From: Gilbert Talbot (Sheffield, Yorkshire); Mary Talbot (Sheffield, Yorkshire);
To: Bess of Hardwick;
Date: 1 August 1577
Summary: Gilbert Talbot writes to his stepmother and mother-in-law, Bess (countess of Shrewsbury), with news about his father and Bess's husband, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury's movements. He also reports conversations between he and his father, mostly to do with Bess. Gilbert has told his father that Bess thinks he (George) is better pleased with her absence than with her presence - an allegation that the earl denies. The letter is also signed by Gilbert's wife, Mary (née Cavendish; Bess's daughter), and the postscript concerns Gilbert and Mary's son George, who asks adamantly after Bess, his grandmother.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (112)
Delivery status: to Bess, sent
Letter features: Seal intact - no. Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - slit and band
Hands: Gilbert Talbot | archivist | Mary Talbot |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 085: Gilbert Talbot

Gilbert Talbot (1552-1616) was the son of George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, and his first wife Gertrude (née Manners; d.1566). Gilbert was the second son but as his older brother Frances died in 1582, Gilbert succeeded to the earldom and became seventh earl of Shrewsbury after his father died on 18 November 1590. After his father's marriage to Bess (and to serve their interests), on 9 February 1568 Gilbert was married to Bess's daughter from her second marriage, Mary (née Cavendish). That is to say, Gilbert was married to his step-sister, at which point Bess became both his step-mother and mother-in-law. (At the same time, his sister Grace was married to Bess’s eldest son Henry.) Gilbert and Mary were known for living large and eventually relations between Gilbert and his father Shrewsbury deteriorated over what Shrewsbury saw as his son and daughter-in-law's careless spending and the resultant debt. Gilbert also became notorious for his quarrelsome disposition. His relationship with his father suffered further damage when he accused him of siding with his wife Bess during their marriage breakdown. After his father’s death he became engaged in litigation with Bess over the will (a legal battle which Bess won). Then, in 1594, he challenged his brother, Edward Talbot, to a duel amidst allegations of poisoning. These and other feuds were often long-lasting and expensive and left Gilbert with many enemies and debts. Gilbert had five children with Mary. His two sons, George and John, died in infancy and therefore his three daughters became joint heirs to their father’s titles and great estate: Mary Herbert, countess of Pembroke (d. 1650), Elizabeth Grey, countess of Kent (1582-1651) and Aletheia Howard, countess of Arundel (b. After 1582, d. 1654).

Other letters associated with Gilbert Talbot:

28 June 1574 (Author)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=80)
20 February 1575/6 (Author)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=165)
28 May 1576 (Author)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=82)
[July 1577?] (Author)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=84)
31 January 1580/1 (Recipient)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=228)
1 July 1589 (Author)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=88)
People Associated with Letter 085: Mary Talbot

Mary Talbot (née Cavendish; b. 1556, d. 1632) was one of Bess's daughters from her marriage with Sir William Cavendish, who died in 1557 when she was only a year old. Following her mother's marriage to George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury (and to serve their interests), on 9 February 1568, when Mary was around twelve-years old, she was married to the earl's son from his previous marriage, Gilbert Talbot. That is to say, Mary was married to her step-brother, at which point the earl became both her step-father and father-in-law. (At the same time, her brother Henry was married to the earl's daughter Grace.) Mary's husband Gilbert was the second son but as his older brother Frances died in 1582, Gilbert succeeded to the earldom, and he and Mary became seventh earl and countess of Shrewsbury, after his father died on 18 November 1590. Mary and Gilbert's two sons, George and John, died in infancy and therefore their three daughters became joint heirs to their father's titles and great estate: Mary Herbert, countess of Pembroke (d. 1650), Elizabeth Grey, countess of Kent (1582-1651) and Aletheia Howard, countess of Arundel (b. after 1582, d. 1654). Mary was better educated than her mother Bess and is known for her strong-mindedness, intelligence and opinions, as well as for her conversion to Roman Catholicism as an adult. She was involved in the elopement and escape plans of her niece Arbella Stuart in 1610 and subsequently, when she refused to testify, was imprisoned in the Tower for several years. She spoke up for her mother, Bess, to queen Elizabeth, in 1587, during her estrangement from Shrewsbury. Despite some of their differences, Mary is said to have been genuinely distressed when her mother died in 1608 and was remembered by Bess in her will.

Other letters associated with Mary Talbot:
1 July 1589 (Author)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=88)
18 February [1590/1?] (Recipient)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=233)
30 November 1607 (Recipient)(URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=179)
People Associated with Letter 085: 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. 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 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 throne.
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.
Other letters associated with Sheffield, Yorkshire

8 Aug 1574 (origin) (URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=73)
7 Jun 1575 (origin) (URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=74)
17 Mar 1578 (origin) (URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=120)
14 May 1578 (origin) (URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=188)
29 Dec 1578 (origin) (URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=123)
17 Jan 1580 (origin) (URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=190)
13 May 1580 (origin) (URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=194)
31 Jan 1581 (origin) (URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=228)
31 Jan 1581 (origin) (URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=227)
28 Jan 1582 (origin) (URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=144)
8 Feb 1582 (origin) (URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=195)
6 May 1582 (origin) (URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=146)
6 May 1582 (origin) (URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=145)
10 Jun 1582 (origin) (URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=105)
24 Nov [1582?] (origin) (URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=204)
14 Apr [1600?] (origin) (URL: http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=2)
Normalised view of Letter 085

My duty moste humblie Remembered Right Honorable my moste Singuler good Lady This day my Lord intendethe to goe to Worsopp, to morow to Rufford, and on Saterday hither agayne/ He was not so Inquysatyve of me touchinge your Ladyship synce my laste beyng at Chatesworthe as he was the tyme before, only he hathe asked me dyvers tymes when I thought your Ladyship wolde be heare, wherto I have answered sum tymes that your Ladyship was so evell at ease with Reumme as you knew not when god wolde make you able, other tymes, that I thoughte when your Ladyship were well you wolde desyre respette to stay for sum mo[net]hes, if he wolde gyve you leave, for yat you assuredly thoughte my Lord was better pleased with your absence then presence, Whervnto he replied very ernesty [t]he contrarye in suche sorte as he hathe done heretofore, when I have toulde him the lyke/ I founde ... occasion to tell him that your Ladyship mentte not to hould owen as your growme any longer, seynge it was his pleasure to be so offended with him, howbeit (I sayde) your Ladyship toulde me that you knew not what offence he had commytted, nor other by him at all then that he was a symple trewe man, & yat you wolde be glad to vnderstand sumthynge to lay to his charge whye you sholde turne him oute of your servise, but he answered no other then that it was his wille for dyvers causes yat he wolde not vtter/ further I sayde your Ladyship toulde me you mente to take sum wyse fellow to your growme yat sholde not be so symple as owen was, but one yat had bene in servise heretofore ... and knew what were fytt[e] & belonged for him to doe [n]... yat service, (quothe he) I beleve she will tak[e] one of my puttynge to her/ Synce yat tyme he gave no occas[ion] of speche of your Ladyship and in deede I have not ben[e] very muche with him thes iiiij or v dayes, for he hadd[e] muche busynes with others, he is nothynge so merrye in my Iugement as he was the laste weeke, but I assure your Ladyship I know not any cause at all, nor other thynge I know worthye your Ladyship's knowledge at this presente. therfore with moste humble desyre of your Ladyship's blessinge to me & myne and our prayer for your Ladyship's Continuance in all honor moste perfyte helthe & felicitie I cease Sheffield this present thursday .i. Auguste 1577

Your Ladyship's moste humble and obedyent Lovinge chyldren.

Gilbert Talbott

M: Talbot

George is very well I thanke god, he drynketh the every day to Lady grandmother, rydeth to her often, but yet within the courte, and if he have any spysse, I tell him, Lady grandmother is comme and will see him, which he then will ether quyckly hyde or quyckly eate, and then askes where Lady Danmode is.
Diplomatic view of Letter 085

[Letter Text: Notes]
X.d.428
(112) [Item number, hand: archivist]
23 [Old foliation/item number, hand: archivist]

My duty moste humblye Remembered R. Ho. my moste Singuler good La: This day my L. intendethe to goe to Worsopp, to morow to Rufford, and on Saterday hither agayn/ He was not so Inquysatyve of me touchinge yo’ L. synce my laste beyng at Chatesworthe as he was the tyme before, only he hathe asked me dyvers tymes when I thought yo’ L. wolde be heare, wherto I have answered sum tymes that yo’ L. was so evell at ease wth Reumme as yo’u knew not when god wolde make yo’u able, other tymes, that I thoughte when yo’ L. were well yo’u wolde dyseyre respette to stay for sum mo...hes, if he wolde gyve yo’u leave, for y’ yo’u assuredly thoughte my L. was better pleased wth yo’f absence then presence. Whervnto he replied very ernestly ...he contrarye in suche sorte as he hathe done heretofore, when I have toulde him the lyke/ I founde ... occasion to tell him that yo’ L. mente not to houlde owen as yo’ f grewme any longer, seynge it was his [deletion] pleasure to be so offended wth him, howbeit (I sayde) yo’ L. toulde me that yo’u knew not what offence he hadd commytted, nor other by him at all then that he was a symple trewe man, & y’ yo’u wolde be glad to vnderstand w sumthynge to lay to his charge whye yo’u sholde turne him oue of yo’ servise, but he answered no other then that it was his wille for dyvers causes y’ he wolde not vttter/ further I sayde yo’ L. toulde me yo’u mente to take sum wyse fellow to yo’ grewme y’ sholde not be so sympl... as owen was, but one y’ had bene in servise heretofore ... and knew what were fytte & belonged for him to doe i...... y’ service, (quothe he) I beleave she will tak...one of
my puttinge to her/ Synce y^t^ tyme he gave no occas...
of speche of yo^t^ La. and in deede I have not ben...
very muche w^th^ him thes iiiij or v dayes, for he hadd...
muche busynes w^th^ others, he is nothinge so merrye in
my Iugem^t^ as he was the laste weeke, but I assure
yo^t^ La. I know not any cause at all, nor other thynge
I know worthye yo^t^ La. knowledge at this p^t^ ssente. therfore
w^th^ moste humble desyre of yo^t^ La. blessinge to me & myne and
o^t^ prayer for yo^t^ La. Continuance in all honor moste p^t^ fyte helthe &
felicite ^ceace^ Sheffield this p^t^ sent thursday .i. Auguste 1577

Yo^t^ La. moste humble and obedyent
Lovinge chyldren.

Gilbert Talbott

M: Talbot §

George is very well I thanke god, he drynketh every
day to La. grandmother, rydethe to her often, but yet w^th^ in the courte,
and if he have any spysse, I tell him, La grandmother is come and
will see him, w^ch^ he then will either quyckly hyde or quyckly eate, and
then askes where La. Danmode is.

Version: 1.0