

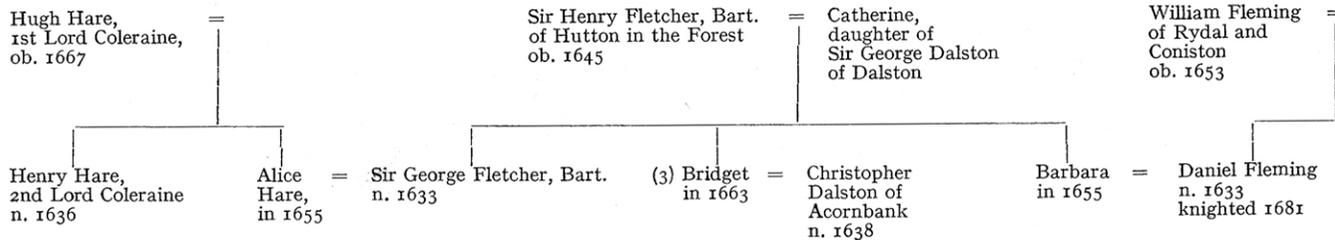
ART. X.—*Sir Daniel Fleming's courtship and marriage.*
By the Rev. C. M. L. BOUCH, F.S.A.

Read at Kendal, September 2nd, 1953.

AMONG the documents in his possession which Mr W. M. F. Vane, M.P., of Hutton-in-the-Forest kindly allowed me to examine in 1952, there was one to which he especially drew my attention: this was a letter from Sir Daniel Fleming of Rydal, to Barbara Fletcher of Hutton-in-the-Forest, proposing marriage. It is marked "copy". Our member, Mr. R. E. Porter, F.S.A., to whom I submitted it in order to ascertain whether it was a copy made by Sir Daniel or by some one else, informs me that "it is not in his writing nor in that of his many sons. Fleming never signed himself other than 'Dan. Fleming' and of the many hundred signatures I have seen not one of them is written with his full christian name. I am very pleased to have seen this interesting document and it bears the stamp of Daniel Fleming in every sentence, so I should presume it to be quite an authentic copy." I have to thank Mr Vane for giving me permission to publish it.

Feeling that members of this Society would be better able to appreciate the letter if they had before them some picture of the circumstances under which it was sent, I have tried to supply this; for the same reason, I have given an account of the events that followed the proposal, and of the marriage ceremony. I hope that the pedigree given on the opposite page will make clear the relationship of the various people mentioned in this account. From an "Autobiographical Sketch" given by Magrath in his *The Flemings in Oxford*, i 1-11, we learn how the pair first met. In Daniel's own words, while he was at

PEDIGREE SHEWING THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PEOPLE MENTIONED IN
Sir Daniel Fleming's courtship and marriage.



Queen's College, Oxford, "in June 1651 in St Maryes church (Oxford) I did first see Mrs B. F. afterwards my wife". Then, in March 1651-2, "I sett my Lady F. &c. northward as farr as Toak-Hill. A great eclipse (on a black Munday) at Lichfield. I first presented Mrs B. F. with a gold ring". After he came down from Oxford, on 13 July 1652 he had further opportunities of seeing her: while "dyneing at Acornb.¹ I did see Sr George. Afterwards I went to Hutton being ye first time I was ever there. I do go again unto Hutton." On 18 December 1652, he set off for London, and in January 1652-3 he went "into Comons at Grays Inn"; but before long his life was suddenly changed because, as his *Memoirs* tell (p. 73), his father "William Fleming, having been a long time consumptive, died at Conington-Hall, May 24 1653"; "which sad news", he notes in the *Autobiography*, "I heard not (being at London) before June 3 53". So he had to come home; and he must have been kept very busy there, for it was not until 8 November that he was able to visit Hutton; he stayed there for six days, and was back again on 20 November for another two days. On 10 February 1653-4 he was at Hutton once more, and seems to have stayed for a fortnight, leaving for London on 24 February and reaching there on 3 March. The next entry is, "My first letter to B. F. Mar. 27 54." Presumably this is the proposal of marriage, though this is, in fact, dated a day later—perhaps he took two days in writing it.

Why did he suddenly take this step, away from home, though he had been with Barbara only just over a month before? We must remember that he was still very young; he was not twenty-one until the following July. He had clearly fallen in love with her at Oxford—perhaps love at first sight, when he saw her in St Mary's church; then he was only eighteen, with his education not completed,

¹ This is Acornbank where (as can be seen from the pedigree) Christopher Dalston, Daniel's future brother-in-law, lived; "Sir George" was George Fletcher, Barbara's brother, who had been at Queen's with Daniel.

and dependent on his father. But the latter's death changed all this: Daniel at once became a man of substance, and independent. It would seem, however, that his mother and his guardians advised him to finish his course at Gray's Inn, and that at first he took their advice, dutifully returning to London—the words in the letter, “earnestly solicited to *step-stately*” suggest something of the kind. But “absence makes the heart grow fonder”, and Daniel, perhaps thinking that, despite what anyone might say, he was in fact lord of Rydal and much else (he notes, under date 25 May 1654, “I took administration of my Father's Goods”), decided to “take the plunge”! So the letter that follows came to be written: —

For the most Vertuous
Young Lady
M^{rs} Barbara Fletcher
at Hutton these
hast
Cumberland

Most vertuous M^{rs} Barbara Ever since I had the Happinesse to be first acquainted with you, my too much timorousnesse hath kept me from expressing that which I am affraid now my too much boldnesse permits me to utter. Untill now (though with not a little regrette) have I in a manner concealed my affection, and as my tongue, when I was last with you, wanted power (through fear of offending you) rightly to paint my thoughts, soe now doth my Pen act to inform you how dearly and entirely I love and honour you. I can easily perceive and give bounds to this my letter, the being both absent and farre distant not possibly to my affection; for the swettnesse of your beauty and the excellency of your virtues have soe fully taken up my thoughts and so firmly surprised and vanquished my heart that my reason should necessarily be as blind as yourselfe is excellent if I should not love and adore you. Least you should doubt of the realitie of my passion, I assure you y^t if I did not love you entirely I should not thus attempt to reveale it to you in Lines which I blush not as my cheekes doe when I write them. Now, dear Madam, since my Zeale to you is begun in vertue and shall be continued in honour, sith my flame has noe fault but y^t of aspiring too high, I heartily wish y^t I may assume the confidence to hope y^t you will not enforce me to despaire of a remedie and

kill him who adores you as his sole Goddess; but rather y^t you would afford me pittie and in some measure yield me a reciprocall returne of Love writ in two lines with your faire hands by this Bearer. In expectation whereof, although I have of late with many arguments beene earnestly sollicitod to *step-stately*, yet I assure you it shall be ever y^e height of my ambition and chiefist of my desires to be solely accounted,

Dear Madam
Your most humble and
devoted serveant
Daniel Fleming

Grays Inne
March 28th
1654

Unfortunately Barbara's answer has not survived, so that we cannot tell if it was "writ in two lines", but it must have been favourable. All the same, Daniel was evidently a young man who attended to business even when he was in love, and he did not leave London until 29 July, reaching home on 11 August. Once there he seems to have made up for lost time: he was at Hutton on 23 and 30 August, 11 September, and 7 and 16 October. But again duty called, and on 25 October he set off to London where he notes: "Dec. 5, 54 A letter from B. F." By 25 January 1654-5 he was home again, and he visited Hutton twice in February, once in March and three times in April. On 27 April 1655 he was off once more to London, arriving there on 4 May; and on 18 May he notes: "Mr (afterwards Sr Jeffrey) Palmer did give directions for drawing of my wifes Joynture with Mr Tho. Lee of y^e Temple." The great day was drawing near: "June y^e 2, 55 Bought my wedding clothes & June 9, 55 & June 12, 13, 15, &c." "June 22 55 Bought a Tortois shell Trunk and gloves." Presumably the trunk was to take the finery home in. He reached home on 17 July, was at Hutton on 28 July and at Rydal on 2 August; on 13 August he notes "Paid for Ingrossing of my marryage settlem^t". Four days later he was at Hutton again, for his wedding. He has left an account of this in his *Memoirs*:—

"Upon Monday, Aug. 27. 1655. about 11 O'Clock in y^e Forenoon He was married unto Barbara Fletcher, Eldest Daughter of S^r Henry Fletcher, Bar^t of Hutton (who was kill'd valiantly fighting for K. Car. I at Routon Heath near Chester Sept. 24. 45) & of y^e Lady Catherine Fletcher his Wife (who was eldest D. to S^r George Dalston of Dalston, K^t) y^e Banns of Marriage between Them being publish'd in y^e Parish-Churches of Hutton & Kirkland, three several Sundays or Holy Days, before, in y^e Time of Divine Service, Y^e People being present, after y^e accustomed manner: And y^e s^d marriage was solemniz'd First by Lancelot Fletcher of Talentyre in Com: Cumb: Esq. (privately in y^e best Chamber at Hutton) as a Justice of y^e Peace in y^e s^d County* by vertue of an Act of y^e Rebels pass'd Aug. 24. 1643. Secondly, Immediately after & publickly in y^e then Dining Room at Hutton (before a great many persons of Quality) by M^r Tho. Smith, then Chaplain to y^e Lady Catherine Fletcher, afterw^{ds} Dean of Carlisle, acc: to y^e Form of Solemnization of Matrimony in y^e Book of Common Prayer. The Bride was given by her Bro^r S^r George Fletcher; Her Portion was 1800^l in Money, & Jewels etc. above y^e value of 200^l Verses upon this marriage presented to Dan. F. by y^e Hon^{ble} Hen. Hare Esq. then eldest Son of Hugh, L^d Colrain, afterw^{ds} himself Lord Colrain."²

After the marriage, the honeymoon. The* first night was spent at Howgill Castle, the next at Appleby where: "Aug. 30. The Countess of P(embroke) gave my wife & me a silver salt wh^h is not used". They were back at Hutton for that night, and after a time went on to various other houses: "Oct. 2 my wife first at Rydal", but on 11 October they were off again on more visits, returning to Hutton on the last day of the month. They remained at Hutton until 27 March 1656, when they left for Coniston, spending exactly a month there, until "Apr. 27, 56 when wee began to keep house at Rydal." The reason for all this delay may perhaps be seen in the two entries that come next in the *Autobiography*: "May 6, 56 Rydal glazed, July 28, 56 Rydal plastered". The house had apparently been in a somewhat dilapidated state when Daniel inherited it, owing to a visit from the parliamentarians, who had plundered it and stripped it of all that was valuable (N. & B., I 163).

² *The Memoirs of Sir Daniel Fleming*, transcribed by R. E. Porter and edited by W. G. Collingwood (this Society's Tract Series, xi), p. 74.