

were of a high order, soon realized a handsome fortune. In 1764 he took a journey to Spain, partly with commercial objects in view, but principally on account of the Clavijo affair, which was afterwards made famous by the Goezman memoirs, and by Goethe's drama. Four years later he made his first essay on the stage with the sentimental drama *Eugénie*, which was followed after an interval of two years by *Les Deux Amis*. Neither had more than moderate success, and it was clear that, though the author might be unaware of it, his strength did not lie in the grave and sentimental. Meantime the clouds of the first great storm in Beaumarchais's life were gathering round him. He was very generally disliked as an upstart, and there were many ready to seize the first opportunity of hurling him from the position he had attained. Duverney, his great benefactor, died in 1770; but some time before his death a duplicate settlement of the affairs between him and Beaumarchais had been drawn up, in which the former acknowledged himself debtor to the latter for 16,000 francs. Duverney's heir, Count la Blache, a bitter enemy of Beaumarchais, denied the validity of this document, though without directly stigmatizing it as a forgery. The matter was put to trial. Beaumarchais gained his cause, but his adversary at once carried the case before the parliament, and in the early part of 1773 that body was preparing to give its decision on the report of one of its members, M. Gozman. Beaumarchais was well-nigh in despair; ruin stared him in the face; he was looked upon not only with dislike but with suspicion and contempt. Worst of all, he was unable to obtain an interview with Gozman, in whose hands his fate rested. At last, just before the day on which the report was to be given in, he was informed privately that, by presenting 200 louis to Mme. Gozman and 15 to her secretary, the desired interview might take place; if the result should prove unfavourable the money would be refunded. The money was sent and the interview obtained; but the decision was adverse, and 200 louis were returned, the 15 going as business expenses to the secretary. Beaumarchais, who had learned that there was no secretary save Mme. Gozman herself, insisted on restitution of the 15 louis, and the lady, in her passion, denied all knowledge of the affair. Her husband, who seems not to have been cognisant of the transaction at first, and who, doubtless, thought the defeated litigant would be easily put down, at once brought an accusation against him in parliament for an attempt to corrupt a judge. The battle was fought chiefly through the *Mémoires*, or reports published by the adverse parties, and in it Beaumarchais's success was most complete. All his best qualities were drawn forth by the struggle; his wit, energy, and cheerfulness seemed to be doubled; and for vivacity of style, fine satire, and broad humour, his famous *Mémoires* have never been surpassed. Even Voltaire was constrained to envy them. Nor was the effect of the struggle apparent only in Beaumarchais himself. He was attacking the parliament through one of its members, and the parliament was the universally-detested body formed by the chancellor Maupeou. The *Mémoires* were, therefore, hailed with general delight; and the author, from being perhaps the most unpopular man in France, became at once the idol of the people. The decision in the case, however, so far as law went, was against him. The parliament condemned him *au blâme*,—i.e., to civic degradation; but he obtained restitution of his rights within two years, and finally triumphed over his adversary La Blache.

During the next few years his employment was of a somewhat singular nature. He was engaged by the king in secret service, principally to destroy certain scurrilous pamphlets concerning Mme. du Barry, the publication of which had been threatened. His visits to England, on

these missions, in which he was very successful, led him to take a deep interest in the impending struggle between the colonies and the mother country. His sympathies were entirely with the Americans; and by his unwearied exertions he succeeded in inducing the French Government to give ample, though private, assistance in money and arms to the insurgent colonists. He himself, partly on his own account, partly as an agent, carried on an enormous traffic with America. During the same period he had laid the foundations of a more enduring fame by his two famous comedies, the best of their class since those of Molière. The earlier, *Le Barbier de Seville*, after a short prohibition, was put on the stage in 1775. The first representation was a complete failure. Beaumarchais had overloaded the last scene with allusions to the facts of his own case and the whole action of the piece was laboured and heavy. But with undaunted energy he set to work, cut down and remodelled the piece in time for the second representation, when it achieved a complete success. The intrigues which were necessary in order to obtain a licence for the second and more famous comedy *Le Mariage de Figaro* are highly amusing, and throw much light on the unsettled state of public sentiment at the time. The play was completed in 1781, but the opposition of Louis XVI., who saw its dangerous tendencies, was not overcome till 1784. The comedy had an unprecedented success. The principal character in both plays, the world-famous *Figaro*, is a completely original conception; and for mingled wit, shrewdness, gaiety, and philosophic reflection, may not unjustly be ranked alongside of the great Tartuffe. To English readers the *Figaro* plays are generally known through the adaptations of them in the grand operas of Mozart and Rossini; but in France they long retained popularity as acting pieces. Beaumarchais's later productions, the bombastic opera *Tarare*, and the drama *The Guilty Mother*, which was very popular, are hardly worthy of his genius.

By his writings Beaumarchais contributed greatly, though quite unconsciously, to hurry on the events that led to the Revolution. At heart he hardly seems to have been a republican, and the new state of affairs did not benefit him. His popularity had been somewhat lessened by the affairs Bergasse and Mirabeau, and his great wealth and splendid mansion exposed him to the enmity of the envious. A speculation into which he entered, to supply the Convention with muskets from Holland, proved a ruinous failure. He was charged with treason to the Republic, and was obliged for some time to take refuge in Holland and England. His memoirs entitled, *Mes Six Époques*, detailing his sufferings under the Republic, are not unworthy of the Gozman period. His courage and happy disposition never deserted him; he was gay and hopeful up to the time of his death, which took place suddenly in May 1799.

Loménie, *Beaumarchais et son Temps*, 1856; Eng. trans. of the same by H. S. Edwards, 4 vols., 1856. Beaumarchais's works have been published by Gudin, 7 vols., 1809; and by Furne, 6 vols., 1827.

BEAUMARIS (formerly Bornovor, and deriving its present French name of Beau Marais from Edward I.), a borough and market-town of Anglesea, North Wales. It is situated on the Bay of Beaumaris, at the northern entrance of the Menai Straits, in lat. 53° 16' N., long. 4° 5' W. The town consists of several streets; and at the extremity of the principal one stands the castle. This fortress was built by Edward I. about 1295. It covers a great extent of ground, but its imposing effect is somewhat lessened by its low position, which was so designed that the fosse might communicate with the sea, so that vessels might unload beneath the walls. The chapel, dedicated to

the Virgin, is a spacious structure, containing several fine monuments. A free school was founded here in 1603. The principal buildings are the town-hall, county hall, prison, custom-house, assembly-room, and national school. Beaumaris has no manufactures and comparatively little

trade, but is much frequented as a bathing-place. It unites with Holyhead, Amlwch, and Llangefni in returning a member to parliament. The bay affords good anchorage, having seven fathoms of water at the lowest ebb. Population in 1871, 2291.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

THE critical memoir prefixed by Mr Dyce to the only good and scholar-like edition of Beaumont and Fletcher has summed up once for all, in fulness of perfect order, what little can now be known of their lives. It may suffice here to extract from this complete and careful record a few main facts and necessary dates, taking as little note as need be of any supplementary or hypothetical matters. Six or seven years before the birth of his brother in art, John Fletcher was born in December 1579 at Rye in Sussex, and baptized on the 20th of the same month. Richard Fletcher, his father, afterwards queen's chaplain, dean of Peterborough, and bishop successively of Bristol, Worcester, and London, was then minister of the parish in which the son was born who was to make their name immortal. That son was just turned of seven when the dean distinguished and disgraced himself as the spiritual tormentor of the last moments on earth of Mary Stuart. When not quite twelve he was admitted pensioner of Bene't College, Cambridge, and two years later was made one of the Bible-clerks: of this college Bishop Fletcher had been president twenty years earlier, and six months before his son's admission had received from its authorities a first letter of thanks for various benefactions, to be followed next year by a second. Four years later than this, when John Fletcher wanted five or six months of his seventeenth year, the bishop died suddenly of over much tobacco and the displeasure of Queen Elizabeth at his second marriage,—this time, it appears, with a lady of such character as figures something too frequently on the stage of his illustrious son. He left eight children by his first marriage in such distress that their uncle, Dr Giles Fletcher, author of a treatise on the Russian commonwealth which is still held in some repute, was obliged to draw up a petition to the queen on their behalf, which was supported by the intercession of Essex, but with what result is uncertain. From this date we know nothing of the fortunes of John Fletcher, till the needy orphan boy of seventeen reappears as the brilliant and triumphant poet whose name is linked for all time with the yet more glorious name of Francis Beaumont, third and youngest son of Sir Francis Beaumont of Grace-Dieu, one of the justices of the Common Pleas,—born, according to general report, in 1586, but, according to more than one apparently irrefragable document, actually born at least a year earlier. The first record of his existence is the entry of his name, together with those of his elder brothers Henry and John, as a gentleman-commoner of Broadgates Hall, Oxford, now supplanted by Pembroke College. But most lovers of his fame will care rather to remember the admirable lines of Wordsworth on the "eager child" who played among the rocks and woodlands of Grace-Dieu; though it may be doubted whether even the boy's first verses were of the peaceful and pastoral character attributed to them by the great laureate of the lakes. That passionate and fiery genius which was so soon and for so short a time to "shake the buskined stage" with heroic and tragic notes of passion and of sorrow, of scorn and rage and slighted love and jealousy, must surely have sought vent from the first in fancies of a more ardent and ambitious kind; and it would be a likelier conjecture that when Frank Beaumont (as we know on more authorities than one that he was always called by

his contemporaries, even in the full flush of his adult fame—"never more than Frank," says Heywood) went to college at the ripe age of twelve, he had already committed a tragedy or two in emulation of *Tamburlaine*, *Andronicus*, or *Jeronymo*. The date of his admission was 4th February 1597; on April 22d of the following year his father died; and on the 3d of November 1600, having left Oxford without taking his degree, the boy of fifteen was entered a member of the Inner Temple, his two brothers standing sponsors on the grave occasion. But the son of Judge Beaumont was no fitter for success at the bar than the son of Bishop Fletcher for distinction in the church: it is equally difficult to imagine either poet invested with either gown. Two years later appeared the poem of *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, a voluptuous and voluminous expansion of the Ovidian legend, not on the whole discreditably to a lad of seventeen, fresh from the popular love-poems of Marlowe and Shakespeare, which it naturally exceeds in long-winded and fantastic diffusion of episodes and conceits. At twenty-two Beaumont prefixed to the magnificent masterpiece of Ben Jonson some noticeable verses in honour of his "dear friend" the author; and in the same year (1607) appeared the anonymous comedy of *The Woman-Hater*, usually assigned to Fletcher alone; but being as it is in the main a crude and puerile imitation of Jonson's manner, and certainly more like a man's work at twenty-two than at twenty-eight, internal evidence would seem to justify, or at least to excuse, those critics who in the teeth of high authority and tradition would transfer from Fletcher to Beaumont the principal responsibility for this first play that can be traced to the hand of either. As Fletcher also prefixed to the first edition of *Volpone* a copy of commendatory verses, we may presume that their common admiration for a common friend was among the earliest and strongest influences which drew together the two great poets whose names were thenceforward to be for ever indivisible. During the dim eleven years between the death of his father and the dawn of his fame, we cannot but imagine that the career of Fletcher had been unprosperous as well as obscure. From seventeen to twenty-eight his youth may presumably have been spent in such painful struggles for success, if not for sustenance, as were never known to his younger colleague, who, as we have seen, was entered at Oxford a few months after Fletcher must in all likelihood have left Cambridge to try his luck in London; a venture most probably resolved on as soon as the youth had found his family reduced by the father's death to such ruinous straits that any smoother course can hardly have been open to him. Entering college at the same age as Fletcher had entered six years earlier, Beaumont had before him a brighter and briefer line of life than his elder. But whatever may have been their respective situations when, either by happy chance or, as Mr Dyce suggests, by the good offices of Jonson, they were first brought together, their intimacy soon became so much closer than that of ordinary brothers that the household which they shared as bachelors was conducted on such thoroughly communistic principles as might have satisfied the most trenchant theorist who ever proclaimed, as the cardinal point of his doctrine, a complete and absolute community of bed and board, with

all goods thereto appertaining. But in the year following that in which the two younger poets had united in homage to Jonson, they had entered into a partnership of more importance than this in "the same clothes and cloak, &c.," with other necessaries of life specified by Aubrey. In 1603, if we may trust the reckoning which seems trustworthiest, the twin stars of our stage rose visibly together for the first time. The loveliest, though not the loftiest, of tragic plays that we owe to the comrades or the successors of Shakespeare, *Philaster*, has always been regarded as the first-born issue of their common genius. The noble tragedy of *Thierry and Theodoret* has generally been dated earlier and assigned to Fletcher alone; but we can be sure neither of the early date nor the single authorship. The main body of the play, comprising both the great scenes which throw out into full and final relief the character of either heroine for perfect good or evil, bears throughout the unmistakable image and superscription of Fletcher; yet there are parts which for gravity and steady strength of style, for reserve and temperance of effect, would seem to suggest the collaboration of a calmer and more patient hand; and these more equable and less passionate parts of the poem recall rather the touch of Massinger than of Beaumont. In the second act, for example, the regular structure of the verse, the even scheme of the action, the exaggerated braggardism which makes of the hero a mere puppet or mouthpiece of his own self-will, are all qualities which, for better or for worse, remind us of the strength or the weakness of a poet with whom we know that Fletcher, before or after his alliance with Beaumont, did now and then work in common. Even the Arbaces of Beaumont, though somewhat too highly coloured, does not "write himself down an ass," like Thierry on his first entrance, after the too frequent fashion of Massinger's braggarts and tyrants; does not proclaim at starting or display with mere wantonness of exposure his more unlovely qualities in the naked nature of their deformity. Compare also the second with the first scene of the fourth act. In style and metre this second scene is as good an example of Massinger as the first is of Fletcher at his best. Observe especially in the elaborate narrative of the pretended self-immolation of Ordella these distinctive notes of the peculiar style of Massinger; the excess of parenthetic sentences, no less than five in a space of twenty lines; the classical common-place of allusion to Athens, Rome, and Sparta in one superfluous breath; the pure and vigorous but somewhat level and prosaic order of language, with the use of certain cheap and easy phrases familiar to Massinger as catchwords; the flat and feeble terminations by means of which the final syllable of one verse runs on into the next without more pause or rhythm than in a passage of prose; the general dignity and gravity of sustained and measured expression. These are the very points in which the style of Massinger differs from that of Fletcher; whose lightest and loosest verses do not overlap each other without sensible distinction between the end of one line and the beginning of the next; who is often too fluent and facile to be choice or forcible in his diction, but seldom if ever prosaic or conventional in phrase or allusion, and by no means habitually given to weave thoughts within thoughts, knit sentence into sentence, and hang whole paragraphs together by the help of loops and brackets. From these indications we might infer that this poem belongs altogether to a period later than the death of Beaumont; though even during his friend's life it appears that Fletcher was once at least allied with Massinger and two lesser dramatists in the composition of some play now unknown to men.

Hardly eight years of toil and triumph, of joyous and glorious life, were spared by destiny to the younger poet

between the date assigned to the first radiant revelation of his genius in *Philaster* and the date which marks the end of all his labours. On the 6th of March 1616 Francis Beaumont died,—according to Jonson and tradition, "ere he was thirty years of age," but this we have seen to be inconsistent with the registry of his entrance at Oxford. If we may trust the elegiac evidence of friends, he died of his own genius and fiery overwork of brain; yet from the magnificent and masculine beauty of his portrait one should certainly never have guessed that any strain of spirit or stress of invention could have worn out so long before its time so fair and royal a temple for so bright and affluent a soul. A student of physiognomy will not fail to mark the points of likeness and of difference between the faces of the two friends; both models of noble manhood, handsome and significant in feature and expression alike;—Beaumont's the statelier and serener of the two, with clear thoughtful eyes, full arched brows, and strong aquiline nose, with a little cleft at the tip; a grave and beautiful mouth, with full and finely curved lips; the form of face a long pure oval, and the imperial head with its "fair large front" and clustering hair set firm and carried high with an aspect at once of quiet command and kingly observation: Fletcher's a more keen and fervid face, sharper in outline every way, with an air of bright ardour and glad fiery impatience; sanguine and nervous, suiting the complexion and colour of hair; the expression of the eager eyes and lips almost recalling that of a noble hound in act to break the leash it strains at;—two heads as lordly of feature and as expressive of aspect as any gallery of great men can show. That spring of 1616, we may note in passing, was the darkest that ever dawned upon England or the world; for, just forty-eight days afterwards, it witnessed, on the 23d of April, the removal from earth of the mightiest genius that ever dwelt among men. Scarcely more than a month and a half divided the death-days of Beaumont and of Shakespeare. Some three years earlier by Mr Dyce's estimate, when about the age of twenty-eight, Beaumont had married Ursula, daughter and coheirress to Henry Isley of Sundridge in Kent, by whom he left two daughters, one of them posthumous. Fletcher survived his friend just nine years and five months; he died "in the great plague, 1625," and was buried on the 29th of August in St Saviour's, Southwark; not, as we might have wished, beside his younger fellow in fame, who but three days after his untimely death had added another deathless memory to the graves of our great men in Westminster Abbey, which he had sung in such noble verse. Dying when just four months short of forty-six, Fletcher had thus, as well as we can now calculate, altogether some fourteen years and six months more of life than the poet who divides with him the imperial inheritance of their common glory.

The perfect union in genius and in friendship which has made one name of the two names of these great twin brothers in song is a thing so admirable and so delightful to remember, that it would seem ungracious and unkindly to claim for either a precedence which we may be sure he would have been eager to disclaim. But 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, and each play of their writing would be such another piece of magnificent patchwork as that last gigantic heir of Shakespeare's invention, the posthumous birth of his parting Muse which was suckled at the breast of Fletcher's as a child of godlike blood might be reared on the milk of a mortal mother—or in this case, we might sometimes be tempted to say, of a she-goat who left in the veins of the heaven-born suckling somewhat too much of his nurse Amalthea. That question however belongs in any case more properly to the study of Shakespeare than to the present subject in hand. It may suffice here to observe that the contributions of Fletcher to the majestic temple of tragedy left incomplete by Shakespeare show the lesser workman almost equally at his best and at his worst, at his weakest and at his strongest. 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—for *Cymbeline* and *Winter's Tale*, though not guiltless of blood, are in their issues no more tragic than *Pericles* or the *Tempest*—a 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 other 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. In the external but essential matter of expression by rhythm and metre he approves himself always a student of Shakespeare's second manner, of the style in which the graver or tragic part of his historical or romantic plays is mostly written; doubtless, the most perfect model that can be studied by any poet who, like Beaumont, is great enough to be in no danger of sinking to the rank of a mere copyist, but while studious of the perfection set before him is yet conscious of his own personal and proper quality of genius, and enters the presence of the master not as a servant but as a son. 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. The matchless fluency and rapidity with which the elder brother pours forth the stream of his smooth swift verse gave probably the first occasion for that foolish rumour which has not yet fallen duly silent, but still murmurs here and there its suggestion that the main office of Beaumont was to correct and contain within bounds the over-flowing invention of his colleague. The poet who while yet a youth had earned by his unaided mastery of hand such a crown as was bestowed by the noble love and the loving "envy" of Ben Jonson was, according to this tradition, a mere precocious pedagogue, fit only to revise and restrain the too liberal effusions of his elder in genius as in years. Now, 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 and *The Double Marriage*. In those admirable tragedies the style is looser, more fluid, more feminine. From the first scene to the last we are swept as it were along the race of a running river, always at full flow of light and buoyant melody, with no dark reaches or perilous eddies, no stagnant pools or sterile sandbanks; its bright course only varied by sudden rapids or a stronger ripple here and there, but in rough places or smooth still stirred and sparkling with summer wind and sun. 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. Outside it we shall find no figures so firmly drawn, no such clearness of outline, no such cunning of hands as we recognize in the three great studies of Bellario, Evadne, and Aspatia. In his male characters, as for instance in the parts of *Philaster* and *Arbaces*, Beaumont also is apt to show something of that exaggeration or inconsistency for which his colleague is perhaps more frequently and more heavily to blame; but in these there is not a jarring note, not a touch misplaced; unless, indeed, a rigid criticism may condemn as unfeminine and incongruous with the gentle beauty of her pathetic patience the device by which Aspatia procures herself the death desired at the hand of Amintor. This is noted as a fault by Mr Dyce; but may well be forgiven for the sake of the magnificent scene which follows, and the highest tragic effect ever attained on the stage of either poet. That this as well as the greater part of those other scenes which are the glory of the poem is due to Beaumont might readily be shown at length by the process of comparison. The noble scene of regicide, which it was found expedient to cancel during the earlier years of the Restoration, may indeed be the work of Fletcher; but the part of Evadne must undoubtedly be in the main assigned to the more potent hand of his fellow. There is a fine harmony of character between her naked audacity in the second act and her fierce repentance in the fourth, which is not unworthy a disciple of the tragic school of Shakespeare; Fletcher is less observant of the due balance, less heedful of the nice proportions of good and evil in a faulty and fiery nature, compounded of perverse instinct and passionate reaction. From him we might have had a figure as admirable for vigour of handling, but hardly in such perfect keeping as this of Beaumont's Evadne, the murderess-Magdalen, whose penitence is of one crimson colour with her sin. Nor even in Fletcher's *Ordella*, worthy as the part is throughout even of the precious and exquisite praise of Lamb, is there any such cunning touch of tenderness or delicate perfume of pathos as in the parts of Bellario and Aspatia. These have in them a bitter sweetness, a subtle pungency of mortal sorrow and tears of divine delight, beyond the reach of Fletcher. His highest studies of female character have dignity, energy, devotion of the heroic type; but they never touch us to the quick, never waken in us any finer and more profound sense than that of applause and admiration. There is a modest pathos now and then in his pictures of feminine submission and slighted or outraged love; but this submission he is apt to make too servile, this love too dog-like in its abject devotion to retain that tender reverence which so many generations of readers have paid to the sweet memories of