SUMMARY: The document below is a copy of verses from Francis Beaumont (1584/5 - 6 March 1616) to Ben Jonson mentioning Shakespeare.

Although Chambers dated Beaumont's verses to 1615 (see Chambers, E.K., *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), Vol. II, pp. 223-4), according to Bland they can be dated much earlier to 'late May or June 1606' (see Bland, *infra*, p. 165):

Second, the date [i.e. Chambers' dating of the poem to 1615] cannot be reconciled with the reference to Marston's The Fawne and Sharpham's The Fleire, the latter of which was performed in 1606. One of Beaumont's jokes is that someone will be required to write a sequel called The Grinne: that comment makes no sense if the sequel has not been written within the previous nine years.

Although both Chambers and Bland connect the verses with a Garter ceremony because of the reference to an individual with 'white and orange-tawny on his back/At Windsor', this seems impossible given that the individual in question is described by Beaumont as being in 'misery', and in a 'wretched' state. It is said that white and orange were the heraldic colours of the Earls of Essex. See Lacey, Robert, *Robert, Earl of Essex; An Elizabethan Icarus*, p. 83:

. . . despite the £14,000 the Earl of Essex spent equipping and dressing them in his tangerine and white liveries.

See also McCoy, Richard C., *The Rites of Knighthood*, p. 79:

http://books.google.ca/books?id=tjSk0bSDHOgC&pg=PA79&lpg=PA79&dq=%22white+and+tangerine%22+%22Robert+Devereux%22&source=bl&ots=Xoh56S8WFu&sig=rWZfApr3DzlROkwRwhJ2K5sr4zI&hl=en&sa=X&ei=LUaTU_PqEcrqoATk44CIBw&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22white%20and%20tangerine%22%20%22Robert%20Devereux%22&f=false

. . . in 1588 at Tilbury where Essex commanded a force of cavalry arrayed in the Devereux colours of white and tangerine.

See also Hammer, Paul E.J., *The Polarization of Elizabethan Politics: The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585-1597*, (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 200:

http://books.google.ca/books?id=VbKM-1eXuBkC&pg=PA200&lpg=PA200&dq=%22Devereux+colours+of+orange+and+white%22&source=bl&ots=Kl_dA2P7mq&sig=CN3KorBkDj4pdsGe9Ox1puALfFE&hl=en&sa=X&ei=SaqUU-SVIMn6oATjjIKQDA&ved=0CCIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22Devereux%20colours%20of%20orange%20and%20white%22&f=false

Modern spelling transcript copyright ©2014 Nina Green All Rights Reserved
http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/

A rather more martial impression was intended when [Essex] arrayed his troop of soldiers before Elizabeth after the defeat of the Spanish armada, in late August 1588. . . . His two hundred light horsemen, sixty musketeers and sixty mounted harquebusiers all appeared in the Devereux colours of orange and white, some in velvet and silk.

It thus may be that the individual alluded to in Beaumont's verses had taken service with the young Robert Devereux (1591-1646), 3rd Earl of Essex, who was at court in 1606. According to the *ODNB*:

Devereux's fortunes were transformed by the accession of James VI of Scotland to the English throne. James immediately showed that he remembered fondly the loyalty to his reversionary right shown by the second earl of Essex. The young Robert Devereux was invited to bear James's sword before him as he entered London at the end of April 1603 and at his coronation on 25 July. James proceeded to restore him to his titles—Baron Bourchier, Viscount Hereford, and earl of Essex—and to his estates and made him a page to Prince Henry. A succession of token honours (such as an Oxford MA honoris causa conferred simultaneously on Robert Cecil's son and heir and on Essex in August 1605) marked him out as a man of promise, and the Howards, earls of Suffolk and Nottingham, insecure in their dominant position at court, were keen to take advantage of this. They persuaded the king to sponsor a marriage between the Devereux and Howard families. On 5 January 1606 Robert, not yet fifteen, was married to Frances Howard (1590–1632), Suffolk's daughter, herself only eight months his elder.

Bland draws attention on pp. 164-5 to an article by Kelliher (see H. Kelliher, 'Francis Beaumont and Nathan Field: New Records of their Early Years', *English Manuscript Studies*, 8 (2000), 1–42) which sheds new light on Beaumont's activities just prior to the writing of these verses:

Hilton Kelliher's important article has established that Beaumont was in Cambridge during the latter half of 1604 and the first months of 1605, from mid-November on resident at the Tolbooth prison on Market Hill. The point, for present purposes, is not so much Beaumont's skill as a gambler, or the nature of his problems, but his meeting with John Cowell, the Vice Chancellor on 15 March 1605. As Kelliher has commented, 'no record of the final decision survives'. It is reasonable to infer, however, that the judgment does survive in Beaumont's poem, and that he was 'Banish'd vnto my home'. There, his elder brother died three months later, and so the restraint on Beaumont came to an end.

See also:

http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Some+recent+dramatic+manuscript+studies.-a093135729

In English Manuscript Studies 8 (2000) Hilton Kelliher, in a tour-de-force of archival investigation, offers important new manuscript evidence from the Cambridge University Archives (housed in the University Library) about the early lives of Francis

Modern spelling transcript copyright ©2014 Nina Green All Rights Reserved
http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/

Beaumont and Nathan Field, which confirms that these authors were in residence in Cambridge in 1604. Kelliher, a Western manuscripts curator at the British Library, closely examines documents, including a copy of Beaumont's baptismal record, from a series of Cambridge court cases to which Beaumont was a party, echoes of which may appear in Beaumont's plays. Kelliher also finds allusions in Field's plays to his life in Cambridge, and further suggests that Field and Beaumont first encountered John Fletcher at Cambridge. The records that Kelliher handles so superbly in this essay show us that Beaumont indulged in slander, dicing, gaming, and other unsavory adventures. They offer exciting new information about the nature of Beaumont's character and work, records of which were previously scant, and of his collaborators and friends.

The modern spelling transcript below was prepared from the original spelling version in Bland, Mark B., 'Francis Beaumont's Verse Letters to Ben Jonson and "The Mermaid Club"', in Beal, P. et al, eds., *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700*, (London: British Library, 2005), pp. 139-179 at pp. 174-5, available online at:

http://www.academia.edu/4064513/Francis_Beaumonts_Verse_Letters_to_Ben_Jonson_and_The_Mermaid_Club

To Mr Ben Jonson

Neither to follow fashion, nor to show
My wit against the state, nor that I know
Anything new with which I am with child
Till I have told, nor hoping to be styled
A good epistler through the town (with which
I might be famous), nor with any itch
Like these wrote I this letter, but to show
The love I carry and methinks I owe
To you above the number, which will best
In something which I use not be expressed.
To write this I invoke none but the post
Of Dover or some carrier's pistling ghost,
For if this equal but that style which men
Send cheese to town with, and thanks down again,
'Tis all I seek for. Here I would let slip
(If I had any in me) scholarship,
And from all learning leave these lines as clear
As Shakespeare's best are, which our heirs shall hear
Preachers cite to their auditors to show
How far sometimes a mortal man may go
By the dim light of nature. 'Tis to me
An help to write of nothing, and as free
As he whose text was *God made all that is*

Modern spelling transcript copyright ©2014 Nina Green All Rights Reserved
http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/

I mean to speak. What do you think of his
State who hath now at the last that he could make
In white and orange-tawny on his back
At Windsor? Is not his misery more
Than a fallen sharer's that now keeps a door?
Hath not his state almost as wretched been
As his that is ordained to write *The Grin*
After *The Fawn* and *Fleer* shall be (as sure
Someone there is allotted to endure
That cross!). There are some I could wish to know,
To love and keep with if they would not show
Their studies to me, or I wish to see
Their works to laugh at if they suffer me
Not to know them, and thus I would commerce
With honest poets that make scurvy verse.
By this time you perceive you did amiss
To leave your worthier studies to see this,
Which is more tedious to you than to walk
In a Jew's church, or Breton's common talk.
But know I wrote not these lines to th' end
To please Ben Jonson, but to please my friend.

Modern spelling transcript copyright ©2014 Nina Green All Rights Reserved
http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/