

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 042 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=042>)

From: Elizabeth Stuart, countess of Lennox (née Cavendish) (Hackney, London (the Lennox's place));

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 25 July [1577?]

Summary: Elizabeth (née Cavendish), countess of Lennox, writes to her mother, Bess (countess of Shrewsbury), that 'I have not so evil deserved as your ladyship has made show', and asks that Bess 'esteem lightly' of such 'false bruits as your ladyship has heard reported of me'.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (51)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: Seal intact - no. Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - sewn

Hands: Elizabeth Stuart, countess of Lennox | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 042: Elizabeth Stuart, countess of Lennox (née Cavendish)

Elizabeth Stuart (née Cavendish), countess of Lennox (1554-1582), was Bess's third daughter from her second marriage to Sir William Cavendish (1508-1557). In 1574, Elizabeth married Charles Stuart, earl of Lennox (1555-1576). The couple were the parents of Arbella Stuart (1575-1615), who after their deaths was raised by her grandmother, Bess.

Other letters associated with Elizabeth Stuart, countess of Lennox (née Cavendish):

[1574?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=41>)

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People Associated with Letter 042: Bess of Hardwick

Born Elizabeth Hardwick (in c.1521/2, d. 13 February 1608), the woman known to posterity as Bess of Hardwick married four times during her life, as a result of which her name changed from Hardwick to Barlow (or Barley), Cavendish, St Loe and then finally (when she was countess of Shrewsbury and then dowager countess) Talbot. As one of the five children of John Hardwick (1495-1528) of Hardwick, Derbyshire, and his first wife, Elizabeth (née Leake), Bess had three sisters (Mary, Jane and Alice) and one brother (James). The Hardwicks were established Derbyshire gentry who had inherited a modest manor house and c.400 acres in and around Hardwick. But when John died in 1528, and their lands were seized by the crown, Bess faced hardship. Bess's mother quickly remarried but her new husband, Ralph Leche of Chatsworth, Derbyshire, brought little land or money to the marriage, and three more daughters were born (Bess's half-sisters Elizabeth, Jane and Margaret). Little else is known of Bess's childhood but, while still young, she was married for the first time, to Robert Barlow (or Barley) of Barlow, Derbyshire, sometime in or before 1543. Barlow died in 1544 and Bess received a small inheritance. In 1547 she married the twice-widowed Sir William Cavendish, treasurer of the king's chamber. Bess and Cavendish had eight children, six of whom survived: Frances (1548), Henry (1550), William (1551, from whom the dukes of Devonshire are descended), Charles (1553, from whom the dukes of Newcastle and Portland are descended), Elizabeth (1554) and Mary (1556). Probably due to a mixture of affection and shared social ambition, Bess's second marriage was happy and fortuitous. She was now moving in courtly circles and experiencing (for the first time) considerable wealth. In 1549 Cavendish and Bess bought the estate of Chatsworth, which was held jointly in both their names and which he and then Bess, following Cavendish's death in 1557, ambitiously rebuilt. Soon after her second husband's death, and sometime before Elizabeth I's accession (in 1558), Bess married Sir William St Loe, a wealthy widower of ancient noble pedigree. St Loe was captain of the guard to the young queen and in addition to further improving Bess's finances, he also brought her into the queen's inner circle and she served briefly as a gentlewoman of the queen's privy chamber (in 1559). The marriage seems to have not been without affection; however, the two would have spent most of it apart - he serving the queen in London and Bess mostly at Chatsworth. Upon St Loe's death (probably in 1565), Bess inherited most of the estate. In 1567 Bess married for a final time, to George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, one of the richest and most powerful men in England. To consolidate the union of their fortunes, the couple had Bess's eldest son, Henry, marry Shrewsbury's daughter (from his previous marriage), and Shrewsbury's eldest son, Gilbert (later the seventh earl), marry Bess's daughter, Mary. Also around this time, Shrewsbury was appointed to be the keeper of Mary Queen of Scots (from 1568-84). At first, relations between Bess and the Catholic Scottish queen seem to have been amicable; however, relations deteriorated all around as Bess's marriage to Shrewsbury broke down in the 1580s. An infamously nasty and highly public legal battle over estates ensued and finally the courts resolved that Shrewsbury provide Bess with a sizeable income from 1587 onwards (Shrewsbury died in 1590). In 1582, Bess took charge of the upbringing of her orphaned granddaughter, Arbella Stuart (1575-1615), claimant to the English

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and Scottish crowns. In 1587, Bess undertook her remarkable building works at Hardwick: the house now known as Hardwick Old Hall was complete by 1591; next to it, the extraordinary building now known as Hardwick New Hall was complete by 1599 and is one of the greatest architectural ventures of Elizabethan England. It was at Hardwick that Bess spent most of the remainder of her life, much of it devoted to caring for and managing Arbella, who came to loathe her existence in Derbyshire and devised several bizarre plans for her escape (to Bess's great distress). Bess also quarrelled with her eldest son, Henry, and disinherited both him and Arbella in her will. She left most of her estate to her beloved and faithful son, William Cavendish, who continued her great dynasty into the seventeenth century.

Normalised view of Letter 042

To the ryght honorabl the countys of Shrewsbury my very good mother

My humbl duty remembred beseching your Ladyship of your daly blesinge presuming of your mother like affeccyon towards me your childe that trusts I haue not so euell deserued as your Ladyship hath made shewe; by your Letters to others whych maketh, me doutfull that your Ladyship hath ben infoormed som great vntruth of me or else I had well hoped that for som smal trifels I shuld not haue contened in your displeasur so longe a time and I myght be so bould as to craue at your Ladyship's hands that it wold pleas you to exteme shuch falce bruts as your Ladyship hath hard reported of me as lightly as you haue don when others wer in the like cas I shuld thinke my selfe much the more bounde to your Ladyship I besech you make my harty comandacions to my aunt I take my leaue in humble wyse hacknay xxv of Iuly

your Ladyship's humbl and obedint dough[ter]

E Lenox

Diplomatic view of Letter 042

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

Eliz. Countess of Lenox

(Mother to y^e Lady Arabella
who was taken off) Second

Daughter of S^r W^m Caven=^edish. Her Husband was
uncle of K James y^e 1.st. [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To the ryght honorabl
the countys of Shrewsbury
my very good mother

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(51) [Item number, hand: archivist]

82 [Old foliation/item number, hand: archivist]

169 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

My humbl duty remembred beseching your La:
of your daly blesinge presuming of your
mother like affeccyon towards me your
childe that trusts I haue not so
euell deserued as your La: hath made
shewe; by your Letters to others whych
maketh, me doutfull y that your La: hath
ben infoirmed som great vntruth of
me or else I had well hoped that for
som smal trifels I shuld not haue
contenued in your displeasur so
longe a time and I myght be so bould
as to craue at your La: hands that
it wold pleas you to exteme shuch falce
bruts as your La: hath hard reported
of me as lightly as you haue don
when others wer in the like cas I shud

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shuld thinke my selfe much the more
bunde to your La: I besech you
make my hartly comandacions
to my aunt I take my leaue in
humble wyse hacknay xxv
of Iuly

your La: humbl
and obedint dough...

[significant space]

E Lenox

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