

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 043 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=043>)

From: Jo[hn?] L[enton?];

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 12 August 1571

Summary: A correspondent 'Jo.L.' (perhaps John Lenton) writes somewhat cryptically of a matter concerning Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) and 'Master Pierrepont', himself acting 'as a mean between the two parties, loving both so well as none better'. He has heard that Anne Pierrepont is in love with one Teverle Teyvle, which leaves Bess's 'hope of Master Chaworth that ways daunted'. Master Pierrepont has a book of his called 'Galen in physick', which has assured Pierrepont that 'wedlock helpeth and hurteth not that thing'.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (52)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: Seal intact - no. Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - tuck and fold

Hands: John Lenton? | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 043: Jo[hn?] L[enton?]

John Lenton is a speculated name that has been attributed to one rather cryptic letter in the Bess correspondence, signed 'Jo. L.'.

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People Associated with Letter 043: 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 043

To the Ryght honorable & hys synguler good lady my lady ye Countese of Shresburye.

Ryght honorable. yt may be yat I mystoke ye matter, but as myn aucthore spake, so I wrote to your honor. he is ye party, yat hathe all doinges with ye seriante for master pierpoynte I meane master fletcher my great frynd, but not so frendly in this matter, as I labored to make hym; yet I am fayne mervelously to hyde my meanyng The other parties have so prevented & foreclosed the hartes of honeste men to gyther with Raskalls. I pray you Madame pervse over my laste letres agayne, ye constructienc I referre to you, for I wrote as I herde, & we go all by gesse & coniectures as strangers to ye thyng so closly in workyng. And I say, ye meane to levy no fyne, but to passe all by feoffes apon truste, which I beleave shalbe ye auctores & begynners of this Tragedy fownde in ye ende I worke as a meane betwene ye ij parties, lovyng bothe so well as non better. Therfor he muste handle ye matter wysly and silently, yat muste putt his hand without harme betwene ye barke & ye tree. When I have commoned with hur, ye other gelously desyryth to know of me, whatt was sayd. Thynke you now whatt herte I have, whome bothe parties truste love. Thei bothe ar lothe I should departe from yer howse, & evyn now master pierrepont brought me from holme whome & wyll call me agayn at night returnyng whome warde from New sted this xijth of Auguste. yet I can not do any great good, so long as ther ys suche councellors with in a myle & within iij myles weste, wheare now ye yowng syr is with his mamme I take yat place to be ye fountan of this myscheffe yet I know it not & so I pray your honour to take me. I speak of no stomache, yet there was ye forge, wheare my troble was framed. & there was ye meanynges & concourse of them all, er thei sett owt to ye Seriante as I espyed in ye begynninge by way of prophesyng. Now yf this be trew, then the scripture is trew, yat sayeth: ex presbiteris processit iniquitas —prestes ar the begynnyng of all mischeffe I neade speak no playner to a good expositonne. Then madame thynke yat yt ys no marvayle yf a yowng ientleman be entrapped of olde sowldyers. Suche wyly heddes other for nearenes of place & parentage, or for olde serpentyne sublyltee, ar able to sett division betwene moste conioyned persons, wo wereth them. My Lorde Dyer told me, yat there ys no way to lett master pierrepont yf he lyste so to doo, but by persuasyone & fayre meanes, which for his parte should not wante, yf he came to hym. I beleave master harehe being wonne (which my Lorde your Beadfelow may do) all the matter wer steyd. for all thei sett theyr lyght at Suharson. I beseche you good madame, vse ye yowng gentleman as gently as ye can, yat we may wynne hym, yf yt be possible, to hate theyr devises & thynke of them as thei ar: no fryndes but foes. yt may be yat theyr proposed feate at Candlemas to be wrought ys ye same, yat the letter mentioneth yat your honour laste wrote. A sonne (when pleasyth god) wold turne all this matter. I do not yet lyke all thynges there so well, as I hope I maye here after. but ye two parties agrea well thanked be ye lorde I heare say yat Anne pierrepont ys in love with on Teyvle & for yat cawse hur mother

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hathe discharged Teverell of his man & boy he hadd in the howse. I speake but by heare say, yet Teyvell ys not at Clyston. yf it be this, then your hope of master Chaworth yat wayse ys dawnted. I mynd in the ande of this next weeke to see your honor. Master pierrepont hathe a booke of me called Gallen in phesycke, and foloweth my councell for ye thyng I told your honor, yat he theryn may perceave wedlocke helpyth & hurtythe not yat thyng./. your dowghter speakyth to me for soiornyng &c. but he dothe not as yet. your .ij. suheete chyldren ar in helthe, but I suppose concernyng theyr commyng to Chatzworth promyse wyll not be performed, your letter was shewed to me/ & I spake but lacke of horse ys ye cawse. when I beleaved .v. hundrythe markes to be &c. I now vnderstand I was deceived by hym yat wold have me thynke so. Thus I take my leave of your honor. the xijth of August.1571.

your honor's to command

Jo. L.

by close dealyng, a man may come to a kyngdom

Diplomatic view of Letter 043

[Address Leaf]

To the Ryght hono=rable & hys synguler
good lady my lady
y^c Countese of
Shresburye.

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(52) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

197 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

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laste letres agayne, y^c constructiene I referre to you, for I
wrote as I herde, & we go all by gesse & coniectures as strangers
to y^c thyng so closly in w^r kyng. And I say, y^c meane to levy
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as non better. Therfor he muste handle y^c matter wysly and
silently, y^t muste putt his hand w^t owt harme betwene y^c
barke & y^c tree. When I have comoned w^t hur, y^c other
gelously desyryth to know of me, whatt was sayd. Thynke
yo^u now whatt herte I have, whome bothe parties truste
love. Thei bothe ar lothe I should departe from y^{er} howse, &

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evyn now m^r p. browght me from holme whome & wyll
call me agayn at night returnyng whome warde from New
sted this xijth of Auguste. yet I can not do any great
good, so long as ther ys suche cowncellors w^t in a myle
& w^t in iij myles weste, wheare now y^e yowng syr is
w^t his mammee I take y^t place to be y^e fountan of this myscheffe
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here after. but y^e two parties agrea well thanked be y^e lorde
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theryn ^{^may^} perceave wedlocke helpyth & hurtythe not y^t thyng./.
yo^r dowghter speakyth to me for soiornyng &c. but he dothe
not as yet. yo^r .ij. suheete chyldren ar in helthe, but I
suppose concernyng theyr commyng to Chatzworth ^{^promyse^} wyll not
be performed, yo^r letter was shewed to me/ & I spake but
lacke of horse ys y^e cawse. when I beleaved .v. hundrythe
m^r kes to be &c. I now vnderstand I was deceaved by hym
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