one the best alive," and

> Then that dear nymph that in the Muses joys,
> That in wild Charnwood with her flocks doth go,
> Mirtilla, sister to those hopeful boys,
> My lovèd Thyrsis and sweet Palmeo;
> That oft to Soar the southern shepherds bring,
> Of whose clear waters they divinely sing.
>
> So good she is, so good likewise they be,
> As none to her might brother be but they,
> Nor none a sister unto them, but she, —
> To them for wit few like, I dare will say:
> In them as Nature truly meant to show
> How near the first, she in the last could go.

The "golden-mouthed Drayton musical" had spent his youth not many miles from "wild Charnwood," at Polesworth Hall, the home of the Gooderes, in Warwickshire. The dear nymph of Charnwood is Elizabeth Beaumont, in 1606 a lass of eighteen, – and the "hopeful boys" who bring the southern shepherds (Jonson, perhaps, and young John Fletcher, as well as Drayton) to their Grace-Dieu priory by the river Soar, are John, then about twenty-three, and the future dramatist, about twenty-two.[24] Under the pastoral pseudonym of Mirtilla, Elizabeth is again celebrated by Drayton twenty-four years later, in his *Muses Elizium*. Since these Pastorals are in confessed sequence with those of "the prime pastoralist of England," and the pastoral Thyrsis and young Palmeo have already sung divinely of the clear waters of their native stream, it would appear that they too are disciples at that time of Master Edmund Spenser in his *Shepheards Calender*. And since these brothers, so like in wit and feature, and in charming devotion to their sister, are all the brothers that she has, it is evident that this portion of the *Eglog* was written after July 10, 1605; for up to that date, the eldest of the family, Henry, was still living, and at the manor house of Grace-Dieu. This friendship between Drayton and the "hopeful boys" continued through life; for, as we shall later note and more at length, in 1627, the year of John's death, and many years after that of Francis, the older poet still celebrates the twain as "My dear companions whom I freely chose My bosome-friends."

When James I made his famous progress from Edinburgh to London, April 5 to May 3, 1603, "every nobleman and gentleman kept open house as he passed. He spent his time in festivities and amusements of various kinds. The gentry of the counties through which his journey lay thronged in to see him. Most of them returned home decorated with the honours of knighthood, a title which he dispensed with a profusion which astonished those who remembered the sober days of Elizabeth."[25] One of those thus decorated was the poet's brother Henry, who was dubbed knight bachelor at Worksop in Derbyshire, on the same day as his uncle, "Henry Perpoint of county Notts," and William Skipwith of Cotes in the Beaumont county – who appears later as a friend of Fletcher.

---

[24] On these identifications, see Fleay, *Chron. Eng. Dr.*, I, 143-145; Elton, *Michael Drayton*, pp. 13, 58; Child, *Michael Drayton* (in *Camb. Hist. Lit.*, IV, 197, *et seq.*).

[25] Gardiner, *Hist. Engl.* 1603-1607, p. 87.

Two days afterwards, Thomas Beaumont of Coleorton received the honour of knighthood at the Earl of Rutland's castle of Belvoir.[26]

Sir Henry of Grace-Dieu did not long enjoy his title. He died about the tenth of July 1605, and was buried on the thirteenth. By his will, witnessed by his brother Francis, and probated February 1606, Sir Henry left half of his private estate to his sister, Elizabeth "for her advancement in marriage," and the other half to be divided equally between John and Francis. He was succeeded as head of the family by John,[27] who later married a daughter of John Fortescue – also of a poetic race – and left by her a large family. The sister, Elizabeth (Mirtilla) probably continued to live at Grace-Dieu until her marriage to Thomas Seyliard of Kent. And that Francis occasionally came home on visits from London we have other proof than that afforded by Drayton. The provision of a competence made by Sir Henry's will leads us to conjecture that the subsequent dramatic activity of the younger brother was undertaken for sheer love of the art; and that, while his finances may have been occasionally at low ebb, the association in Bohemian *ménage* with John Fletcher, which followed the years of residence at the Inner Temple, was a matter of choice, not of poverty.

[26] Shaw's *Knights of Engl.*, Vol. II, under dates.

[27] Grosart (*D. N. B.* art. *John Beaumont*) says that John had been admitted to the Inner Temple with Henry. John does not appear in Inderwick.

CHAPTER IV
THE VAUX COUSINS AND THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

Certain political events of the years 1603 to 1606 must have occasioned the young Beaumonts intimate and poignant concern. Their own family was, of course, Protestant, but it was closely connected by blood and matrimonial alliance with some of the most devoted and conspicuous Catholic families of England. Some of their Hastings kinsmen, sons of Francis, Earl of Huntingdon, were Catholics; and their first cousins, the Vauxes, whose home at Great Harrowden near by had been for over twenty years the harbourage of persecuted priests, were active Jesuits. After the death of his first wife, – Beaumont's aunt Elizabeth, who left four children, Henry, Eleanor, Elizabeth, and Anne, – William, Lord Vaux, had married Mary, the sister of the noble-hearted and self-sacrificing Catholic, Sir Thomas Tresham of Rushton in Northamptonshire; and this lady had brought up her own children, George and Ambrose, as well as the children of the first marriage, in strict adherence to the Roman faith and practice. Henry, the heir to the title, had been one of that zealous band of young Catholic gentlemen who received Fathers Campion and Persons on their arrival in England in 1580.[28] Before 1594, Henry, "that blessed gentleman and saint," as Father Persons calls him, had died, having resigned his inheritance of the Barony to his brother George some years earlier in order to spend his remaining days in celibacy, study, and prayer. In 1590, George, the elder son by the second marriage, had taken to wife, Elizabeth Roper, also an ardent Catholic, the daughter of the future Lord Teynham. She was left a widow in 1594 with an infant son, Edward, whom she educated to maintain the Catholicity of the family. In 1595, the old Baron, Beaumont's uncle, died – "the infortunatest peer of Parliament for poverty that ever was" by reason of the fines and forfeitures entailed upon him for his religious zeal. Meanwhile, in 1591, we find the daughters of the first marriage, Eleanor, whose husband was an Edward Brookesby, of Arundel House, Leicestershire, and Anne Vaux, concealing in a house in Warwickshire, the well-known Father Gerard and his Superior, Father Garnet, from priest-hunters, or pursuivants. These two cousins of Beaumont are described in Father Gerard's *Narrative*[29] as illustrious for goodness and holiness, "whom in my own mind I often compare to the two women who received our Lord." The younger, Anne, "was remarkable at all times for her virginal modesty and shamefacedness, but in the cause of God and the defence of His servants, the *virgo* became *virago*. She is almost always ill, but we have seen her, when so weakened as to be scarce able to utter three words without pain, on the arrival of the pursuivants become so strong as to spend three or four hours in contest with them. When she has no priest in the house she feels afraid; but the simple presence of a priest so animates her that then she makes sure that no devil has any power over her house." In the years that follow to 1605, the Vauxes are identified as recusants and as sympathizers with the untoward fortunes of Fathers Southwell, Walpole, Garnet, and others. In 1601, their kinsman and Frank Beaumont's, Henry Hastings, nephew to George, fourth Earl of Huntingdon, has joined the ranks and in 1602, we find him in a list of Jesuits "to be sought after" by the Earl of Salisbury, – "John Gerard with Mrs. Vaux and young Mr. Hastings." Father Gerard's headquarters in fact are from 1598 to 1605 with Mrs. Vaux and her son Edward, the young Baron, at Great Harrowden, and there others of the fifteen Jesuit fathers in England at that time, and prominent Catholics, such as Sir Oliver Manners, brother of Roger, Earl of Rutland, Sir Everard Digby, and Francis Tresham, a first cousin of Mrs. Vaux, were wont to foregather.

When James I came to the throne, the Catholics had hope of some alleviation of the penalties under which they laboured. Disappointed in this hope, the discontented, led by two priests, Watson and Clarke, embarked upon a wild scheme to kidnap the King and set as the price of his liberty

[28] John Morris, *Life of Father John Gerard*, p. 311, *et seq.*

[29] Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 113. See below, Appendix, Table D.

the extension to Catholics of equal rights, religious, civil, and political, with the Protestants. The plot was betrayed, the priests executed, and the other leaders condemned to death, – then reprieved but attainted. Among those thus reprieved were Lord Grey de Wilton and "a confederate named Brookesby." This Brookesby was Bartholomew, the brother of Eleanor Vaux's husband. When new and more stringent measures were immediately adopted for the repression of priests and recusants, the indignation of the Catholics reached a climax. "They saw," says Gardiner, "no more than the intolerable wrong under which they suffered; and it would be strange if there were not some amongst them who would be driven to meet wrong with violence, and to count even the perpetration of a great crime as a meritorious deed."[30]

In 1603 Father Gerard took a new house in London in the fields behind St. Clement's Inn, – just across the Strand from the Inner Temple where Francis Beaumont was living at the time. "This new house," says Gerard, "was very suitable and convenient and had private entrances on both sides, and I had contrived in it some most excellent hiding-places; and there I should have long remained, free from all peril or even suspicion, if some friends of mine, while I was absent from London, had not availed themselves of the house rather rashly."[31] These friends were Robert Catesby, a cousin of the Vauxes of Harrowden; his cousin, Thomas Winter; Winter's relative, John Wright, and Thomas Percy, a kinsman of Henry, ninth Earl of Northumberland, – all gentlemen of distinguished county families. In May 1604, these men with one Guy Fawkes of York and Scotton, a soldier of fortune and "excellent good natural parts," and, like the rest, fanatic with brooding over the wrongs of the Catholic Church, met at Father Gerard's house behind St. Clement's Inn, swore to keep secret the purpose of their meeting, received in an adjoining room the Sacrament from Father Gerard, an unwitting accomplice, in confirmation of their oath; and then, retiring, learned from Catesby that the project intended was to blow up the Parliament House with gunpowder when the King and the royal family next came to the House of Lords. Within a few days "Thomas Percy hired a howse at Westminster," says Fawkes in his subsequent Confession, "neare adjoyning Parlt. howse, and there wee beganne to make a myne about the XI of December, 1604." The rest of the story is too well-known to call for repetition. How the gunpowder was smuggled into a cellar running under the Parliament House; how, when Parliament was prorogued to November 5th, 1605, the conspirators, running short of money to equip an insurrection, added to their number a few wealthy accomplices, – most significant to our narrative, that old friend of the Vauxes, Sir Edward Digby, and Francis Tresham, cousin of Catesby and the Winters, and as I have said of the Vauxes themselves.[32] How Tresham, recoiling from the destruction of innocent Catholic Lords with the detested Protestants, met Catesby, Winter, and Fawkes at White Webbs, "a house known as Dr. Hewick's house by Enfield Chace," and laboured with them for permission to warn their friends, especially his brothers-in-law, Lord Stourton and Monteagle; and how, when permission was refused, he wrote an anonymous letter to Monteagle, begging him "as you tender your life, to devise some excuse to shift of your attendance at this Parliament; for God and man hath concurred to punish the wickedness of this time." How Monteagle informed the Council and the King. How Guy Fawkes was discovered among his barrels of gunpowder, and on the fourth of November arrested as "John Johnson," the servant of Thomas Percy, one of the King's Gentlemen Pensioners. How "on the morning of the fifth, the news of the great deliverance ran like wildfire along the streets of London," and Catesby and Wright, Percy and the brothers Winter, were in full flight for Lady Catesby's house in Ashby St. Legers, Northamptonshire, not far from Harrowden.

With the rest of the world Francis Beaumont would gasp with amazement. But what must have been his concern when on the first examination of "John Johnson," November 5th, the identity of

[30] Gardiner, *Hist. Engl.* 1603-1642, I, 234.

[31] Morris, p. 360. See also, below, Appendix, Table D.

[32] Fletcher's connections, also, the Bakers, Lennards, and Sackvilles were interested in the fortunes of Francis Tresham; for he had married Anne Tufton of Hothfield, Kent, granddaughter of Mary Baker who was sister of Sir Richard of Sissinghurst and of Cicely, first Countess of Dorset. – Collins, III, 489; Hasted, VII, 518. See below, Appendix, Tables D, E.

that conspirator was established not by any confession of his, but from the contents of a letter found upon him, written by – Beaumont's first cousin, Anne Vaux![33]

As intelligence oozed from the Lords of Council, Beaumont would next learn that Anne's sister-in-law, Mrs. [Elizabeth] Vaux of Harrowden had expected something was about to take place, and that Father Gerard and "Walley" [Garnet, the Father Superior of the English Jesuits] "made her house their chief resort"; and then that Fawkes had confessed that Catesby, the two Winters, and Francis Tresham – all of the Vaux family connection – and Sir Everard Digby of their close acquaintance, were implicated in the Plot; and that the conspiracy was not merely to blow up the older members of the royal family but to secure the Princess Elizabeth, place her upon the throne, and marry her to an English Catholic,[34]– therefore, an enterprise likely to implicate his Catholic cousins, indeed. His friend, Ben Jonson, is meanwhile blustering of private informations, and Francis would be likely to hear that Ben has written (November 8) to Lord Salisbury offering his services to unravel the web "if no better person can be found," and averring that the Catholics "are all so enweaved in it as it will make 500 gent. lesse of the religion within this weeke." Then he is apprised that John Wright, Catesby, Percy, etc., have been seen at "Lady" Vaux's on the eighth. The next day, that these three and Christopher Wright have been overtaken and slain; and then that, on the ninth, Fawkes has confessed that they have been using a house of Father Garnet's at White Webbs as a rendezvous. Perhaps White Webbs means nothing to Francis just yet, but it soon will. Three days later, Tresham under examination acknowledges interviews with his cousins, Catesby and Thomas Winter, and with Fathers Garnet and Gerard; but says he has not been at Mrs. Vaux's house at Harrowden for a year. Soon afterwards, December 5, the Inner Temple itself is shaken to the foundations by the intelligence that Jesuit literature has been discovered by Sir Edward Coke in Tresham's chamber, – a manuscript of Blackwell's famous treatise on *Equivocation*, destined to play a baleful rôle in the ensuing examination of certain of the suspects.

Meanwhile, Francis would observe with alarm that his Vaux cousins are from day to day objects of deeper suspicion. On November 13, Lord Vaux's house at Harrowden is searched; his mother gives up all her keys but no papers are found. She and the young lord strongly deny all knowledge of the treason; the house, however, is still guarded. On the eighteenth, Elizabeth, Mrs. Vaux, is examined and says that she does not know "Gerard, the priest"[!]; but among the visitors at her house she mentions Catesby, Digby, and "Greene" [Greenway] and "Darcy" [Garnet], priests. She acknowledges having written to Lady Wenman, the wife of Sir Richard, last Easter, saying that "Tottenham would turn French," but fails to explain her meaning. From other quarters, however, it is learned that she bade that lady "be of good comfort for there should soon be toleration for religion," adding: "Fast and pray that that may come to pass which we purpose, which yf it doe, wee shall see Totnam turned French." And Sir Richard, examined concerning the contents of Mrs. Vaux's letter to his wife, affirms that he "disliked their intercourse, because Mrs. Vaux tried to pervert his wife." On December 4, Catesby's servant, Bates, acknowledges that he revealed the whole Plot to Greenway, the priest, in confession, "who said it was a good cause, bade him be secret, and absolved him." From Henry Huddleston's examination, December 6, it appears that Mrs. Vaux has not been telling the whole truth about Harrowden, for not only were the two other priests most suspected, Garnet and Greenway, there sometimes, but also Gerard, whom Huddleston has met there. On January 19, Bates definitely connects Gerard and Garnet with the proceedings; and all three priests are proclaimed. Gerard cannot be found, but from his own *Narrative* it appears that he had been hiding at Harrowden before, that now he is concealed in London, and Elizabeth Vaux knows where.[35] When she is brought again before

[33] The facts as here presented are drawn from the *Calendar of State Papers (Domestic)*, the *Gunpowder Plot Book*, and Father Gerard's *Narrative* (in Morris), in the order of dates as indicated.

[34] Nov. 5-8.

[35] Morris, *Life of Father Gerard*, p. 385.

the Lords of Council and threatened with death if she tell not where the priest is, we may imagine the interest of the Beaumonts. Francis, though no sympathizer with the Plot, cannot have failed to admire the bearing of Elizabeth during the examination:

> "As for my hostess, Mrs. Vaux," writes Father Gerard, "she was brought to London after that long search for me, and strictly examined about me by the Lords of the Council; but she answered to everything so discreetly as to escape all blame. At last they produced a letter of hers to a certain relative, asking for the release of Father Strange and another, of whom I spoke before. This relative of hers was the chief man in the county in which they had been taken, and she thought she could by her intercession with him prevail for their release. But the treacherous man, who had often enough, as far as words went, offered to serve her in any way, proved the truth of our Lord's prophecy, 'A man's enemies shall be those of his own household!' for he immediately sent up her letter to the Council. They showed her, therefore, her own letter, and said to her, 'You see now that you are entirely at the King's mercy for life or death; so if you consent to tell us where Father Gerard is, you shall have your life.'
>
> "'I do not know where he is,' she answered, 'and if I did know, I would not tell you.'
>
> "Then rose one of the lords, who had been a former friend of hers, to accompany her to the door, out of courtesy, and on the way said to her persuasively, 'Have pity on yourself and on your children, and say what is required of you, for otherwise you must certainly die.'
>
> "To which she answered with a loud voice, 'Then, my lord, I will die.'
>
> "This was said when the door had been opened, so that her servants who were waiting for her heard what she said, and all burst into weeping. But the Council only said this to terrify her, for they did not commit her to prison, but sent her to the house of a certain gentleman in the city, and after being held there in custody for a time she was released, but on condition of remaining in London. And one of the principal Lords of the Council acknowledged to a friend that he had nothing against her, except that she was a stout Papist, going ahead of others, and, as it were, a leader in evil."

What follows of Elizabeth's devotion to the cause, would not be likely to filter through; but the Beaumonts may have had their suspicions. According to Father Gerard: —

> "Immediately she was released from custody, knowing that I was then in London, quite forgetful of herself, she set about taking care of me, and provided all the furniture and other things necessary for my new house. Moreover, she sent me letters daily, recounting everything that occurred; and when she knew that I wished to cross the sea for a time, she bid me not spare expense, so that I secured a safe passage, for that she would pay everything, though it should cost five thousand florins, and in fact she sent me at once a thousand florins for my journey. I left her in care of Father Percy, who had already as my companion lived a long time at her house. There he still remains, and does much good. I went straight to Rome, and being sent back thence to these parts, was fixed at Louvain."[36] So much at present of Elizabeth. We shall hear of her, as did Beaumont, during the succeeding years.

In the tribulations of Anne Vaux, his own first cousin, Francis must have been even more deeply interested. That she was in communication with Fawkes had been discovered, November 5.

[36] Morris, pp. 413-414.

She was apprehended, committed to the care of Sir John Swynerton, but temporarily discharged. When Fawkes confessed, November 9, that the conspirators had been using a house of Father Garnet's at White Webbs, in Enfield Chace, the house called "Dr. Hewick's" was searched. "No papers nor munition found, but Popish books and relics, – and many trap-doors and secret passages." Garnet had escaped but, on examination of the servants, it developed that under the pseudonym of "Meaze" he had taken the house "for his sister, Mrs. Perkins," – [and who should "Mrs. Perkins" turn out to be but Anne Vaux!] The books and relics are the property of "Mrs. Jennings," – [and who should she be but Anne's sister, Eleanor Brookesby!] "Mrs. Perkins spent a month at White Webbs lately;" and "three gentlemen [Catesby, Winter, and another] came to White Webbs, the day the King left Royston" [October 31]. On November 27, Sir Everard Digby's servant deposes concerning Garnet that "Mrs. Ann Vaux doth usually goe with him whithersoever he goethe." On January 19, as we have seen, warrants are out for the arrest of Garnet. On January 30, he is taken with another Jesuit priest, Father Oldcorne, at Hindlip Hall, in Worcestershire, where for seven days and nights they have been buried in a closet, and nourished by broths conveyed to them by means of a quill which passed "through a little hole in a chimney that backed another chimney into a gentlewoman's chamber." True enough, the deposition, that whithersoever her beloved Father Superior "goethe, Mrs. Ann Vaux doth usually goe"; for she is the gentlewoman of the broths and quill, – she with Mrs. Abington, the sister of Monteagle. Garnet and Oldcorne are taken prisoners to the Tower; and three weeks later Anne is in town again, communicating with Garnet by means of letters, ostensibly brief and patent, but eked out with tidings written in an invisible ink of orange-juice. On March 6, Garnet confesses that Mrs. Anne Vaux, alias Perkins, he, and Brookesby bear the expenses of White Webbs. On March 11, Anne being examined says that she keeps the place at her own expense; that Catesby, Winter, and Tresham have been to her house, but that she knew nothing of the Plot; on the contrary, suspecting some mischief at one time, she had "begged Garnet to prevent it." Examined again on March 24, she says that "Francis Tresham, her cousin, often visited her and Garnet at White Webbs, Erith, Wandsworth, etc., when Garnet would counsel him to be patient and quiet; and that they also visited Tresham at his house in Warwickshire." Garnet's trial took place at Guildhall on March 28, Sir Edward Coke of the Inner Temple acting for the prosecution. Garnet acknowledged that the Plot had been conveyed to him by another priest [Greenway] in confession. He was convicted, however, not for failing to divulge that knowledge, but for failing to dissuade Catesby and the rest, both before and after he had gained knowledge from Greenway. He was executed on May 3. Of Anne's share in all that has preceded, Beaumont would by this date have known. One wonders whether he or his brother, John, ever learned the pathetic details of the final correspondence between Anne and the Father Superior. How, March 21, she wrote to him asking directions for the disposal of herself, and concluding that life without him was "not life but deathe." How, April 2, he replied with advice for her future; and as to Oldcorne and himself, added that the former had "dreamt there were two tabernacles prepared for them." How, the next day, she wrote again asking fuller directions and wishing Father Oldcorne had "dreamt there was a third seat" for her. And how, that same day, with loving thought for all details of her proceedings, and with sorrow for his own weakness under examination, the Father Superior sends his last word to her, – that he will "die not as a victorious martyr, but as a penitent thief," – and bids her farewell.

All this of the Harrowden cousins and their connection with Catholicism and the Gunpowder Plot, I have included not only because it touches nearly upon the family interests and friendships of Beaumont's early years, but also because it throws light upon the circumstances and feelings which prompted the satire of his first play, *The Woman-Hater* (acted in 1607), where as we shall see he alludes with horror to the Plot itself, but holds up to ridicule the informers who swarmed the streets of London in the years succeeding, and trumped up charges of conspiracy and recusancy against unoffending persons, and so sought to deprive them, if not of life, of property. It is with some hesitancy, since the proof to me is not conclusive, that I suggest that the animus in this play against favourites and intelligencers has perhaps more of a personal flavour than has hitherto been suspected.

An entry from the Docquet, calendared with the State Papers, Domestic, of November 14, 1607, may indicate that John Beaumont, the brother of Francis, though a Protestant, had in some way manifested sympathy with his Catholic relatives during the persecutions which followed the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot: – "Gift to Sir Jas. Sempill of the King's two parts of the site of the late dissolved monastery of Grace-Dieu, and other lands in Leicester, in the hands of the Crown by the recusancy of John Beaumont." At first reading the John Beaumont would appear to be Francis' grandfather, the Master of the Rolls. But the Master lost his lands not for recusancy (or refusal on religious grounds to take the Oath of Allegiance, or attend the State Church), but for malfeasance in office, and that in 1552-3, while the Protestant Edward VI was King. He had no lands to lose after Mary mounted the throne, – even if as a Protestant he were recusant under a Catholic Queen. The recusancy seems to be of a date contemporaneous with James's refusal, October 17, 1606, to take fines from recusants, the King, as the State Papers inform us, taking "two-thirds of their goods, lands, etc., instead." The "two-thirds" would appear to be the "two parts" of Grace-Dieu and other lands, specified in the Gift; and that the sufferer was Francis Beaumont's brother is rendered the more likely by the fact that the beneficiary, Sir James Sempill, had been distinguishing himself by hatred of Roman Catholics from November 16, 1605, on; and that on July 31, 1609, he is again receiving grants "out of lands and goods of recusants, to be convicted at his charges."

There is nothing, indeed, in the career of Beaumont's brother, John, as commonly recorded, or in the temper of his poetry to indicate a refusal on his part to disavow the supremacy of Rome in ecclesiastical affairs, or to attend regularly the services of the Protestant Church. His writings speak both loyalty and Protestant Christianity. But it is to be noted that not only many of his kinsmen but his wife, as well, belonged to families affiliated with Roman Catholicism, and that his eulogistic poems addressed to James are all of later years, – after his kinsman, Buckingham, had "drawn him from his silent cell," and "first inclined the anointed head to hear his rural songs, and read his lines"; also that it is only under James's successor that he is honoured by a baronetcy. It is, therefore, not at all impossible that, because of some careless or over-frank utterance of fellow-feeling for his Catholic connections, or of repugnance for the unusually savage measures adopted after the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, he may have been accused of recusancy, deprived of part of his estate, and driven into the seclusion which he maintained at Grace-Dieu till 1616 or thereabout.

CHAPTER V
FLETCHER'S FAMILY, AND HIS YOUTH

The friendship between Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher may have commenced at any time after Francis became a member of the Inner Temple, in 1600, – probably not later than 1605, when Beaumont was about twenty-one and Fletcher twenty-six. The latter was the son of "a comely and courtly prelate," Richard, Bishop, successively of Bristol, Worcester, and London. Richard's father, also, had been a clergyman; and Richard, himself, in his earlier years had been pensioner and scholar of Trinity, Cambridge (1563), then Fellow of Bene't College (Corpus Christi), then President of the College. In 1573 he married Elizabeth Holland at Cranbrook in Kent, perhaps of the family of Hugh Holland, descended from the Earls of Kent, who later appears in the circle of Beaumont's acquaintance; became, next, minister of the church of Rye, Sussex, about fifteen miles south of Cranbrook; then, Chaplain to the Queen; then, Dean of Peterborough. While he was officiating at Rye, in December 1579, John the fourth of nine children, was born. This John, the dramatist, is probably the "John Fletcher of London," who was admitted pensioner of Bene't College, Cambridge, in 1591, and, as if destined for holy orders, became two years later a Bible-clerk, reading the lessons in the services of the college chapel. At the time of his entering college, his father had risen to the bishopric of Bristol; and, later in 1591, had been made Lord High Almoner to the Queen; he had a house at Chelsea, and was near the court "where his presence was accustomed much to be." By 1593 the Bishop had been advanced to the diocese of Worcester; and we find him active in the House of Lords with the Archbishop of Canterbury in the proposal of severe measures against the Barrowists and Brownists.[37] The next year he was elected Bishop of London, – succeeding John Aylmer, who had been tutor to Lady Jane Grey, – and was confirmed by royal assent in January 1595. From Sir John Harington's unfavourable account[38] it would appear that the Bishop owed his rapid promotion to the combination of great mind and small means which made him a fitting tool for "zealous courtiers whose devotion did serve them more to prey on the Church than pray in the Church." But his will, drawn in 1593, shows him mindful of the poor, solicitous concerning the "Chrystian and godlie education" of his children and confident in the principles and promises of the Christian faith, – "this hope hath the God of all comforte laide upp in my breste."

We have no record of John's proceeding to a degree. It is not unlikely that he left Cambridge for the city when his father attained the metropolitan see. From early years the boy had enjoyed every opportunity of observing the ways of monarchs and courtiers, scholars and poets, as well as of princes of the Church. Since 1576, his father had "lived in her highnes," the Queen's, "gratious aspect and favour." *Præsul splendidus*, says Camden. Eloquent, accomplished, courtly, lavish in hospitality and munificence, no wonder that he counted among his friends, Burghley, the Lord Treasurer, and Burghley's oldest son, Sir Thomas Cecil, Anthony Bacon, the brother of Sir Francis, and that princely second Earl of Essex, Robert Devereux, who had married the widow of Sir Philip Sidney, and with whom the lame but clever Anthony Bacon lived. Sir Francis Drake also was one of his friends and gave him a "ringe of golde" which he willed to one of his executors. Another of his "loveinge freindes," and an assistant-executor of his will, was the learned and vigorous Dr. Richard Bancroft, his successor as Bishop of London and afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. As for immediate literary connections, suffice it here to say that the Bishop's brother, Dr. Giles Fletcher, was a cultivated diplomat and writer upon government, and that the sons of Dr. Giles were the clerical Spenserians, Phineas, but three years younger than his cousin the dramatist, – whose fisher-play *Sicelides* was acting at King's College, Cambridge, in the year of John's *Chances* in London, and whose *Brittain's Ida* is as light in

[37] *Cal. State Papers (Dom.)*, April 7, 1593.

[38] *Briefe View of the State of the Church.*

its youthful eroticism as his *Purple Island* is ponderous in pedantic allegory, – and Giles, nine years younger than John, who was printing verses before John wrote his earliest play, and whose poem of *Christ's Victorie* was published, in 1610, a year or so later than John's pastoral of *The Faithfull Shepheardesse*. Bishop Fletcher could tell his sons stories of royalty, not only in affluence, but in distress; for when John was but eight years old the father as Dean of Peterborough was chaplain to Mary, Queen of Scots, at Fotheringay, adding to her distress "by the zeal with which he urged her to renounce the faith of Rome." It was he who when Mary's head was held up after the execution cried, "So perish all the Queen's enemies!"[39] He could, also, tell them much about the great founder of the Dorset family, for at Fotheringay at the same time was Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, afterwards first Earl of Dorset, who had come to announce to Mary, Queen of Scots, the sentence of death.

From 1591 on, the Bishop was experiencing the alternate "smiles and frowns of royalty" in London; about the time that John left college more particularly the frowns. For, John's mother having died about the end of 1592, the Bishop had, in 1595, most unwisely married Maria (daughter of John Giffard of Weston-under-Edge in Gloucestershire), the relict of a few months' standing of Sir Richard Baker of Sissinghurst in Kent. The Bishop's acquaintance with this second wife, as well as with the first, probably derived from his father's incumbency as Vicar of the church in Cranbrook, Kent, which began in 1555 and was still existing as late as 1574. The young Richard would often have shuddered as a child before Bloody Baker's Prison with its iron-barred windows glowering from the parish church, for Sir John hated the primitive and pious Anabaptists who had taken up their abode about Cranbrook, and he hunted them down;[40] and Richard would, as a lad, have walked the two miles across the clayey fields and through the low-lying woods with his father to the stately manor house, built by old Sir John Baker himself in the time of Edward VI, and have seen that distinguished personage who had been Attorney-General and Chancellor of the Exchequer under Henry VIII, – and who as may be recalled was one of that Council of State, in 1553, which ratified and signed Edward VI's 'devise for the succession' making Lady Jane Grey inheritress of the crown. And when young Richard returned from his presidency of Bene't College, in 1573, to Cranbrook to marry Elizabeth Holland, he would have renewed acquaintance with Sir Richard, who had succeeded the "bloody" Sir John as master of Sissinghurst, sixteen years before. He may for all we know have been present at the entertainment which that same year Sir Richard made for Queen Elizabeth. Maria Giffard was twenty-four years old, then. Whether she was yet Lady Baker we do not know – but it is probable; and we may be sure that on his various visits to Cranbrook, the rising dean and bishop had frequent opportunity to meet her at Sissinghurst before his own wife's death, or the death of Sir Richard in 1594. Since the sister of Sir Richard Baker, Cicely, was already the wife of Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, when, in 1586-7, Buckhurst and Richard Fletcher, Dean of Peterborough, were thrown together at Fotheringay, it is not unlikely that the closer association between the Fletchers and Lady Buckhurst's sister-in-law of Sissinghurst grew out of this alliance of the Sackvilles with the Bakers.

Lady Baker was in 1595 in conspicuous disfavour with Queen Elizabeth, and with the people too; for, if she was virtuous, as her nephew records,[41] "the more happy she in herself, though unhappy that the world did not believe it."[42] Certain it is, that in a contemporary satire she is thrice-damned as of the most ancient of disreputable professions, and once dignified as "my Lady Letcher." Though of unsavoury reputation, she was of fine appearance, and socially very well connected. Her brother, Sir George Giffard, was in service at Court under Elizabeth; and in Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, she had a brother-in-law, who was kinsman to the Queen, herself. But not only did the Queen dislike her, she disliked the idea of any of her prelates, especially her comely Bishop of London, marrying a second

[39] Nichols's *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, II, 506-510.

[40] See the story in *Camden Miscellany*, III (1854).

[41] Sir Richard Baker, in his *Chronicle of the Kings of England*.

[42] Fuller's *Worthies*, as cited by Dyce, I, x, xi.

time, without her express consent. For a year after this second marriage the Bishop was suspended from his office. "Here of the Bishop was sadly sensible," says Fuller, "and seeking to lose his sorrow in a mist of smoak, died of the immoderate taking thereof." Sir John Harington, however, tells us that he regained the royal favour; – "but, certain it is that (the Queen being pacified, and hee in great jollity with his faire Lady and her Carpets and Cushions in his bed-chamber) he died suddenly, taking Tobacco in his chaire, saying to his man that stood by him, whom he loved very well, 'Oh, boy, I die.'"

That was in 1596. The Bishop left little but his library and his debts. The former went to two of his sons, Nathaniel and John. The latter swallowed up his house at Chelsea with his other properties. The Bishop's brother and chief executor of the will, Giles, the diplomat, is soon memorializing the Queen for "some commiseration towards the orphans of the late Bishopp of London." He emphasizes the diminution of the Bishop's worldly estate consequent upon his translation to the costly see of London, his extraordinary charges in the reparation of the four episcopal residences, his lavish expenditure in hospitality, his penitence for "the errour of his late marriage," and concludes: – "He hath left behinde him 8 poore children, whereof divers are very young. His dettes due to the Quenes Majestie and to other creditors are 1400*li.* or thereaboutes, his whole state is but one house wherein the widow claimeth her thirds, his plate valewed at 400*li.*, his other stuffe at 500*li.*" Anthony Bacon, who sympathized with the purpose of this memorial, enlisted the coöperation of Bishop Fletcher's powerful friend and his own patron, the Earl of Essex, who "likewise represented to the Queen the case of the orphans … in so favourable a light that she was inclin'd to relieve them;" but whether she did so or not, we are unable to discover.[43]

What John Fletcher, – a lad of seventeen, when, in 1596, he was turned out of Fulham Palace and his father's private house in Chelsea, with its carpets and cushions and the special "stayre and dore made of purpose … in a bay window" for the entrance of Queen Elizabeth when she might deign, or did deign, to visit her unruly prelate, – what the lad of seventeen did for a living before we find him, about 1606 or 1607, in the ranks of the dramatists, we have no means of knowing. Perhaps the remaining years of his boyhood were spent with his uncle, Giles, and his young cousins, the coming poets, or with the aunt whom his father called "sister Pownell." The stepmother of eighteen months' duration is not likely with her luxurious tastes and questionable character to have tarried long in charge of the eight "poore and fatherless children." She had children of her own by her previous marriage, in whom to seek consolation, Grisogone and Cicely Baker, then in their twenties, and devoted to her.[44] And with one or both we may surmise that she resumed her life in Kent, or with the heir of sleepy Sissinghurst, making the most of her carpets and cushions and such of her "thirds" as she could recover, until – for she was but forty-seven – she might find more congenial comfort in a third marriage. Her permanent consoler was a certain Sir Stephen Thornhurst of Forde in the Isle of Thanet; and he, thirteen years after the death of her second husband, buried her in state in Canterbury Cathedral, 1609.

In 1603 her sister-in-law, Cicely (Baker) Sackville, now Countess of Dorset and the Earl, her husband, that fine old dramatist of Beaumont's Inner Temple, and former acquaintance at Fotheringay of John Fletcher's father, had taken possession of the manor of Knole, near Sevenoaks in Kent, where their descendants live to-day. Before 1609, Fletcher's stepsister Cicely, named after her aunt, the Countess, had become the Lady Cicely Blunt. Grisogone became the Lady Grisogone Lennard, having married, about 1596, a great friend of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and of his Countess (Sir Philip Sidney's sister), Sir Henry, the son of Sampson Lennard of Chevening and Knole. The Lennard estate lay but three and a half miles from that of their connections, the Dorsets, of Knole Park. If young Fletcher ever went down to see his stepmother at Sissinghurst, or his own mother's

[43] The materials as furnished by Dyce, *B. and F.*, I, xiv-xv, from Birch's *Mem. of Elizabeth*, and the Bacon Papers in the Lambeth Library are confirmed by *Cal. St. Papers* (*Dom.*), June 1596, July 9, 1597, *etc.*

[44] As her monument in Canterbury would indicate. Hasted, *Hist. Kent*, XI, 397.

family in Cranbrook, he was but twenty-six miles by post-road from Chevening and still less from Aunt Cicely at Knole. Beaumont, himself, as we shall see, married the heiress of Sundridge Place a mile and a half south of Chevening, and but forty minutes across the fields from Knole. His sister Elizabeth, too, married a gentleman of one of the neighbouring parishes. The acquaintance of both our dramatists with Bakers and Sackvilles was enhanced by sympathies literary and dramatic. A still younger Sir Richard Baker, cousin to John Fletcher's stepsisters, and to the second and third Earls of Dorset, was an historian, a poet, and a student of the stage – on familiar terms with Tarleton, Burbadge, and Alleyn. And the literary traditions handed down from Thomas Sackville, the author of *Gorboduc* and *The Mirror for Magistrates* were not forgotten by his grandson, Richard, third Earl of Dorset, the contemporary of our dramatists, – for whom, if I am not mistaken, their portraits, now hanging in the dining-room of the Baron Sackville at Knole, were painted.[45]

I have dwelt thus at length upon the conditions antecedent to, and investing, the youth of Beaumont and of Fletcher, because the documents already at hand, if read in the light of scientific biography and literature, set before us with remarkable clearness the social and poetic background of their career as dramatists. When this background of birth, breeding, and family connection is filled in with the deeper colours of their life in London, its manners, experience, and associations, one may more readily comprehend why Dryden says in comparing them with Shakespeare, "they understood and imitated the conversation of gentlemen [of contemporary fashion] much better; whose wild debaucheries and quickness of wit in repartees, no poet before them could paint as they have done."

[45] For the Bakers and their connections, see Hasted, *Hist. Kent*, III, 77; IV, 374, *et seq.*; VII, 100-101; for the Sackvilles. – Hasted, III, 73-82; for the Lennards, – Hasted, III, 108-116; the *Peerages* of Collins, Burke, etc., and the articles in *D. N. B.* See also, below, Appendix, Table E.

CHAPTER VI
SOME EARLY PLAYS OF BEAUMONT AND OF FLETCHER

Beaumont and Fletcher may have been friends by 1603 or 1604, – in all likelihood, as early as 1605 when, as we have seen, Drayton and other "southern Shepherds" were by way of visiting the Beaumonts at Grace-Dieu. In that year Jonson's *Volpone* was acted for the first time; and one may divine from the familiar and affectionate terms in which our two young dramatists address the author upon the publication of the play in 1607 that they had been acquainted not only with Jonson but with one another for the two years past. We have no satisfactory proof of their coöperation in play-writing before 1606 or 1607. According to Dryden, – whose statements of fact are occasionally to be taken with a grain of salt, but who, in this instance, though writing almost sixty years after the event, is basing his assertion upon first-hand authority, – "the first play that brought 'them' in esteem was their *Philaster*," but "before that they had written two or three very unsuccessfully." *Philaster*, as I shall presently show, was, in all probability, first acted between December 7, 1609 and July 12, 1610. Before 1609, however, each had written dramas independently, Beaumont *The Woman-Hater* and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*; Fletcher, *The Faithfull Shepheardesse*, and maybe one or two other plays. Our first evidence of their association in dramatic activity is the presence of Fletcher's hand, apparently as a reviser, in three scenes of *The Woman-Hater*, which was licensed for publication May 20, 1607, as "lately acted by the Children of Paul's." From contemporary evidence we know, as did Dryden, that two of these plays, *The Knight* and *Faithfull Shepheardesse* were ungraciously received; and Richard Brome, about fourteen years after Fletcher's death, suggests that perhaps *Monsieur Thomas* shared "the common fate."

The Woman-Hater was the earliest play of either of our dramatists to find its way into print. Drayton's lines, already referred to, about "sweet Palmeo" imply that Beaumont was already known as a poet, before April 1606. A passage in the Prologue of *The Woman-Hater* seems, as Professor Thorndike has shown, to refer to the narrow escape of Jonson, Chapman, and Marston from having their ears cropped for an offense given to the King by their *Eastward Hoe*. If it does, "he that made this play," undoubtedly Beaumont, made it after the publication of *Eastward Hoe* in 1605. The title-page of 1607 says that the play is given "as it hath been lately acted." The ridicule of intelligencers emulating some worthy men in this land "who have discovered things dangerously hanging over the State" has reference to the system of spying which assumed enormous proportions after the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot in November 1605. An allusion to King James's weakness for handsome young men, "Why may not *I* be a favourite in the sudden?" may very well refer, as Fleay has maintained, to the restoration to favour of Robert Ker (or Carr) of Ferniehurst, afterwards Earl Somerset, – a page whom James had "brought with him from Scotland, and brought up of a child,"[46] but had dismissed soon after his accession. It was at a tilting match, March 24, 1607, that the youth "had the good fortune to break his leg in the presence of the King," and "by his personal activity, strong animal spirits," and beauty, to attract his majesty anew, and on the spot. The beauty, Beaumont emphasizes as a requisite for royal favour. "Why may not *I* be a favourite on the sudden?" says the bloated, hungry courtier, "I see nothing against it." "Not so, sir," replies Valore; "I know you have not the *face* to be a favourite on the sudden." The fact that James did not make a knight bachelor of Carr till December of that year, would in no way invalidate a fling at the favour bestowed upon him in March. Indeed Beaumont's slur in *The Woman-Hater* upon "the legs … very strangely become the legs of a knight and a courtier" might have applied to Carr as early as 1603, for on July 25 of that year James had made him a Knight of the Bath, – in the same batch, by the way, with a certain Oliver Cromwell of

[46] The King's letter to Salisbury (undated, but of 1608). Gardiner, *Hist. Engl.* 1603-1642, II, 43-45.

Huntingdonshire.[47] Without violating the plague regulations, as laid down by the City, *The Woman-Hater* could have been acted during the six months following November 20, 1606. A passage in Act III, 2,[48] which I shall presently quote in full, is, as has not previously been noticed, a manifest parody of one of Antony's speeches in *Antony and Cleopatra*[49] which, according to all evidence, was not acted before 1607. It would appear, therefore, that Beaumont's first play was completed after January 1, 1607, probably after March 24, when Carr regained the royal favour, and was presented for the first time during the two months following the latter date.

The Woman-Hater affords interesting glimpses of the author's observation, sometimes perhaps experience, in town and country. "That I might be turned loose," says one of his *dramatis personae*, "to try my fortune amongst the whole fry in a college or an inn of court!" And another, a gay young buck, – "I must take some of the common courses of our nobility, which is thus: If I can find no company that likes me, pluck off my hat-band, throw an old cloak over my face and, as if I would not be known, walk hastily through the streets till I be discovered: 'There goes Count Such-a-one,' says one; 'There goes Count Such-a-one,' says another; 'Look how fast he goes,' says a third; 'There's some great matters in hand, questionless,' says a fourth; – when all my business is to have them say so. This hath been used. Or, if I can find any company [acting at the theatre], I'll after dinner to the stage to see a play; where, when I first enter, you shall have a murmur in the house; every one that does not know, cries, 'What nobleman is that?' All the gallants on the stage, rise, vail to me, kiss their hand, offer me their places; then I pick out some one whom I please to grace among the rest, take his seat, use it, throw my cloak over my face, and laugh at him; the poor gentleman imagines himself most highly graced, thinks all the auditors esteem him one of my bosom friends, and in right special regard with me." And again, and this is much like first-hand knowledge: "There is no poet acquainted with more shakings and quakings, towards the latter end of his new play (when he's in that case that he stands peeping betwixt the curtains, so fearfully that a bottle of ale cannot be opened but he thinks somebody hisses), than I am at this instant." And again, – of the political spies, who had persecuted more than one of Beaumont's relatives and, according to tradition, trumped up momentary trouble for our young dramatists themselves, a few years later: "This fellow is a kind of informer, one that lives in ale-houses and taverns; and because he perceives some worthy men in this land, with much labour and great expense, to have discovered things dangerously hanging over the state, he thinks to discover as much out of the talk of drunkards in tap-houses. He brings me information, picked out of broken words in men's common talk, which with his malicious misapplication he hopes will seem dangerous; he doth, besides, bring me the names of all the young gentlemen in the city that use ordinaries or taverns, talking (to my thinking) only as the freedom of their youth teach them without any further ends, for dangerous and seditious spirits." Much more in this kind, of city ways known to Beaumont; and, also, something of country ways, the table of the Leicestershire squire – the Beaumonts of Coleorton and the Villierses of Brooksby, – and the hunting-breakfasts with which Grace-Dieu was familiar. The hungry courtier of the play vows to "keep a sumptuous house; a board groaning under the heavy burden of the beast that cheweth the cud, and the fowl that cutteth the air. It shall not, like the table of a country-justice, be sprinkled over with all manner of cheap salads, sliced beef, giblets and pettitoes, to fill up room; nor shall there stand any great, cumbersome, uncut-up pies at the nether end, filled with moss and stones, partly to make a show with, partly to keep the lower mess [below the salt] from eating; nor shall my meal come in sneaking like the city-service, one dish a quarter of an hour after another, and gone as if they had appointed to meet there and mistook the hour; nor should it, like the new court-service, come in in haste, as if it fain would be

[47] This much more distinguished favour has been overlooked by Thorndike and other critics. But it is possible that Shaw, *Knights of England*, I, 154, may be confounding him with another Carr, a favourite of Queen Anne's.

[48] Dyce, *B. and F.*, Vol. I, p. 53.

[49] Act IV, 14, 50-54.

gone again [whipped off by the waiters], all courses at once, like a hunting breakfast: but I would have my several courses and my dishes well filed [ordered]; my first course shall be brought in after the ancient manner by a score of old blear-eyed serving-men in long blue coats." – And not a little of life at Court, and of the favourites with whom King James surrounded himself: – "They say one shall see fine sights at the Court? I'll tell you what you shall see. You shall see many faces of man's making, for you shall find very few as God left them; and you shall see many legs too; amongst the rest you shall behold one pair, the feet of which were in past times sockless, but are now, through the change of time (that alters all things), very strangely become the legs of a knight and a courtier; another pair you shall see, that were heir-apparent legs to a glover; these legs hope shortly to be honourable; when they pass by they will bow, and the mouth to these legs will seem to offer you some courtship; it will swear, but it will lie; hear it not."

Keen observation this, and a dramatist's acquaintance with many kinds of life; the promise of a satiric mastery, and very vivid prose for a lad of twenty-three. The play is not, as a dramatic composition, of any peculiar distinction. Beaumont is still in his pupilage to the classics, and to Ben Jonson's comedy of humours. But the humours, though unoriginal and boyishly forced, are clearly defined; and the instinct for fun is irrepressible. The Woman-Hater, obsessed by the delusion that all women are in pursuit, is admirably victimized by a witty and versatile heroine who has, with maliciously genial pretense, assumed the rôle of man-hunter. And to the main plot is loosely, but not altogether ineffectually, attached a highly diverting story which Beaumont has taken from the Latin treatise of Paulus Jovius on Roman fishes, or from some intermediate source. Like the Tamisius of the original, his Lazarillo, – whose prayer to the Goddess of Plenty is ever, "fill me this day with some rare delicates," – scours the city in fruitless quest of an umbrana's head. Finally, he is taken by intelligencers, spies in the service of the state, who construe his passion for the head of a fish as treason aimed at the head of the Duke. The comedy abounds in parody of verses well known at the time, of lines from *Hamlet* and *All's Well that End Well*, *Othello*[50] and *Eastward Hoe*[50] and bombastic catches from other plays. To me the most ludicrous bit of burlesque is of the moment of last suspense in *Antony and Cleopatra* (IV, 14 and 15) where Antony, thinking to die "after the high Roman fashion" which Cleopatra forthwith emulates, says "I come my queen," —

> Stay for me!
> Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand,
> And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze.
> Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops,
> And all the haunt [of Elysium] be ours.

So Lazarillo, in awful apprehension lest his love, his fish-head, be eaten before he arrive, —

> If it be eaten, here he stands that is the most dejected, most unfortunate, miserable, accursed, forsaken slave this province yields! I will not sure outlive it; no, I will die bravely and like a Roman;
>
> And after death, amidst the Elysian shades,
> I'll meet my love again.

Shakespeare's play was not entered for publication till May 20, 1608, but this passage shows that Beaumont had seen it at the Globe before May 20, 1607.

[50] *Cf.*, Lazarillo's *Farewells*, Act III, 3.

I have no hesitation in assigning to the same year, 1607, although most critics have dated it three or four years later, Beaumont's admirable burlesque of contemporary bourgeois drama and chivalric romance, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. Evidence both external and internal, which I shall later state, points to its presentation by the Children of the Queen's Revels at Blackfriars while they were under the business management of Henry Evans and Robert Keysar, and before the temporary suppression of the company in March 1608. The question of date has been complicated by the supposed indebtedness of the burlesque to *Don Quixote*; but I shall attempt to show, when I consider the play at length, that it has no verbal relation either to the original (1604) or the translation (1612) of Cervantes' story. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is in some respects of the same boyish tone and outlook upon the humours of life as *The Woman-Hater*, but it is incomparably more novel in conception, more varied in composition, and more effervescent in satire. It displays the Beaumont of twenty-two or – three as already an effective dramatist of contemporary manners and humours, a master of parody, side-long mirth, and ironic wit, before he joined forces with Fletcher and developed, in the treatment of more serious and romantic themes, the power of poetic characterization and the pathos that bespeak experience and reflection, – and, in the treatment of the comedy of life, the realism that proceeds from broad and sympathetic observation. The play, which as the publisher of the first quarto, in 1613, tell us was "begot and borne in eight daies," was not a success; evidently because the public did not like the sport that it made of dramas and dramatists then popular; especially, did not stomach the ridicule of the bombast-loving and romanticizing London citizen himself, – was not yet educated up to the humour; perhaps, because "hee … this unfortunate child … was so unlike his brethren." At any rate, according to Walter Burre, the publisher, in 1613, "the wide world for want of judgement, or not understanding the privy marke of Ironie about it (which showed it was no ofspring of any vulgar braine) utterly rejected it." And Burre goes on to say in his Dedication of the quarto to Maister Robert Keysar: – "for want of acceptance it was even ready to give up the Ghost, and was in danger to have bene smothered in perpetuall oblivion, if you (out of your direct antipathy to ingratitude) had not bene moved both to relieve and cherish it: wherein I must needs commend both your judgement, understanding, and singular love to good wits."

The rest of this Dedication is of great interest as bearing upon the date of the composition of the play; but it has been entirely misconstrued or else it gives us false information. That matter I shall discuss in connection with the sources and composition of the play.[51] Suffice it to say here that *The Knight* followed *The Travails of Three English Brothers*, acted. June 29, 1607, and that the Robert Keysar who rescued the manuscript of *The Knight* from oblivion had, only in 1606 or 1607, acquired a financial interest in the Queen's Revels' Children, and was backing them during the last year of their occupancy of Blackfriars when they presented the play, and where only it was presented.

In the same year, 1607, both young men are writing commendatory verses for the first quarto of Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, which had been acted in 1605. Beaumont, with the confidence of intimacy, addresses Jonson as "Dear Friend," praises his "even work," deplores its failure with the many who "nothing can digest, but what's obscene, or barks," and implies that he forbears to make them understand its merits purely in deference to Jonson's wiser judgment, —

> I would have shewn
> To all the world the art which thou alone
> Hast taught our tongue, the rules of time, of place
> And other rites, deliver'd with the grace
> Of comic style, which only is far more
> Than any English stage hath known before.
> But since our subtle gallants think it good

[51] See Chap. XXIV, below.

To like of nought that may be understood …
… let us desire
They may continue, simply to admire
Fine clothes and strange words,

and offensive personalities.

Fletcher in a more epigrammatic appeal to "The true master in his art, B. Jonson," prays him to forgive friends and foes alike, and then, those "who are nor worthy to be friends or foes."

Concerning Fletcher's beginnings in composition the earliest date is suggested by a line of D'Avenant's, written many years after Fletcher's death (1625), "full twenty years he wore the bays."[52] It has been conjectured by some that the elder of our dramatists was in the field as early as 1604, with his comedy of *The Woman's Prize* or *The Tamer Tamed*, – a well contrived and witty continuation of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, – in which Maria, a cousin of Shakespeare's Katherine, now deceased, marries the bereaved Petruchio and effectively turns the tables upon him. If acted before 1607, *The Woman's Prize* was a Paul's Boys' or Queen's Revels' play. But while the upper limit of the play is fixed by the mention of the siege of Ostend, 1604, other references and the literary style point to 1610, even to 1614, as the date of composition or revision.[53]

It is likely that Fletcher was writing plays before 1608, but what we do not know. In that year was acted the pastoral drama of *The Faithfull Shepheardesse*, a composition entirely his own. This delicate confection of sensual desire, ideal love, translunar chastity, and subacid cynicism regarding "all ideas of chastity whatever,"[54] was an experiment; and a failure upon the stage. It has, as I shall later emphasize, lyric and descriptive charm of surpassing merit, but it lacks, as does most of Fletcher's work, moral depth and emotional reality; and following, as it did, a literary convention in design, it could not avail itself of the skill in dramatic device, and the racy flavour which a little later characterized his *Monsieur Thomas*. The date of its first performance is determined by the combined authority of the Stationers' Registers (from which we learn that the publishers of the first quarto, undated, but undoubtedly of 1609,[55] were in unassisted partnership only from December 22, 1608 to July 20, 1609), of a statement of Jonson to Drummond of Hawthornden that the play was written "ten years" before 1618, and of commendatory verses to the first quarto of 1609, by the young actor-dramatist, Nathaniel Field. If we may guide our calculations by the plague regulations of the time, it must have been acted before July 28, 1608.

On the appearance of the first quarto, in 1609, Jonson sympathizing with "the worthy author," on the ill reception of the pastoral when first performed, says:

I, that am glad thy innocence was their guilt,

for the rabble found not there the "vices, which they look'd for," I —

Do crown thy murder'd poem; which shall rise
A glorified work to time, when fire
Or moths shall eat what all these fools admire.

---

[52] Prologue, for a revival, in 1649, of *The Woman-Hater*, which D'Avenant mistakenly attributes to Fletcher.

[53] Reasons for dating an earlier version of the play about 1604 are given by Oliphant, *Engl. Studien*, XV, 338-339, and Thorndike, *Infl. of B. and F.*, 70-71. In its present form, however, the play dates later than Jonson's *Epicoene*, 1610. See Gayley, *Rep. Eng. Com.*, III, *Introd.*, § 15.

[54] I heartily concur with W. W. Greg's interpretation, *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama*, p. 274.

[55] See Fleay, *Chron. Eng. Dr.*, I, 312, and Thorndike, *Infl. of B. and F.*, 64.

And Francis Beaumont writing to "my friend, Master John Fletcher" speaks of his "undoubted wit" and "art," and rejoices that, if they should condemn the play now that it is printed,

> Your censurers must have the quality
> Of reading, which I am afraid is more
> Than half your shrewdest judges had before.

In the first quarto two commendatory poems are printed, the first by N. F., the second by the Homeric scholar and well known dramatist, George Chapman. The latter writes "to his loving friend, Master John Fletcher," in terms of generous encouragement and glowing charm. Your pastoral, says he, is "a poem and a play, too," —

> But because
> Your poem only hath by us applause,
> Renews the golden world, and holds through all
> The holy laws of homely pastoral,
> Where flowers and founts, and nymphs and semi-gods,
> And all the Graces find their old abodes,
> Where forests flourish but in endless verse,
> And meadows nothing fit for purchasers;
> This iron age, that eats itself, will never
> Bite at your golden world; that other's ever
> Lov'd as itself. Then like your book, do you
> Live in old peace, and that for praise allow.

If Jonson, Chapman, and Beaumont suspected the undercurrent of satire in this Pastoral, and they surely were not obtuse, they concealed the suspicion admirably. As for Fletcher he continued to "live in old peace." "When his faire Shepheardesse on the guilty stage, Was martir'd between Ignorance and Rage… Hee only as if unconcernèd smil'd." An attitude toward the public that characterized him all through life.

The admiration of younger men is shown in the respectful commendation of N. F. This is Nathaniel Field. He was acting with the Blackfriars' Boys since the days when Jonson presented *Cynthia's Revels*, and, as one of the Queen's Revels' Children, he had probably taken part in *The Faithfull Shepheardesse* when the undiscerning public hissed it. Field came of good family, had been one of Mulcaster's pupils at the Merchant Taylors' School, and was beloved by Chapman and Jonson. He was then but twenty-two, – about three years younger than Fletcher's friend, Beaumont, – but for nine years gone he had been recognized as a genius among boy-actors. That the verses of so young a man should be accepted, and coupled with those of the thunder-girt Chapman, was to him a great and unexpected honour; and the youth expresses prettily his pride in being published by his "lov'd friend" in such distinguished literary company, —

> Can my approovement, sir, be worth your thankes,
> Whose unknowne name, and Muse in swathing clowtes,
> Is not yet growne to strength, among these rankes
> To have a roome?

Now he is planning to write dramas himself; and it is pleasant to note with what modesty he touches upon the project:

> But I must justifie what privately
> I censur'd to you, my ambition is
> (Even by my hopes and love to Poesie)
> To live to perfect such a worke as this,
> Clad in such elegant proprietie
> Of words, including a morallitie,[56]
> So sweete and profitable.

He is alluding to his not yet finished comedy, *A Woman is a Weather-cocke*. The youth must have been close to Beaumont as well as to Fletcher; he soon afterwards, 1609-10, played the leading part in their *Coxcombe*, – which, I think, was the earliest work planned and written by them in collaboration; and when, a little later, his own first comedy was acted by the Queen's Revels' Children no auditor of literary ear could have failed to detect, amid the manifest echoes of Chapman, Jonson, and Shakespeare, the flattering resemblance in diction, rhythm, and poetic fancy to the most characteristic features of Beaumont's style. This is very interesting, because in another dramatic composition *Foure Playes in One*, written in part by Fletcher, certain portions have so close a likeness to Beaumont's work, that until lately they have been mistakenly attributed to that poet and assigned to this early period of his career. The portions of *The Foure Playes* not written by Fletcher were written by no other than Nat. Field. And since in Field's *Address to the Reader* of the *Weather-cocke*, licensed for publication November 23, 1611, he still speaks as if the *Weather-cocke* were his only venture in play-writing, we may conclude that *The Foure Playes in One* was not put together before the end of 1611, or the beginning of 1612. That series need not, therefore, be considered in the present place; all the more so, since Beaumont had in all probability nothing directly to do with its composition.[57]

Of the other dramas written by Fletcher alone and assigned by critics to his earlier period, that is to say before 1610, or even 1611, the only one beside *The Faithfull Shepheardesse* that may with any degree of safety be admitted to consideration is a comedy of romance, manners, and humours, *Monsieur Thomas*. The romance is a delightful story of self-abnegating love. The father, Valentine, and the son Francisco, supposed to have been drowned long ago, and now known (if the texts had only printed the play as Fletcher wrote it) as Callidon, a guest of Valentine, love the same girl, the father's ward. This part of the play is executed with captivating grace. It shows that Fletcher had, from the first, an instinct for the dramatic handling of a complicated story, an eye for delicate and surprising situations, an appreciation of chivalric honour and genuine passion, and a fancy fertile and playful. In the subplot the manners are such as would appeal to a Fletcher not yet thirty years of age; and the humours are those of a student of the earlier plays of Ben Jonson, and of Marston – who ceased writing in 1607. It has indeed been asserted, but without much credibility, that "the notion of the panerotic Hylas," who must always "be courting wenches through key-holes," was taken from a character in Marston's *Parasitaster*, of 1606.[58] The name of this Captain, Hylas, was in the mouth of Fletcher in those early days; he uses it again in his part of the *Philaster*, written in 1609 or 1610, and elsewhere. The snatches of song and the names of ballads are those of contemporary popularity between 1606 and 1609; and in two instances they are those of which Beaumont makes use in his *Knight of the Burning Pestle* of 1607. The play was acted, too, apparently by the same company, the Queen's Revels' Children, and in the same house as was Beaumont's. It could not have been played by them at "the Private House in Black Fryers" later than March 1608, unless they squeezed it into that last month of 1609 which serves as a telescope basket for so many of the plays which critics cannot satisfactorily date.

---

[56] Folio, 1647, 'mortallitie'; a misprint.

[57] See Chap. XXIII, below.

[58] See Guskar, *Anglia*, XXVIII, XXIX.

For my present purpose, which is to show how Fletcher, not assisted by Beaumont, wrote during his youth, it makes little difference whether *Monsieur Thomas* was written as early as 1608 or only before 1611. The fact is, however, that a line in the last scene, "Take her, Francisco, now no more young Callidon," shows clearly that Callidon, a name not occurring elsewhere in the play, and necessary to the dramatic complication, had been used by Fletcher in his first version; and when we put the names Callidon and Cellidée together (she is Francisco's belovèd) we are pointed at once to the source of the romantic plot – the *Histoire de Celidée, Thamyre, et Calidon* at the beginning of the Second Part of the *Astrée* of the Marquis D'Urfé.[59] The First Part of this voluminous pastoral romance had been published, probably in 1609, in an edition which is lost; but a second edition, dedicated to Henri IV, who died May 14, 1610, appeared that year. Some of Fletcher's inspiration, as for the name and general characteristic of Hylas, was drawn from the First Part. The Second Part was not printed till later in 1610. It would, therefore, appear that Fletcher could not have written *Monsieur Thomas* before the latter date. On the other hand, as Dr. Upham[60] has indicated, the *Astrée* had been read as early as February 12, 1607, by Ben Jonson's friend, William Drummond, who, on that day, writes about it critically to Sir George Keith. If the First Part had been circulated in manuscript, and read by an Englishman, in 1607, it is not at all unlikely that the Second Part, too, of this most leisurely published romance, which did not get itself all into covers till 1647, had been read in manuscript by many men, French and English, long before its appearance in print, 1610; – may be by Fletcher himself, as early as 1608. Or he may have heard the story, as early as that, from some one who had read it. The fact that he alters some of the names, follows the plot but loosely, characterizes the personages not at all as if he had the original before him, and uses none of their diction, would favour the supposition that he is writing from hearsay, or from some second hand and condensed version of the story.

No matter what the exact date of composition, *Monsieur Thomas* is the one play beside *The Faithfull Shepheardesse* from which we may draw conclusions concerning the native tendencies of the young Fletcher. The subplot of Thomas, concocted with clever ease, and furnished with varied devices appropriate to comic effect – disguisings, mouse-traps, dupers duped, street-frolics and mock sentimental serenades, scaling-ladders, convents, and a blackamoor girl for a decoy-duck, – is conceived in a rollicking spirit and executed in sprightly conversational style. Sir Adolphus Ward says that "as a picture of manners it is excelled by few other Elizabethan comedies." I am sorry that I cannot agree; I call it low, or farcical comedy; and though the 'manners' be briskly and realistically imagined, I question their contemporary actuality, – even their dramatic probability. Amusing scapegraces like the hero of the title-part have existed in all periods of history; and fathers, who will not have their sons mollycoddles; and squires of dames, like the susceptible Hylas. But manners, to be dramatically probable, must reflect the contacts of possible characters in a definite period. And no one can maintain that the contact of these persons with the women of the play is characterized by possibility. Or that these manners could, even in the beginning of James I's reign, have characterized a perceptible percentage of actual Londoners. Thomas, whose humour it is to assume sanctimony for the purpose of vexing his father, and blasphemy for the purpose of teasing his sweetheart – racking that "maiden's tender ears with damns and devils," – is no more grotesque than many a contemporary embodiment of 'humour.' But what of his contacts with the "charming" Mary who "daily hopes his fair conversion" and has "a credit," and "loves where her modesty may live untainted"; and, then, that she may "laugh an hour" admits him to her bed-chamber, having substituted for herself a negro wench? And what of the contacts with his equally "modest" sister, Dorothy, who not only talks smut with him and with the "charming" Mary, but deems his fornication "fine sport" and would act it if she were a man? I fear that much reading of decadent drama sometimes impairs the critical perception. In making allowance

[59] Stiefel, *Zeitschr. f. Vergl. Litt.*, XII (1898), 248; *Engl. Stud.*, XXXVI; Hatcher, *Anglia*, Feb. 1907; and Macaulay, *C. H. L.*, VI, 156.

[60] *French Influence in English Literature*, pp. 300, 308.

for what masquerades as historical probability one frequently accepts human improbabilities, and condones what should be condemned – even from the dramatic point of view. I have found it so in my own case. With all its picaresque quality, its jovial 'humours' and its racy fun, this play is sheer stage-rubbish: it has no basis in the general life of the class it purports to represent, no basis in actual manners, nor in likelihood or poetry. Its basis is in the uncritical and, to say the least, irresponsible taste of a theatre-going Rump which enjoyed the spurious localization, and attribution to others, of the imaginings of its own heart.

The characters are well grouped; and the spirit of merriment prevails. The reversals of motive and fortune, the recognitions and the dénouement are as excellently and puerilely absurd as could be desired of such an amalgam of romance and farcical intrigue. Richard Brome, writing in praise of the author for the quarto of 1639, implies that the play was not well received at its "first presenting," – "when Ignorance was judge, and but a few What was legitimate, what bastard knew." That first presenting was between 1608 and 1612; and the few might have cared more for Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* or *Volpone*, or something by Shakespeare, or soon afterwards for Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* or *A King and No King*. But, as Brome assures us, "the world's grown wiser now." That is to say, it had learned by 1639 "what was legitimate," and could believe that in Fletcher's *Monsieur Thomas* and the like, "the Muses jointly did inspire His raptures only with their sacred fire." But even as transmogrified by D'Urfey and others the play did not survive its century.

No better example could be afforded of the kind of comedy that Fletcher was capable of producing in his earlier period. It shows us with what ability he could dramatize a romantic tale; with what license as a realist imagine and portray an unmoral, when not immoral, semblance of contemporary life. That was either before Beaumont had joined forces with him; or when Beaumont was not pruning his fancy; was not hanging "plummets" on his wit "to suppress Its too luxuriant-growing mightiness," nor persuading him that mirth might subsist "untainted with obscenity," and "strength and sweetness" and "high choice of brain" be "couched in every line." I am not claiming too much for Beaumont. In his later work as in his earlier there is the frank animalism, at times, of Elizabethan blood and humour; but one may search in vain his parts of the joint-plays as well as his youthful *Knight of the Burning Pestle* and those portions of *The Woman-Hater* which Fletcher did not touch, for the Jacobean salaciousness of Fletcher's *Monsieur Thomas* and the carnal cynicism which lurks beneath the pastoral garb of innocence even in *The Faithfull Shepheardesse*; – characteristics that find utterance again, untrammeled, in the dramas written after the younger poet was dead, – and Fletcher could no longer, as in those earlier days,

> wisely submit each birth
> To knowing Beaumont e're it did come forth,
> Working againe untill *he* said 'twas fit;
> And make him the sobriety of his wit.[61]

During the years of Beaumont's apprenticeship to Poetry cloaked as Law things had changed but little in his world of the Inner Temple. In its parliament, Sir Edward Coke, judicial, intrepid, and devout is still most potent. The chamber, lodging, and rooms which his father, Mr. Justice Beaumont, and his uncle Henry had built and occupied near to Ram Alley in the north end of Fuller's Rents are still held by Richard Daveys, who as Treasurer moved into them in 1601. Dr. Richard Masters is still Master of the Temple; and in the church, where Francis was obliged to receive the Sacrament at stated times, he, sitting perhaps by his uncle Henry's tomb, would hear the assistant ministers, Richard Evans and William Crashaw. The sacred place was still the refuge of outlaws from Whitefriars who claimed the privilege of sanctuary. If Beaumont wished to steal, after hours, into the Alsatia beyond

[61] Adapted from Cartwright in the *Commendatory Poems*, Folio of *B. and F.*, 1647.

Fuller's Rents, he must skirt or propitiate in 1607 as in 1602 the same Cerberus at the gates, – William Knight, the glover. Outside awaited him the hospitality of the Mitre Inn, or of Barrow at the "Cat and Fiddle," or of the slovenly Anthony Gibbes in his cook's shop of Ram Alley.[62]

[62] Details in Inderwick, *op. cit.*, Vols. I and II, passim.

CHAPTER VII
THE "BANKE-SIDE" AND THE PERIOD OF THE PARTNERSHIP

As we shall presently see, Beaumont during his career in London retained his connection with the Inner Temple, which would be his club; and it may be presumed that up to 1606 or 1607, his residence alternated between the Temple and his brother's home of Grace-Dieu. About 1609, however, he was surely collaborating with his friend, Fletcher, in the composition of plays. And we may conjecture that, in that or the previous year, our Castor and Pollux were established in those historic lodgings in Southwark where, as Aubrey, writing more than half a century later, tells us, they lived in closest intimacy. That gossipy chronicler records the obvious in his "there was a wonderfull consimility of phansey between him [Beaumont] and Mr. Jo. Fletcher, which caused that dearnesse of friendship between them";[63] but when he proceeds "They lived together on the Banke-side, not far from the Play-house, both batchelors; lay together (from Sir James Hales, etc.); had one wench in the house between them, which they did so admire, the same cloaths and cloake, etc., between them," we feel that so far as inferences are concerned the account is to be taken with at least a morsel of reserve. Aubrey was not born till after both Beaumont and Fletcher were dead; and, as Dyce pertinently remarks, "perhaps Aubrey's informant (Sir James Hales) knowing his ready credulity, purposely overcharged the picture of our poets' domestic establishment." To inquire too closely into gossip were folly; but it is only fair to recall that sixty years after Fletcher's death, popular tradition was content with conferring the "wench," exclusively upon him. Oldwit, in Shadwell's play of *Bury-Fair* (1689) says: "I myself, simple as I stand here, was a wit in the last age. I was created Ben Jonson's son, in the Apollo. I knew Fletcher, my friend Fletcher, and his maid Joan; well, I shall never forget him: I have supped with him at his house on the Banke-side; he loved a fat loin of pork of all things in the world; and Joan his maid had her beer-glass of sack; and we all kissed her, i' faith, and were as merry as passed."[64] It is hardly necessary, in any case, to surmise with those who sniff up improprieties that the admirable services of the original "wench," whether Joan or another, far exceeded the roasting of pork and the burning of sack for her two "batchelors."

To the years 1609 and 1610 may be assigned with some show of confidence Beaumont and Fletcher's first significant romantic dramas *The Coxcombe* and *Philaster*. The former was acted by the Children of her Majesty's Revels, I think before July 12, 1610. If at Blackfriars, before January 4, 1610; if at Whitefriars, after January 4. There are grounds for believing that it was the play upon which Fletcher and Beaumont were engaged in the country when Beaumont wrote a letter, justly famous, probably toward the end of 1609, to Ben Jonson; and, since the play was not well received, that it was one of the unsuccessful comedies which as Dryden says preceded *Philaster*. *Philaster* was acted at the Globe and Blackfriars by the King's Men, for the first time, it would appear, between December 7, 1609 and July 12, 1610. My reasons in detail for thus dating both of these dramas are given later. But a word about the *Letter to Ben Jonson* may be said here.

It was first printed at the end of a play called *The Nice Valour* in the folio of 1647. Owing to a careless acceptance of the rubric prefixed to it by the publishers of that folio, historians have ordinarily dated its composition at too early a period. The poem itself mentions "Sutcliffe's wit," referring to three controversial tracts of the Dean of Exeter, printed in 1606; but Beaumont might jibe at the Dean's expense for years after 1606. The rubic inscribed a generation after the death of both our dramatists, and therefore of but secondary importance, tells us that the *Letter* was "written,

[63] Aubrey's *Brief Lives*, Ed. Clark, I, 94-95.

[64] Dyce, *B. and F.*, I, XXVI, *n*.

before he [Beaumont] and Master Fletcher came to London, with two of the precedent comedies, then not finish'd, which deferr'd their merry meetings at the Mermaid." We know that the young men had been in London for years before 1606. If the rubric has any meaning whatever, it is merely that the customary convivialities at the Mermaid, as described in the *Letter*, had been interrupted by a visit to the country during which they were finishing two of the comedies which precede *The Nice Valour* in the folio; and it indicates a date not earlier than 1608, for the writing of the letter, and probably not later than July 1610. For only three of the fifteen plays which appear in the folio before *The Nice Valour* could have been completed during the career of Beaumont as a dramatist, and none of the three antedates 1608. In two of these Beaumont had no hand: *The Captaine*, which may have been composed as late as 1611, and *Beggars' Bush*,[65] which shows the collaboration of Massinger, but Fletcher's part of which may have been written in 1608. The only one of the "precedent comedies" in which we may be sure that Beaumont collaborated is *The Coxcombe*. If, as I believe, it was acted first between December 1609 and July 1610[66] it may well have been written in the country during the latter half of 1609, while the plague rate was exceptionally high in London. Both *Beggars' Bush* and *The Coxcombe* abound in rural scenes; but the latter especially, in scenes that might have been suggested by Grace-Dieu and its neighborhood.

The rubric prefixed to the *Letter* by the publishers is of negligible authority. The 'me' and 'us' of the *Letter* itself do not necessarily designate Fletcher as the companion of Beaumont's rustication: they stand at one time for country-folk; at another for the Mermaid circle, Jonson, Chapman, Fletcher, probably Shakespeare, Drayton, Cotton, Donne, Hugh Holland, Tom Coryate, Richard Martin, Selden (of Beaumont's Inner Temple), and other famous wits and poets; at another for Jonson and Beaumont alone. The date of the poem must be determined from internal evidence. It is written with the careless ease of long-standing intimacy. It is of a genial, jocose, and fairly mature, epistolary style. It betrays the literary assurance of one whose reputation is already established. Beaumont is in temporary banishment from London, for lack of funds – therefore, considerably later than 1606, when he was presumably well off; for in that year he had just come into a quarter of his brother, Sir Henry's, private estate. He longs now for the stimulus of the merry meetings in Bread-street, as one whose wit has been sharpened by them for a long time past:

> Methinks the little wit I had is lost
> Since I saw you; for Wit is like a Rest
> Held up at Tennis, which men do the best
> With the best gamesters; …

up here in Leicestershire "The Countrey Gentlemen begin to allow My wit for dry bobs." "In this warm shine" of our hay-making season, soberly deferring to country knights, listening to hoary family-jests, drinking water mixed with claret-lees, "I lye and dream of your full Mermaid Wine":

> What things have we seen
> Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been
> So nimble, and so full of subtill flame,
> As if that every one from whence they came
> Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
> And had resolv'd to live a foole, the rest
> Of his dull life. Then, when there hath been thrown
> Wit able enough to justifie the Town

[65] Based upon Dekker's *Bellman of London*, 1608. Acted at Court, 1622.

[66] See Chapter XXV, below.

For three daies past, – wit that might warrant be
For the whole City to talk foolishly
Till that were cancell'd, – and, when that was gone,
We left an Aire behind us, which alone
Was able to make the two next Companies
Right witty; though but downright fooles, more wise.

When he remembers all this, he "needs must cry," but one thought of Ben Jonson cheers him:

Only strong Destiny, which all controuls,
I hope hath left a better fate in store
For me thy friend, than to live ever poore,
Banisht unto this home. Fate once againe
Bring me to thee, who canst make smooth and plaine
The way of Knowledge for me, and then I,
Who have no good but in thy company
Protest it will my greatest comfort be
To acknowledge all I have to flow from thee.
Ben, when these Scaenes are perfect, we'll taste wine;
I'll drink thy Muses health, thou shalt quaff mine.

The *Letter* was written after Beaumont's Muse had produced something worthy of a toast from Jonson, – the *Woman-Hater* and the *Knight*, for instance (both marked by wit and by the discipline of Jonson); but not later than the end of 1612, for during most of 1613 Jonson was traveling in France as governor to Sir Walter Raleigh's "knavishly inclined" son; and after February of that year Beaumont wrote so far as I venture to conclude but one drama, *The Scornful Ladie*; and that does not precede this *Letter* in the folio of 1647; is not printed in that folio at all. Nor was this *Letter* of a disciple written later than the great Beaumont-Fletcher plays of 1610-1611, for then Jonson was praising Beaumont for "writing better" than he himself. If there is any truth at all in the rubric to the *Letter*, the "scenes" of which Beaumont speaks as not yet "perfect" were of *The Coxcombe*; and evidence which I shall, in the proper place, adduce convinces me that that was first acted before March 25, 1610, perhaps before January 4. The play would, then, have been written about the end of 1609.

I do not wonder that, as the Prologue in the first folio tells us, it was "condemned by the ignorant multitude," not only because of its length, a fault removed in the editions which we possess, but because the larger part of the play is written by Fletcher, and in his most inartistic, and irrational, licentious vein. Beaumont, though admitted to the partnership, had not yet succeeded in hanging "plummets" on his friend's luxuriance. He contented himself with contributing to a theme of Boccaccian cuckoldry the subplot of how Ricardo, drunk, loses his betrothed, and finds her again and is forgiven, – a little story that contains all the poignancy of sorrow and poppy of romance and poetry of innocence that make the comedy readable and tolerable.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.