

8 Sep 1823 William Lee to William Fitzwilliam

[Note: Piece reference WWM/F87/2. Some context is necessary to demystify the carefully vague content and allusions in this letter from Diana Beaumont's brother-in-law William Lee to Lord Fitzwilliam of Wentworth-Woodhouse. The nephew was Thomas Wentworth Beaumont, whose engagement to Elizabeth Swinburne of Capheaton Hall in Northumberland had just been called off, principally because he had accused his intended future mother-in-law of adultery, including with Earl Grey (of Reform Act fame a few years later). This was the 'unfortunate scene' referred to in the letter. It is clear from the letter that the Revd. Bird and Richard Beaumont, TW's brother, knew what had happened but shied away from being the bearers of the bad tidings to Diana. It looks as though Lee realised it was going to have to be him who had that unenviable task. The entire salacious story became public knowledge when letters were published in the Newcastle Chronicle in 1826, during the election campaign in which TW Beaumont was standing again for Parliament, an election he lost. In his uneasy state it looks as though Lee misdated the letter. We know from other sources that the 'unfortunate scene' took place on 10th August, and Lee refers to a letter to Diana received 22nd August, and to other events since then. 8th September might be more accurate and is assumed here.]

Grove 8th August 1823

My Dear Lord

No one my Lord is more capable of appreciating your Lordships kind attention upon all occasions to our Family than Myself, & no one is better acquainted with the motives that induced your Lordship to address the Letter to me I received on Saturday last, & which, if I did not so far as my Judgement will permit me to act, in this very unfortunate affair, exercise that discretion which your Lordship is kind enough to give me credit for, to the best advantage to every part of the Family so much interested. I should at once forfeit that good Opinion your Lordship is kind enough to entertain of me. I unfortunately last Year for Reasons it is perfectly impossible for me even to surmise came under the displeasure of my Nephew & therefore was forbid by him going to the Moors at Allendale this Year or otherwise I should have been in the North when this unfortunate & I may add unaccountable affair occurred. About Ten days ago, I was [at] Bretton, when Mrs. Beaumont informed me that she had Received a Letter from Sir John Swinburn to say that his Liberality & conduct was perfectly satisfactory, but that things had occurred that make it indispensably necessary on his part to break off this Match & that [rest of sentence underlined] Mr. Bird who was present, when he Returned to Hoyland, could inform her the Reason. Mrs. Beaumont immediately wrote to Sir John to say if her presence in the North could be of any use, she would immediately upon the Receipt of his Letter depart, as she was desirous of doing every thing in her Power for the happiness of her Son. On the 22 d. of August she Received this Letter from Sir John in Reply. 'I am perfectly sensible of your very liberal Conduct from the outset to this moment, & I assure you it is not from any difficulties of

pecuniary arrangements that I have been induced to break of this Match.' Mr. Bird Returned to Hoyland last Thursday week, & Refused to see Mrs. Beaumont, or give any information & her Third Son Returned from Bradley on Wednesday last, & also persists in being silent as to the same. I went to Bretton on Saturday after the Receipt of your Lordships very kind Letter to inform myself how matters stood, feeling anxious if I could be of any use in alleviating the feelings of the Family to do it, but when I found that after all the Letters Mrs. Beaumont sent <on> to Mr. Bird who was present at Capheaton when this unfortunate scene happened, that he still refused waiting upon Mrs. Beaumont, but had written a Letter to say that in a few days the whole subject would be explained to her satisfaction, & that not the least blame would attach to the Character of my Nephew & which statement was confirmed by my Nephew Richard. I feel quite confident that your Lordship will think that I have acted the prudent part in not Naming to Mrs. Beaumont one word upon this subject of your Letter. I wish to God that Mr. Birds information may be correct, but that I am afraid is impossible. After waiting a certain time, if I do not see that this necessary explanation is made & that the conduct of my Nephew should be such as to make it indispensably necessary on my part to mention the subject to Mrs. Beaumont, in such a case, I flatter myself your Lordship will not think that I have gone beyond the bounds of prudence, if I should Name the subject of Your Lordships Letter to Mrs. Beaumont. I beg to <Return> your Lordship my most <sincere> thanks for this great mark of attention & Subscribe Myself Your Lordships Most devoted Servant.

Wm. Lee

28 Jun 1830 Diana Beaumont to Charles Wentworth-Fitzwilliam

[Note: Piece reference WWM/G3/3. Diana's signature is faltering, added at the end of a letter written in another hand. Viscount Milton was a courtesy title of the heir to Earl Fitzwilliam]

Portman Square June 28th 1830

My dear Lord,

I beg to offer my best thanks for your Lordship's early communication of your intention of retiring from the representation of the County of York, a circumstance that will I am sure be universally regretted.

When my Agents informed me a few days since that a contest was expected, I gave orders to the same effect that I have done on former occasions –

I have the honor to be My dear Lord Your faithful & obedt. &c &c

Diana Beaumont

The Viscount Milton