

THE OTHER ELIZABETH DRURY:
A TRAGIC MARRIAGE
IN THE FAMILY OF JOHN DONNE'S PATRON

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The name of Drury has been immortalized by John Donne, who wrote a group of poems in memory of Elizabeth, only child of Sir Robert Drury of Hawstead in Suffolk, after her tragically early death in 1610. But history has forgotten the sad life of another Elizabeth Drury, her kinswoman, and daughter of Sir Dru Drury, though it was in the same year that both parents had cause to grieve, one through a death, the other through a marriage. The only clue to the story to be found among the writings of Suffolk historians is afforded by a Candler MS, in an entry under the pedigree of Drury of Riddlesworth (Harley 6071):

Elizabetha 1^a filia Drugonis Drury . . . = Henry Reinolds
de Belsted gent August 9 1610

To this he adds the cryptic note: *in miserrima fuit prodita.*

The wretched Elizabeth, some ten years older than her cousin, had been 'betrayed into most miserable circumstances' by a man who had himself been a victim of avarice and lack of affection, which may have led him to treat his wife with similar unkindness. Of this man, Henry Reynolds, something is already known, since he may have been on the fringe of literary society as the friend of Michael Drayton, who addressed an *Elegy* to someone of this name; he was born at Belstead in 1581, entered the Inner Temple in 1597 and was licensed to travel abroad in 1604. The bare facts of his life have been noted elsewhere;¹ the remainder of his story, and of his marriage with Elizabeth, is told below.

Dissension in his family began before his birth. His father, also Henry Reynolds, had married three times. The first wife brought him no children, and his second marriage was no more fortunate in this respect; it was to Anne Goldingham, widow of Christopher Goldingham, who had held the manor of Belstead until his death in 1559. On the widow's remarriage in 1563, Reynolds and his

¹ In the edition of Michael Drayton's *Works* by J. Hebel, with introductions and notes by K. Tillotson and B. Newdigate. Cf. the notes to Drayton's *Elegy* addressed to his friend Henry Reynolds, v, 216 (Oxford, 1941).

wife had bought the manor from the heir, Thomas Goldingham, but were not long allowed to enjoy it in peace as a lawsuit was brought against them by the heir's disgruntled son in 1568.² Reynolds was allowed to keep his land, and sold some of it to a neighbour in 1578.³ For the second time he lost a wife, childless, and he was becoming an elderly man when he married the young daughter of an Ipswich man who had already drawn up a will in which he left a ring to his special friend Harry Reynolds in token of his affection.⁴ This was Sir Edmund Withypole, and it was his daughter Elizabeth that Reynolds married and who bore him the son he must have longed for (see Pedigree, Fig. 27). Six years later,

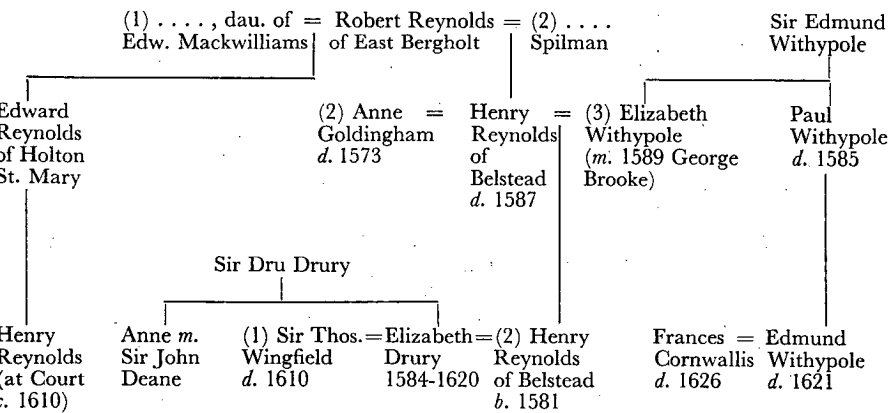


FIG. 27.—Pedigree of Reynolds and allied families.

in 1587, he died, leaving Henry as his only child, and with the knowledge that his wife was anxious to marry someone else. His will shows that he took every step possible to provide for his young son in the event of unfair dealing by a future stepfather,⁵ but exactly how unjust that dealing could be—and on the part of Henry's mother too—remained to be shown by a lawsuit which began not long after the elder Reynolds's death, when his widow was married to George Brooke of Aspoll who farmed Belstead while his stepson was a minor.⁶ The lawsuit began with a complaint by the widow of Henry Reynold's executor, William Goldingham LL.D., against the former Elizabeth Reynolds and her husband, and the

² Christopher Goldingham v. Henry and Anne Reynolds, 13 May 1568, (P.R.O. ref. C3/77/27).

³ To William Plumbe; Fines Hilary 20 Eliz.

⁴ 52 Stafforde, (1606).

⁵ 61 Spencer, (1587).

⁶ Cf. Brooke's will (24 Woodhall, 1601).

story she had to tell is one of incredible sordidness.⁷ She claimed that Henry Reynolds had at first made his wife his executor, with special provisions in the will to ensure an inheritance for his son at his majority—since he suspected that his wife was anxious to marry again as soon as possible. She had later refused to carry out these duties, claiming that the provisions would make her less eligible as a match, and so Reynolds had appointed his stepson Goldingham in her place. As Reynolds lay dying, Goldingham rode down from London to say goodbye, and then to read and discuss the will with the widow. The business proved extremely complicated, because Goldingham could not find enough ready money to carry out the dead man's wishes; and as his widow Anne deposed: 'he returned againe to London wth a sorrowfull harte for his manifolde charges in Travailinge vp and downe, for the greate hindrance he had thereby in his p^fession'. At length Goldingham took financial responsibility upon himself in order to carry out the provisions of the will, but meanwhile the widow of Reynolds had recovered unexpectedly a large number of debts and was refusing to hand them over.⁸ The unfortunate Goldingham was persuaded to enter into yet more commitments to relieve himself of the original debt of £1800 which he had contracted on behalf of the heir; as a result of scheming between Elizabeth Reynolds and her cousin Dr. John Hare, also a London lawyer, Goldingham found himself committed not only to the original £1800 but to another £3000 as well. His distress of mind, vividly depicted by his widow in her deposition, led to his death, and his widow Anne finally brought the complaint to Chancery. The case, begun in 1588, came to a hearing in April 1592,⁹ and ended with a most extraordinary scene; on the Masters of the Courts' recommending a course of action which would undoubtedly have led to redress for the plaintiff, George Brooke, husband of Reynolds's widow 'did verie boldlie in open Courte refuse and reiect all the Masters of the Courte to the great disgrace of that most [honorable Court]'. It appears that the dispute was finally settled by the intervention of auditors; Elizabeth and her husband remained at Belstead Hall until Brooke's death in 1601, when he left her the profit of the crops in the fields and barns at Belstead 'in case it shall fall out that I dye whilist I haue belstead

⁷ Anne Goldingham, exec. of Wm. Goldingham v. George and Elizabeth Brooke, 20 April 1592, (C2 Eliz. G8/44).

⁸ The Privy Council took steps to prevent some of these debts from being paid until the law had decided to whom they were due. Cf. *Acts P.C.* 1588-9, 383 (13 July 1589).

⁹ Apparently the delay was excessive even for that time; on 16 April the Privy Council wrote to the Master of the Rolls directing that the case should have an early settlement, since it had been pending for so many years. Cf. *Acts P.C.*, 1591-2, 400.

in my handes'. This condition was only just fulfilled, as the heir was of age in the following year. It is interesting that nowhere does Brooke mention his stepson Henry Reynolds; he leaves everything to the three boys whom Elizabeth bore him, and does not even leave a ring to Henry. It does not seem that the latter could have spent a happy childhood after his father's death when he was six; Henry Reynolds's will showed how much affection he lavished on the child of his old age, and it must have been a sad change for the boy when his mother married a man whose aim seemed to be to get the child's inheritance for himself and his wife.

His stepson, meanwhile, had left home in 1597 to enter the Inner Temple. He left without being called to the Bar, possibly to return home to look after the Belstead estate, and shortly after his majority he set out on the Grand Tour which was to finish his education, having obtained a licence to travel on 29 May 1604.¹⁰ Permission was granted for him to remain abroad for three years, and no doubt he went to Italy like all ambitious young men of the time. Ten years later he went abroad again, as the State Papers reveal,¹¹ but the second visit was undertaken in fear and distress, since during those ten years Henry had become embroiled in the tragedy which was to lead to alleged plots against his own life and the death in misery of a woman whom he had betrayed. The history of his relationship with Elizabeth Drury must begin with some account of the friends and kinsmen who were involved with him in the tragedy. Chief among these were the Withypoles of Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich, and Rendlesham Hall, Suffolk.¹² Henry Reynolds's grandfather, Sir Edmund, his mother's father, had died in 1606, and was succeeded by his grandson (his eldest son having died in 1585) also Sir Edmund, first cousin to Reynolds. The younger Edmund had married a wife from a very rich and influential family, Frances Cornwallis, and had thereby become related to one of James I's ambassadors, Sir Charles Cornwallis, to two successive holders of the office of Groom Porter (both named Thomas Cornwallis) at James's Court, and to the essayist Sir William Cornwallis, of Brome Hall, Suffolk, one of whose pieces was dedicated to his cousin, Lady Frances Withypole.¹³ It was she who played a leading part in the tragedy; a minor part was taken by a friend and neighbour, Sir Henry Glemham of Glemham Hall, near Rendlesham Hall, country house of the Withypoles, and by his wife Lady Anne, daughter of Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset, author of *Gorboduc*. The heroine of the tragedy was

¹⁰ *Cal. S.P. (Domestic)*, 1603-10, 114.

¹¹ *Acts P.C.*, 1613-14, 599.

¹² Cf. the Withypole pedigree in Metcalfe's *Visitations of Suffolk*, (Exeter 1882).

¹³ *Essays*, ed. D. C. Allen, (Baltimore 1946), 155.

Elizabeth Drury, now Lady Wingfield, a young widow of 25 when the story begins. She was the eldest daughter of Sir Dru Drury, long an official at court, and kinsman of the Robert Drury for whose daughter Donne wrote an elegy; but she had been born at Linstead in Kent where her father had married an heiress, and built himself a mansion as his country house, his town house being in Beech Lane in Cripplegate.¹⁴ Elizabeth had been married at the age of 17 to a man much older than herself, Thomas Wingfield of Letheringham, a village bordering on Rendlesham and Glemham. The marriage took place in 1601; a daughter was born in 1603 and the son and heir, Anthony, in 1606, the year in which his father was knighted, having recently succeeded to the family estates on the death of his unmarried elder brother. Sir Thomas was then 50, his wife only 21. Four years later, in January 1609/10, her husband was dead of smallpox;¹⁵ seven months later, on 9 August 1610, she was again a wife, to Henry Reynolds of Belstead. The story of their marriage is related in a Chancery case of 1615, in which the deponents are Sir Dru Drury, Henry Reynolds, Sir Edmund Withypole, Sir Henry Glemham, Lady Anne Glemham, and Charles Glemham.¹⁶ The plaintiff was Sir Dru, on behalf of his daughter and her children, and his deposition, although ostensibly concerned with revenues from various manors settled on the former Lady Wingfield, reveals a story of cruelty and treachery. His daughter, he said, had been persuaded into marriage by some 'extraordinary practices' on the part of Lady Withypole, who was, he alleged, well-known for her contrivances in arranging matches; Elizabeth had, however, received assurances that her new husband would make her an allowance of £300 yearly, and would not interfere in any way with the estates being held for her son. But not long after the marriage, Reynolds 'fell into lascivious and incontinent courses of lyfe', and his wife, hearing of his behaviour, and 'manifesting her knowledg thereof' there arose 'discontent beetweene them'. Moreover, Reynolds was a recusant, and refused to let his wife read the Bible and attend Divine Service; he had never made his wife the promised allowance, he had made over the wardship of her son to his kinsman Sir

¹⁴ In the early 17th century the parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate, was something of a literary quarter. Lancelot Andrewes was the incumbent, Ben Jonson lived in the neighbourhood, and the Fortune Theatre was close to Sir Dru's mansion, Drury House. Cf. J. J. Baddeley, *Cripplegate*, (London 1921). There are a few references to Sir Dru Drury in R. C. Bald's *Donne and the Drurys*, (Cambridge 1959).

¹⁵ Information about the Wingfield family is to be found in P. C. Rushen, *Transcripts of the Parish Registers of Letheringham*, (London 1901).

¹⁶ Sir Dru Drury v. Henry Reynolds, Sir Edmund Withypole etc., (C2 James I D8/32).

Edmund Withypole, and he had left his wife destitute. The final insult had come when he had arrived unbidden at the house where his wife was living, and had broken open her chests and carried away to Sir Edmund's house her linen and plate. Sir Dru was seeking redress from Chancery, because 'the saide Mr Renolds is nowe gone, as they gyve forth beeyonde the seas, where he meaneth to contynew Seaven yeres'. Sir Dru adds that one of the principal inducements made to his daughter was that her suitor had a kinsman, one Henry Reynolds, living at court, who was worth £20,000 and intended to leave his possessions to his namesake. The reference was to the son of Henry's uncle Edward, of Holton St. Mary, also named Henry; he had obtained preferment at Court through the influence of members of his mother's family, the Mackwilliams of Stambourn Hall, Essex.

The defendants' version of the story is, naturally, rather different, and is more detailed. Lady Anne deposed that the first she knew about the marriage was from Lady Elizabeth herself, and that it had been done entirely without her knowledge; but the other defendants agree in a common version. They allege that Lady Elizabeth and Henry Reynolds arrived one night, uninvited, at the house of Lady Elizabeth's neighbour, Sir Henry Glemham, and the discussion turned on marriage. Since Reynolds was 'a yonge gent of good birth of cyvill conversaton & good dispositon . . . geñially well esteemed of all men' and 'of good reputation desert & qualetie', and since, according to Sir Henry and Sir Edmund, there had been reports spread about the countryside that Lady Elizabeth meant to make an unsuitable match, it was suggested that the two should marry. The contract was made that night, and the wedding took place next morning in Lady Withypole's chamber in Sir Henry's house. Reynolds deposed that he was sure his wife was as willing as he was for the marriage, and there was no need for any solicitation on his part; she would, he alleged, have married her servant or anyone else so as not to be without a husband. It was she who was so anxious for the ceremony to take place at once, since, she said, she dare not return home and confess that she intended to enter into such a contract as she would then be prevented from doing so by her cousin, Thomas Wingfield, and by her man, formerly servant to Sir Thomas, one William Naunton. Reynolds admitted that they had begun to draw up a document setting forth her rights, for the benefit, as she explained, of those of her kinsmen who would be furious at her marriage; but after only part of the agreement had been completed, she herself threw it on the fire, saying that it was not necessary. Sir Edmund added that he could prove that no unfair dealing was intended, since the Lady Elizabeth's brother-in-law, Sir John Deane (husband of her

sister Anne) had been present in Sir Henry's house throughout the proceedings. All the defendants denied that they had held out any prospects of inheritance from the kinsman at Court. Their story of developments after the marriage also disagrees with that of the plaintiff's. Reynolds had been forced to sell his estate at Belstead¹⁷ in order to buy the wardship of Anthony Wingfield, which his wife did not wish to place in the hands of strangers. Belstead had brought him £4000, the wardship had cost £2000, and much of the rest of the money had gone in new buildings on the Letheringham estate. But he had intended well by his wife, and as Sir Edmund deposed, when he was taken seriously ill not long after the marriage, he had left everything to Elizabeth. Contentment grew between them, Reynolds alleged, because of his wife's 'vnciuil and out ragious vsages of him both in Words and action and her imodest and vnwomanly behaiour to others especially people of base condicon'; Sir Edmund supported this allegation by referring to her 'imodest & vnseemly behaiō & Carrage . . . towards other men' and added that Sir Dru himself had remarked, after the marriage, that his son-in-law had the worse match. The situation between the married couple grew more bitter, said Reynolds, until at last his wife began to plot against his life, and he was forced to leave her. Both he and the other defendants denied that he ever gave her cause for complaint in his own behaviour, nor had he ever prevented her from reading the Bible. On the contrary, said Sir Edmund, Reynolds and his wife had lived with him for a year in his house; he noticed that his cousin went to church more frequently than Lady Elizabeth and he had certainly not refused her the Bible; moreover, such goods as had been brought to his house were only those which belonged to Reynolds himself, from his chests of books and clothes. The plaintiff's reply to these allegations was, of course, to reassert his original statement, but there was one point on which he thought fit to enlarge. Reports had been circulated, according to Sir Edmund's allegation, about his daughter's affection for William Naunton, who was said to be a man of mean ability and estate. Sir Dru pointed out that Naunton was a gentleman by birth and of 'good Credit and Conversation' and not an unworthy match for his daughter, even though he had been her husband's servant—probably his steward. Naunton was clearly disappointed at losing his bride, but did not give up hope of revenge on Reynolds.

This is all the Chancery depositions tell of Reynolds's marriage

¹⁷ This explains why the Visitation of 1612–21 shows the Blossie family in possession of Belstead Hall. W. A. Copinger, in *The Manors of Suffolk*, vi, 6, (Manchester 1910), states that Reynolds senr. sold to Plumbe, who sold to Blossie some time in the late 16th century, but this is clearly wrong.

and of Naunton's attempts to win back his mistress. The story may be traced further in the Calendar of State Papers and in the Acts of the Privy Council. Before the case came to court Reynolds had gone abroad, as is shown by the issue of a passport to 'Henry Reignolds, gent., to travayle for one yeare, with one servant, and such trunkes of apparrells and other needefull provisions (not prohibited)' on 20 October 1614. The pass was procured, it is stated, by 'Mr. Cornewallys and Mr. Greisley', Cornwallis perhaps being related to Reynolds through his cousin Lady Frances Withypole. After some months, and while Reynolds was still abroad, Sir Dru made his complaint in Chancery (18 March 1614/15); the senior Glemhams and the Withypoles made their answers in April, and Reynolds not until May when presumably he had returned to England. Charles Glemham did not reply until July, and Naunton was evidently driven by the delays in Chancery to seek another solution. On 2 November 1615 Henry Reynolds of Ipswich was summoned to Whitehall to answer a charge preferred by 'William Nanton' (Naunton) that he received and harboured priests.¹⁸ Naunton's initiative is not surprising, if it was part of a campaign to rescue his lady. He was not, in fact, a man of inferior birth; he was of an old-established Letheringham family, allied in the sixteenth century by marriage with the Wingfields, and he was a kinsman of Sir Robert Naunton, Secretary of State 1618-1623, and Privy Councillor 1624-35. But in 1615 his influence at court was clearly less than that of Reynolds; the case was heard by, among others, the Earl of Suffolk, patron of the defendant's cousin at court, and Naunton's charge was dismissed until he should obtain further evidence. Just over a year later Elizabeth Reynolds herself tried to obtain some redress of her grievances, by appealing to the Court of High Commission at Lambeth, which dealt mainly with marital causes. The Court's records for this year have been destroyed, but a summary of the case has been preserved.¹⁹ On 20 February 1616/17 the Court ordered that Reynolds should pay his wife £250 in equal instalments every month for one year; at the end of that year they asked for a further three months' payments, or 'untill they might be brought to cohabite and live together as man and wife'. But on 11 July 1618 Elizabeth Reynolds again appealed, this time to Whitehall, as she had received nothing from her husband, who had gone abroad. The summary continues: 'it is in probability to be presumed, considering his suddayne and secreat departure, that he hath withdrawne himselfe out of the kingdome of purpose to illude her further pursuit of him unto his Majesty'. The Court directed that Anthony Parker and whoever

¹⁸ *Acts P.C.*, 1615-16, 316.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1617-19, 220.

else might be handling the revenue of Reynolds's estate should pay the money to his wife; but these instructions were disobeyed, since again on 26 July the Court had to intervene, and ordered that Anthony Parker and Charles Glemham should either make the payments or appear before the Court in London to explain their refusal.²⁰ Within the next six months Reynolds himself must have returned, for on the following 6 January the Privy Council issued a warrant to Edmund Pierce, one of the messengers of the Chamber, 'to repaire to the dwelling or place of aboade of Henry Reinolds, esquier, and to apprehend and bring him before their Lordships to answer such matters as are to be objected against him'.²¹ Here the story ends; Sir Dru had died in April 1617, leaving his daughter, by a will dated in 1613, a silver basin and ewer, but with no memento to his son-in-law; the family could not even bear to have him named on Sir Dru's monument in Riddlesworth Church, where his eldest daughter, Elizabeth, is referred to as the wife of the late Sir Thomas Wingfield, and Reynolds's name is excluded.²² Elizabeth herself died in 1620,²³ and her son Anthony came of age in 1627, and took over his inheritance. There are only two more certain references to Henry Reynolds; one is in the will of his faithful friend Anthony Parker.²⁴ In his will, dated in January 1621/2, Parker reveals that he had served the Withypoles for a long time, and as he said: 'I was faithfull and iust to them all and wore out my best yeares in toylinge and paines takinge for them wth whom I liued seauen and twenty yeares'. The Withypoles and Reynolds owed him much; Lady Withypole was still in his debt for more than £300 which he had lent her, some time before 1606, for the expenses of her son, now Sir William, when he travelled to Italy—perhaps in 1604 with his second cousin Reynolds. To the latter he had been faithful in the administration of his estate when he was abroad, and he did not forget him in his will; but he left him only ten pieces of gold to buy himself a gelding. To Charles Glemham, his partner in the administration and a distant kinsman, he left larger legacies.

The last reference to Reynolds of Belstead is to be found in the will of his cousin Lady Frances Withypole.²⁵ Sir Edmund had died in 1621, leaving a very brief will; Lady Frances began to make her will in 1623, and revised it at various dates before her death in May 1626. In a section dated 4 August 1623 she states:

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 232.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 340.

²² Cf. F. Blomefield, *Norfolk*, 1, 283 (2nd Ed., London 1805).

²³ Harley 6071 gives this date in the Drury (Riddlesworth) pedigree.

²⁴ 77 Swann.

²⁵ 66 Hele.

My husband hadd of my cosen Reignoldes the money for which he sould the Wardshipp of my cosen Winkfelde for which he should haue of me by agreement Cxxli yearlie duringe his lief which I would haue carefullie paid whether he be in England or wheresoeuer in anie other partes of the world, and soc soone as my estate maie be settled I will that he haue assurance of Cxxli by yeare duringe his lief.

Similar words are repeated in a section dated June 1625. It would seem that those who had conspired to rob Elizabeth Wingfield had now fallen out among themselves. Sir Dru had alleged that Reynolds had made over the wardship of his step-son to Sir Edmund Withypole; some time before the latter's death he must have taken back the money he had given for it and offered an annuity of £120 in exchange. But Lady Withypole does not seem to have continued the annuity; her financial affairs were clearly in great disorder, and the will was made in distress and confusion of mind. It is, at times, almost incoherent. But it does suggest that Reynolds had gone abroad again, and that if he was not receiving the annuity, must have been in straitened circumstances.

The unfortunate Elizabeth was already dead, after a life which can have known little lasting happiness. Married at seventeen to a man old enough to be her father, widowed when only twenty-six, she must have found Reynolds an attractive and romantic partner in the clandestine marriage; a man only three years older than herself, 'of cyvill conversaton' and of 'good dispositon', and generally well-esteemed. According to a deposition in the lawsuit, Reynolds at first tried to make her a good husband, but there seem to have been faults on both sides to account for the wretchedness of the marriage. Certainly some of the allegations made in the same lawsuit against both husband and wife ring only too true. Those who made the marriage can never have imagined the tragic results; Elizabeth dead before she was forty, her husband driven abroad, and his patrimony sold to strangers, the Blosses, whose memorials now occupy the place in Belstead church where those of Reynolds and his descendants should have been.