

Classic Poetry Series

Beaumont and Fletcher
- poems -

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Beaumont and Fletcher(1584 - 1616)

Beaumont and Fletcher were the English dramatists Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, who collaborated in their writing during the reign of James I (he reigned in England 1603-1625)

When the first collected folio of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, containing a masque and some thirty-four plays, none of the latter having previously been printed, was published in 1647, long after the deaths of its authors, no attempt was made to discriminate between the parts of the famous collaborators; nor did the 1679 folio, in spite of its eighteen additional plays, suggest that a separation was desirable or feasible. But recent investigation has tended more and more strongly toward such a distinction, until, for instance, C.M. Gayley in his *Beaumont the Dramatist* is sure of only six plays as the joint product of Swinburne's *Castor and Pollux of the English drama*--although E.H.C. Oliphant in his *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher* prefers eight and allows the two men three more with the assistance of Massinger.

Moreover, contrary to the older impression growing out of the longer dramatic career and larger output of Fletcher, virtually all modern critics insist that Beaumont was the greater dramatist. But the disentangling of the web has not ended here, since the hands of Massinger and Field, not to mention those of William Rowley, Shirley, Shakespeare, and others have been identified in a considerable part of the work which for many years masqueraded under the label of "Beaumont and Fletcher." The whole situation provides a striking commentary on the conditions of Elizabethan dramatic publication and authorship.

Bonduca

{Bonduca the British queen, taking occasion from a defeat of the Romans to impeach their valor, is rebuked by Caratac.}

Queen Bonduca, I do not grieve your fortune.
If I grieve, 'tis at the bearing of your fortunes;
You put too much wind to your sail: discretion
And hardy valor are the twins of honor,
And nursed together, make a conqueror;
Divided, but a talker. 'Tis a truth,
That Rome has fled before us twice, and routed; -
A truth we ought to crown the gods for, lady,
And not our tongues.
You call the Romans fearful, fleeing Romans,
And Roman girls: -
Does this become a doer? are they such?
Where is your conquest then?
Why are your altars crowned with wreaths of flowers,
The beast with gilt horns waiting for the fire?
The holy Druides composing songs
Of everlasting life to Victory?
Why are these triumphs, lady? for a May-game?
For hunting a poor herd of wretched Romans?
Is it no more? shut up your temples, Britons,
And let the husbandman redeem his heifers;
Put out your holy fires; no timbrel ring;
Let's home and sleep; for such great overthrows
A candle burns too bright a sacrifice;
A glow-worm's tail too full a flame.
You say, I doat upon these Romans; -
Witness these wounds, I do; they were fairly given:
I love an enemy, I was born a soldier;
And he that in the head of 's troop defies me,
Rending my manly body with his sword,
I make a mistress. Yellow-tressed Hymen
Ne'er tied a longing virgin with more joy,
Than I am married to that man that wounds me:
And are not all these Romans? Ten struck battles
I sucked these honored scars from, and all Roman.
Ten years of bitter nights and heavy marches,

When many a frozen storm sung through my cuirass,
And made it doubtful whether that or I
Were the more stubborn metal, have I wrought through,
And all to try these Romans. Ten times a night
I have swum the rivers, when the stars of Rome
Shot at me as I floated, and the billows
Tumbled their watery ruins on my shoulders,
Charging my battered sides with troops of agues,
And still to try these Romans; whom I found
As ready, and as full of that I brought,
(Which was not fear nor flight,) as valiant,
As vigilant, as wise, to do and suffer,
Ever advanced as forward as the Britons;
Have I not seen these Britons
Run, run, Bonduca? - not the quick rack swifter;
The virgin from the hated ravisher
Not half so fearful; - not a flight drawn home,
A round stone from a sling, a lover's wish,
E'er made that haste they have. By heavens!
I have seen these Britons that you magnify,
Run as they would have out-run time, and roaring, -
Basely for mercy, roaring; the light shadows,
That in a thought scour o'er the fields of corn,
Halted on crutches to them. Yes, Bonduca,
I have seen thee run too, and thee, Nennius;
Yea, run apace, both; then when Penyus,
The Roman girl, cut through your armed carts,
And drove them headlong on ye down the hill; -
Then when he hunted ye like Britain foxes,
More by the scent than sight: then did I see
These valiant and approved men of Britain,
Like boding owls, creep into tods of ivy,
And hoot their fears to one another nightly.
I fled too,
But not so fast; your jewel had been lost then,
Young Hengo there; he trasht me, Nennius:
For when your fears outrun him, then slept I,
And in the head of all the Romans' fury
Took him, and, with my tough belt to my back,
I buckled him; - behind him, my sure shield; -
And then I followed. If I say I fought
Five times in bringing off this bud of Britain,

I lie not, Nennius. Neither had ye heard
Me speak this, or ever seen the child more,
But that the son of Virtue, Penyus,
Seeing me steer through all these storms of danger,
My helm still on my head, my sword my prow,
Turned to my foe my face, he cried out nobly,
'Go, Briton, bear thy lion's whelp off safely;
Thy manly sword has ransomed thee: grow strong,
And let me meet here once again in arms:
Then if thou stand'st, thou art mine.' I took his offer,
And here I am to honor him.

There's not a blow we gave since Julius landed,
That was of strength and worth, but like records
They file to after-ages. Our Registers
The Romans are, for noble deeds of honor;
And shall we burn their mentions with upbraidings?
Had we a difference with some petty Isle,
Or with our neighbors, lady, for our landmarks,
The taking in some rebellious Lord,
Or making a head against commotions,
After a day of blood, peace might be argued;
But where we grapple for the ground we live on,
The Liberty we hold as dear as life,
The gods we worship, and next those, our honors,
And with those swords that know no end of battle:
Those men beside themselves allow no neighbor;
Those minds that, where the day is, claim inheritance;
And where the sun makes ripe the fruits, their harvest;
And where they march, but measure out more ground
To add to
Rome
, and here in the bowels on us;
It must not be; no, as they are our foes,
And those that must be so until we tire 'em,
Let's use the peace of Honor, that's fair dealing;
But in our ends, our swords.

Beaumont and Fletcher

Consolation Of Early Death

Sweet prince, the name of Death was never terrible
To him that knew to live; nor the loud torrent
Of all afflictions, singing as they swim,
A gall of heart, but to a guilty conscience:
Whilst we stand fair, though by a two-edged storm
We find untimely falls, like early roses,
Bent to the earth, we bear our native sweetness.
When we are little children,
And cry and fret for every toy comes 'cross us,
How sweetly do we shew, when sleep steals on us!
When we grow great, but our affection greater,
And struggle with this stubborn twin, born with us
And tug and pull, yet still we find a giant:
Had we not then the privilege to sleep
Our everlasting sleep, he would make us idiots.
The memory and monuments of good men
Are more than lives; and though their tombs want tongues
Yet have they eyes that daily sweat their losses,
And such a tear from stone no time can value.
To die both young and good are Nature's curses,
As the world says; ask Truth, they are bounteous blessings;
For then we reach at heaven in our full virtues,
And fix ourselves new stars, crown'd with our goodness.

Beaumont and Fletcher

Folding The Flocks

Shepherds all, and maidens fair,
Fold your flocks up; for the air
'Gins to thicken, and the sun
Already his great course hath run.
See the dew-drops, how they kiss
Every little flower that is;
Hanging on their velvet heads,
Like a string of crystal beads.
See the heavy clouds low falling,
And bright Hesperus down calling
The dead night from under ground;
At whose rising, mists unsound,
Damps and vapours, fly apace,
And hover o'er the smiling face
Of these pastures, where they come,
Striking dead both bud and bloom.
Therefore from such danger lock
Every one his loved flock;
And let your dogs lie loose without,
Lest the wolf come as a scout
From the mountain, and, ere day,
Bear a lamb or kid away;
Or the crafty, thievish fox,
Break upon your simple flocks;
To secure yourself from these
Be not too secure in ease;
So shall you good shepherds prove,
And deserve your master's love.
Now, good night! may sweetest slumbers
And soft silence fall in numbers
On your eyelids: so farewell:
Thus I end my evening knell.

Beaumont and Fletcher

Lay A Garland On My Hearse

Lay a garland on my hearse,
Of the dismal yew,
Maidens, willow branches bear,
Say I died true.
My love was false, but I was firm
From my hour of birth;
Upon my buried body lie
Lightly, gentle earth.

Beaumont and Fletcher

Love At First Sight - (From Philaster)

Sitting in my window,
Pointing my thoughts in lawn, I saw a god,
(I thought, but it was you,) enter our gates;
My blood flew out and back again, as fast
As I had prest it forth, and sucked it in,
Like breath; then was I called away in haste
To entertain you. Never was a man
Heaved from a sheepecot to a sceptre, raised
So high in thoughts as I: you left a kiss
Upon these lips, then, which I mean to keep
From you forever. I did hear you talk
Far above singing; after you were gone,
I grew acquainted with my heart, and searched
What stirred it so. Alas! I found it love.

Beaumont and Fletcher

Poet's Mood

Hence, all you vain delights,
As short as are the nights
Wherein you spend your folly!
There's nought in this life sweet,
If man were wise to see it,
But only melancholy;
Oh, sweetest melancholy!
Welcome folded arms, and fixed eyes,
A sigh that piercing mortifies,
A look that's fastened to the ground,
A tongue chained up, without a sound!
Fountain-head and pathless groves,
Places which pale passion loves!
Moonlight walks, when all the fowls
Are warmly housed, save bats and owls!
A midnight bell, a parting groan!
These are the sounds we feed upon;
Then stretch our bones in a still gloomy valley:
Nothing's so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy.

Beaumont and Fletcher

Sleep - (From Valentinian)

Care-charming sleep, thou easer of all woes,
Brother to death; sweetly thyself dispose
On this afflicted prince; fall, like a cloud,
In gentle showers; give nothing that is loud
Or painful to his slumbers; easy, sweet,
And, as a purling stream, thou son of night,
Pass by his troubled senses; sing his pain,
Like hollow murmuring wind, or silver raine.
Into this prince, gently, oh! gently slide,
And kiss him into slumbers like a bride.

Beaumont and Fletcher

Song - Shake Off Your Heavy Trance

Shake off your heavy trance,
And leap into a dance,
Such as no mortals use to tread,
Fit only for Apollo -
To play to, for the moon to lead,
And all the stars to follow!
O blessed youth! for Jove doth pause,
Laying aside his graver laws
For this device:
And at the wedding such a pair
Each dance is taken for a prayer,
Each song a sacrifice.
You should stay longer if we durst;
Away! Alas! that he that first
Gave Time wild wings to fly away,
Has now no power to make him stay.

Beaumont and Fletcher

To Venus

O divine star of Heaven,
Thou in power above the seven;
Thou, O gentle Queen, that art
Curer of each wounded heart,
Thou the fuel, and the flame;
Thou in heaven, and here, the same;
Thou the wooer, and the wooed;
Thou the hunger, and the food;
Thou the prayer, and the prayed;
Thou what is or shall be said.

Beaumont and Fletcher

Unfolding The Flocks

Shepherds, rise, and shake off sleep -
See the blushing morn doth peep
Through your windows, while the sun
To the mountain-tops has run,
Gilding all the vales below
With his rising flames, which grow
Brighter with his climbing still -
Up! ye lazy swains! and fill
Bag and bottle for the field;
Clasp your cloaks fast, lest they yield
To the bitter north-east wind;
Call the maidens up, and find
Who lies longest, that she may
Be chidden for untimed delay.
Feed your faithful dogs, and pray
Heaven to keep you from decay;
So unfold, and then away.

Beaumont and Fletcher