

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 088 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=088>)

From: Gilbert Talbot; Mary Talbot;

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 1 July 1589

Summary: Gilbert and Mary Talbot write to Mary's mother, Bess (countess of Shrewsbury), reporting that 'our business' at court is delayed daily. Gilbert writes how Robert Devereux, the earl of Essex, planned on renewing his suit regarding Tutbury, but is willing to 'surcease his suit for himself and to further me therein all that he could'. Further, Gilbert includes a detailed report about the murder of Henry III in France, and the rumour that the murderer is a Dominican friar. In a postscript, Mary writes that nothing has been 'performed for your ladyship's case', but the queen has 'asked me very carefully for my lady Arbella [Stuart, Bess's grand-daughter]'.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (115)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: Gilbert Talbot | archivist | Mary Talbot |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 088: 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:

- 4 November 1570 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=171>)
- 28 June 1574 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=80>)
- 14 May 1575 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=81>)
- [October 1575?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=218>)
- 13 October 1575 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=217>)
- 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>)
- 1 August 1577 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=85>)
- [30 June 1578?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=83>)
- 13 February 1578/9 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=166>)
- 28 February 1578/9 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=174>)
- 11 September 1580 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=154>)
- 31 January 1580/1 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=228>)

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31 January 1580/1 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=227>)
[19 September 1583?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=86>)
[February 1589] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=87>)
28 February [1597/8?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=187>)
[November 1604] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=177>)
15 January [1606] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=180>)

People Associated with Letter 088: 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 August 1577 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=85>)
- 13 February 1578/9 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=166>)
- [1580s] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=181>)
- [1580] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=185>)
- [19 September 1583?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=86>)
- [February 1589] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=87>)
- 18 February [1590/1?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=233>)
- 28 February [1597/8?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=187>)
- 15 January [1606] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=180>)
- 8 July [1607] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=89>)
- 30 November 1607 (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=179>)
- 30 December [1607?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=90>)

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People Associated with Letter 088: 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 088

To my Lady./

Our bounden dutyes moste humblie Remmembred/ In lyke humble manner gevinge your Ladyship thanks for your lettre which lately we receved/ Wherby we vnderstand/ that which beste contenteth vs/ The good healtie of your Ladyship with all yours there./ Touchynge our busynes here/ we can not yet (by any possible meanes) procure the dispatche therof, but are styll delayed with daly promis/ and partycularly for the offyces/ I lately vnderstandinge that the Erle of Essex meante to renew his sute to her majestie for Tutbury I toulde him/ that I was very sorry my happ was to be crossed therin by any seyng the same offyce hadd contynued in the handes of my auncestors thes two hundred yeres paste/ muche more by suche a one as his Lordship was of whom I never deserved otherwyse then well/ and who I was ryghte sorry sholde vse so great discourtesye to me &c: with muche more to the lyke effecte/ When I hadd ended/ he answered/ that It lyeinge so very nere his chefe house & in his owne cuntrey he hadd moved her majestie therin more then a yere synce/ who did dyrectly promis him that she wolde make stay therof for him and not graunte it to any other/ which promis he sayde he was fully purposed to have now renewed to her majestes memory/ nevertheles so muche he respected my house/ and so great good affection he beareth to me/ as he was contented bothe to surcease his sute for him selfe/ and to further me therin all that he coulde/ which I colde not but take very thankfully at his handes/ And thus muche I have imparted bothe to my Lord Treasurer and to master Secretary/ And they have declared the same to her majestie so as there is now no scrupell at all/ that I can learne/ & yet my bylls are vnsignd/ and putt of from day to day./

I assure my selfe that before this lettre shall cum to your Ladyship's handes/ you shall have harde of the wycked murther of the ffrenche Kynge In this manner/ a freare of a new order which this Kynge him selfe erected caled/ The order of Dominickes desyred to have private accesse to his owne person for matters tendynge hylie to his honor & servyce/ And beyng admtyted he delivered vnto the Kynge a lettre importynge an offer of one of the chefe gates of Paris to be at the Kynge's commandement but before the sayde lettre was fully redd/ that cruell varlett (with a longe sharpe poynted knyfe yat he hadd in his wyde sleve for yat purpose) stabbed the Kynge into ye syde therwith/ yet the King havynge sum glympse of the knyfe stroke it sumwhat doune with his arme/ wherby it perced not so depe into his boddy but yat ther was hope of his recovery/ the Kynge him selfe wrested that knyfe oute of the vyllanes hande/ (sum sayes he pulled it oute of his owne boddy) but certayne it is that the King stabbed the varlett two or three tymes into the face & hedd therwith/ & so by thos yat were nereste the Kynge/ he was Instantly slayne in ye place/ The King immediatly sente for the King of Navar to him who was incamped nere vnto him with many others of the nobilitie/ And after he hadd hadd sum private speche with the

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King of Navarr/ he desyred all thos noble men ther presente to receve him for theyr Kynge and no other/ which they all faythfully vowed to doe And they all (with that Kynge) did also vow to be revenged of the Kynge's dethe/ Sum thynke it is not a freare indeede who did this wycked acte/ but sum other person who determininge to sell his lyffe in yat revenge/ did so apparrell him selfe/ to thende therby to procure accesse./ Vppon this newes my Lord Chancellor (who was then at holdenby at the marryage of his nephew) was sente for vpp agen with all spede/ And this nyghte he will be at london/ he purposed to have tarryed ther xen or xij dayes longer/ here they will resolve what course is fytteste to be taken for the King of Navars ayde so sone as they shall be agen advertized how the nobilitie & people are bente towardes him./ all thynges here are after the wonted manner/ Thus moste humblie besechynge your Ladyship's blessinge/ with our wonted prayers for your moste happy longe lyffe in all confortes/ and our prayers to God to prosper my Lady Arbella and to blesse our lyttell ons/ & to rewarde your Ladyship for your gret goodnes to them we humblie seace./ This fyrste of Iuly .1589.

Your Ladyship's moste humble and obedient lovyng chyl dren //

Gilb: Talbott

Mary Talbott

meny good wordes I contnewally receue and promes of as much as I can desire but nothing performed for your ladyship's case nothing done how my lord's reuersion of his ofesis standes this leter will aduertes your ladyship and for welbeke it is much mor backward then it semed to be at our coming vp. we will labor still by all good menes and leue: the succes to god who in shart time may make greter alteracions when we lest loke for it god

turne all to the best, here is a brut but I know not of what credet that foler shall be the Queen's leger imbasitor in Scotland: the Queen axed me very carfully for my lady arbell the last day god bles her with all his good blesinges and geue your ladyship that and all other confortes

Diplomatic view of Letter 088

[Address Leaf]

To my Lady./
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[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(115) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

Our bounden dutyes moste humblie Remmembred/ In lyke humble
manner gevinge yo^r La: thanks for yo^r *lettre* w^{ch} lately we
receved/ Wherby we vnderstand/ that w^{ch} beste contenteth
vs/ The good healthe of yo^r La: wth all yo:^{rs} there./
Touchynge our busynes here/ we can not yet (by any possible
meanes) *procure* the dispatche therof, but are styll delayed
wth daly *promis*/ and *partycularly* for the offyces/ I lately
vnderstandinge that the Erle of Essex meante to renew
his sute to her ma:^{tie} for Tutbury I toulde him/ that
I was very sorry my happ was to be crossed therin by
any seyng the same offyce hadd contynued in the handes
of my auncestors thes two hundred yeres paste/ muche
more by suche a one as his Lp: was w of whom I
never deserved otherwyse then well/ and who I was
ryghte sorry sholde vse so great discourtesye to me &c: wth
muche more to the lyke effecte/ When I hadd ended/
he answered/ that It lyng so very nere his chefe
house & in his owne cuntrey he hadd moved her ma:^{tie}
therin more then a yere synce/ who did dyrectly ~
promis him that she wolde *may* make stay therof for him
and not graunte it to any other/ w^{ch} *promis* he sayde
he was fully purposed to have now renewed to her
ma:^{tes} memory/ nevertheles so muche he respected my
house/ and so great good affection he beareth to me/

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as he was contented bothe to relyngose surcease his
sute for him selfe/ and to further me therin all that
he coulde/ w^{ch} I colde not but take very thankfully
at his handes/ And thus muche I have imparted bothe to
my L:^d *Treasurer* and to m:^r *Secretary*/ And they have
declared the same to her ma:^{tie} so as there is now no
scrupell at all/ that I can learne/ & yet my bylls are
vnsigned/ and putt of from day to day./

I assure my selfe that before this *lettre* shall cum to yo^r La:
handes/ you shall have harde of the wycked murder
of the ffrenche Kyng In this manner/ a freare of a
new order w^{ch} this Kyng him selfe erected caled/
The order of Dominickes desyred to have *private* accesse to
his owne *person* for matters tendynge hylve to his honor
& servyce/ And beyng admtyted he delivered vnto the
Kyng a *lettre* importynge an offer of one of the chefe
gates of Paris to be at the Kynges *commandem:*^t but before
the sayde *lettre* was fully redd/ that cruell varlett (wth
a longe sharpe poynted knyfe y^t he hadd in his wyde
sleve for y^t purpose) stabbed the Kyng into ye syde
therwth / yet the K: havynge sum glympse of the knyfe
~~stryek~~ stroke it sumwhat doune wth his arme/ wherby it
perced not so depe into his boddy but y^t ther was hope of

[page break]

his recovery/ the Kyng him selfe wrested that knyfe oute of the
vyllanes hande/ (sum sayes he pulled it oute of his owne boddy)
but *certayne* it is that the K: stabbed the varlett two or three
tymes into the face & hedd therwth / & so by thos y^t were *nerest*
nereste the Knyge/ he was Instantly slayne in y^e place/
The K: *immediately* sente for the K: of Navar to him who was
incamped nere vnto him wth many others of the nobilitie/ And
after he hadd hadd sum pⁱ vate speche wth the K: of Navarr/ he
desyred all thos noble men ther *presente* to receve him for
theyr Kyng and no other/ w^{ch} they all faythfully vowed to doe
And they all (wth that Kyng) did also vow to be revenged of

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the Kynges dethe/ Sum thynke it was ^{^is not^} a freare indeede who
did this wycked acte/ but sum ^{^other^} person who determininge to sell his
lyffe in y^t revenge/ did so aparrell him selfe/ to thende therby
to procure accesse./ Vppon this newes my L:^d Chancellor
(who was then at holdenby at the marryage of his daughter
nephew) was sente for vpp agen wth all spede/ And this
nyghte he will be at london/ he purposed to have tarryed
ther x^{en} or xij dayes longer/ here they will resolve what
course is fytteste to be taken ^{^for the K: of Navars ayde^} so sone as they shall be agen
advertized how the nobilitie & people are bente towardes
him./ all thynges here are after the wonted manner/
Thus moste humblie besechyng y^r La: blessinge/ wth our
wonted prayers for y^r moste happy longe lyffe in all
comfortes/ and our prayers to God to prosper my La: Arbella
and to blesse our lyttell ons/ & to rewarde y^r La: for y^r gret
goodnes to them ~~and~~ we humblie seace./ This fyrste
of Iuly .1589.

[significant space]

Yo^r La: moste humble and
obedient lovyng chylidren
//

[significant space]

Gilb: Talbott
§

Mary Talbott

meny good wordes I
contenewally receue and
promes of as much as
I can desire but nothing
performed for your la: case
nothing done how my lo: reuersion

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of his ofesis standes this leter
will aduertes your la: and
for welbeke it is much mor
bacward then it semed to
be at our coming vp. we
will labor still by all good
menes and leue: the succes
to god h̄o who is in shart time
may make greter alteracions
when we lest loke for it god

turne all to the best, here is a brut but
I know not of what credet that foler
shall be the Q leger imbasito n̄ ^r^ in
Scotland: the Q axed me very carfully
for my la: arbell the last day god
bles her w^t all his go^o d blesinges and
geue your la: that and all other comfortes

Version: 1.0