

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 056 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=056>)

From: Edward Manners, third earl of Rutland (Newark, Nottinghamshire);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 18 April [c. 1570]

Summary: Edward Manners, third earl of Rutland, writes to Bess (countess of Shrewsbury), to recommend the bearer, one Mistress Higgens, who was servant to Manner's late aunt (Lady Gertrude, the former countess of Shrewsbury). Manners asks Bess to show Mistress Higgens 'good furtherance' (that is, help or aid) and to consider her claim to 'aparaunt' (that is, her right to remain employed in the family's service).

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (71)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: Edward Manners, third earl of Rutland | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 056: Edward Manners, third earl of Rutland

Edward Manners, third earl of Rutland (1549-87), was the eldest son of Henry Manners, second earl of Rutland (1526-63), and his wife Margaret (née Neville; d.1559). He had a noble upbringing as the queen's ward (educated by William Cecil) and was known in his own time as a scholar; however, he held no major office and his life was shortened by illness, including gout.

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People Associated with Letter 056: 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 056

To my verie good Lady the Countes of Shrewsbury geve these

My very good Lady I: am bould to recommend to your Lady shippes good furtheranncce this berer mistres higgens an ould servant of my Late awntes your predecessor who claymeth a paret from my Lord your husband as by his deed it semeth that he hath granted ye gentlewoman is my kinswoman & to my Iudgment in no such estat but that this grant may much plesure her wherfor my good Lady I estonece request your good Ladyship's furtheranncce in such sort as she may find that I haue recommended her & so resting to requite the plesure that you shall shew her in such sort as occasion may serve me I Leave your Ladyship to god from Newark this 18 of Aprill

Your Ladyship's most assured to Commaund

Rutland

Diplomatic view of Letter 056

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

Edw^r Maners El of Rutland's
Letter (K^t of y^e Garter) He succeeded his
Father Henry in y^e Title in 1563,
& died 14th of April 1587. [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To my verie good Lady
the Countes of Shrewsbury
geve these
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[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428
(71) [Item number, hand: archivist]
84 [Old foliation/item number, hand: archivist]
177 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

My very good Lady I: am bould to recommend to
y^r Lady shippes good furtherannce this berer m^r s
higgens an ould servant of my Late awntes y^r ~~prese~~ predecessor
who claymeth a paret from my L y^r husband as by
his deed it semeth that he hath granted y^e
gentlewoman is my kinswoman & to my Iudgment
in no such estat but that this grant may much
plesure her wherfor my good Lady I estonece request
yo^r good La furtherannce in such sort as she may find
that I haue recommended her & so resting to ~~requesting~~ ^{^requite^}
the plesure that y^u shall shew her in such sort as
occasion may serve ^{^me^} I Leave y^r La. to god from Newark
this 18 of of Aprill

Y^r La most assured

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to Commaund

Rutland

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