

RELATIONSHIPS

and behaved himself in such undutiful manner towards her as well in his actions and behaviour in threatening troubling and molesting her from time to time but also therein hath shewed and stirred up so many crosses and troubles in hindering her many ways that she cannot quietly enjoy that small living and means which her said late husband left her to maintain herself upon that she is weary of her life if some present course be not taken for her relief all which appeareth by several articles hereunto annexed which your petitioner is now ready to prove by oath before your honour and worships.

She therefore humbly desireth your honour and worships for God's cause to take some such speedy course for her safety from him either by awarding the good behaviour against him or otherwise as to your honour and worships shall seem expedient And your petitioner shall daily pray to God for your honour and worships etc.

Articles preferred by Katherine Venables widow against Thomas Venables her eldest son as followeth:

[Especially] the said Katherine Venables upon or about the last day of October last past having hired a workman to cleave wood and to do such work as she then had to do the said workman having made a ladder and wanting staves to put therein William Venables youngest son of the said Katherine went with the said workman to cut staves forth of a tree that lay in the ground of the said Katherine whereupon the said Thomas Venables came in most violent and outrageous manner (having a broom hook in his hand) into the said close and then and there threatened the said workman that if he offered to work any longer there or to strike over another stroke he would cut off his hands and head and vowed so to do with many heavy vows and oaths whereupon the said workman being in great fear durst not work any longer there but was enforced to leave of and give over his work to the great prejudice of the said Katherine.

Item the said Katherine having set diverse rails and posts to preserve her corn from the cattle of the said Thomas for eating the same forth of her barn the said Thomas the day in the precedent articles did cut down the said rails and did likewise cut the said ladder into diverse pieces so that the said Katherine by that means had a great part of her corn destroyed by the cattle of the said Thomas.

Item the said Thomas upon or about the said last day of October coming to the house of the said Katherine and finding the door shut and having an axe in his hand did in most violent manner break down the door of the said house into diverse pieces (the said Katherine with her family being in peace and quietness in her said house) the said Thomas having broken down the said door and having a great pitching pikel¹ in his hand held and shook the same towards the said Katherine insomuch that she and her family being

1. A pitchfork.

in great fear and peril of their lives were enforced to cry for help of their neighbour.

Item the said Thomas upon or about the six and twentieth day of May last past came to the house of the said Katherine and threatened the said Katherine and her whole family that whosoever came forth of the door of the said house he would make them forever going in again and swore most heavily for that purpose and likewise would have killed the son of the said Katherine, with a great bill² and endeavoured himself to that purpose also.

Item the next day having been at the alehouse and being almost drunk came into the fold belonging to the said house and there cut a stone trough into pieces having laid a great pitching pikel by him whereat the said Katherine was very sore affrighted and in great fear.

Item the said Thomas doth so threaten and terrify the said Katherine and her son William and other workmen insomuch that no workmen dare work with her to her great discomfort and hindrance.

8.10 The love of sisters: Lady Elizabeth Poley and Lady Anne D'Ewes, c. 1639

This is one of a series of letters between two sisters, playing on precisely those difficulties of communication and distance that could both interrupt and enhance friendships. Lady Elizabeth Poley was the second wife of Sir William Poley, and died in 1698, having had three daughters and three sons; her sister Lady Anne D'Ewes was the wife of Sir Simonds D'Ewes, MP, and died in 1641, aged 29.

Elizabeth Poley to Anne D'Ewes, BL, Harleian MS. 382, fo. 173 (1639/40).

For my Lady D'Ewes at her lodging in Aldersgate Street at Mr Johnson's a tailor at the Hand in Hand

Worthy sister

I could wish we might always enjoy each other which is one of the greatest comforts I take in this life especially where I find so much nobleness with so many realities as distance of place or length of time doth rather unite our hearts than accuse them of any neglects which is the truest love and though I have not those ways and means of expressions that others have yet God knows the truth of it to you and my dear brother for in my saddest thoughts which are not few it is such comfort to but wish myself with you. . . .
Your affectionate sister and servant Elizabeth Poley

8.11 My dearest soul: Anne Dormer, her sister and son, 1691

These letters from Anne Dormer to her sister Lady Elizabeth Trumbull and her son Jack were written three years after her husband's death, while she was at
2. A long-bladed tool.

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Tunbridge for her health. She discusses her relationships with both of them, but also those with the servants whose lives are dependent on their relations with the family. The first letter was written by one of the servants, perhaps Robin, who is elsewhere recorded as running to fetch glasses of the Tonbridge water for her to save her appearing in the public rooms. Other letters (e.g. document 6.10) describe her unhappy marriage in much detail.

Trumbull Papers, BL, Add. MS 72516, fos 235-6, 233-4.

Anne Dormer to her sister Lady Elizabeth Trumbull

Tonbridge October 2 [1691]

My dearest soul

Just now I received thine of September the tenth from Lazareto and since love and joy are passions as well as grief which often hinders us from expressing our thoughts as we wish, so the transporting pleasure I received in the kindness of thine, and in hearing you were all well, and got so much nearer me, makes me neither able to write as I would, nor to forbear saying something to satisfy thee that thine came safe, and found me I bless God in much better health than I have been a great while, though I make use of another hand to tell thee so because I have my belly full of water, and dare not stay till I am rid of it least the post should be gone; you tell me unless I write immediately it will not come to you time enough before you leave the place where you are; I have been here a tedious time, ever since the 26 of May last, and truly till very lately I can scarce say the water did me any good, it passed so ill, and it plagued me so much, that I look like a gridiron, and were it not for the scar in my forehead it were impossible for you to know me. I resolve now to try if I can learn, to laugh a little; now I hope once more to enjoy thy beloved company, for you know I never could be so truly merry as when thou wert one of the company and I think to use my poor cousin Ward's expression, my eyes ever since we parted have been button-holes of grief, or as she said at other time fountains fraught with tears. . . .

Before this I imagine thou hast heard that my dear brother has been married above these three months, and is not only a most extraordinary woman whom you will love and delight in, but she is really in her ingenuity, will, good nature, readiness to oblige in that way and manner infinitely like her predecessor, whom she dearly loved and highly values, and is so infinitely kind to my niece Fany that I hope this Betty and she will live as the other did with good Mrs Burwell who is Frances you know. I had begun to answer dear Jack's most affectionate letter which the post will not allow me to finish therefore here dear heart let him read my true love and assure him that as never son can better deserve a mother's kindness than he has done, so no son shall find a greater share of mine than he shall ever have. To my most worthy brother I owe so much that I can say nothing which equals my sense of his kindness to my and all mine, Jack I hope will do his endeavour to help me return some part of his share and I am sure I will never fail of

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doing all I am able to shew myself grateful. His most affectionate letter I have answered several times and am sorry to hear he now enquires whether I had his and that you have received so few from thy passionately loving sister and faithful friend
Anne Dormer

Fany¹ who is here with me a tall small sprat desires her duty to you and her dear uncle whom she says she is sure she loves tho she doth not remember but for her dear brother Jack she makes love to him daily and well remembers his fair face and his white locks and next to seeing him there is nothing she longs for like having her brother Jack married because then mamey, says she, I shall be an aunt within a year or it will be very strange. Pray give my respects to good Mr Halley.

Anne Dormer to her son Jack

Tunbridge August 10 1691

Dear Jack

Tho' the advantage you had in being my first love was so great it needed no addition, yet I have received so very many expressions of your affection to me that I should be unjust if I did not own the share you have in mine grows daily greater, not my dear child that I set so high a value upon the increase you have added to my fortune which was full as large before as I ever desired to have it, or intended to have made it, but that I am truly pleased with the proofs you have given of a most generous temper, love to a mother that tends you above her own flesh, and kindness to brothers and a sister who all will I hope deserve so well of you as never to give you cause to repent what you have done for them. I am still at Tunbridge where I should not have stayed so long, but that the hopes of gaining better health and as well to avoid many inconveniences that would have entailed some upon you has made me bear with such as I found here, for it is a place I should never have chosen for my delight, the company which most comes hither for being a burden which I have always avoided in the public meetings neither did I bring a coach hither because I would have that just excuse not to visit any but such very particular friends as would find me out and which lay very near me and truly I met with so many of them that I could not get the time to myself I wished for and which I hope to enjoy when they are gone.

Do not dear heart believe that I want care of your father's reputation or yours in that I come hither now without a coach for I saw last year so many of the best quality and fortune that sent back their own and kept none here that I had very good examples doing so this. . . . I bless God I am better

1. This Fanny is her daughter rather than the niece mentioned earlier.

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