

= Harriet Leveson @-@ Gower , Countess Granville =

Henrietta Elizabeth " Harriet " Leveson @-@ Gower , Countess Granville (née Cavendish ; 29 August 1785 ? 25 November 1862) was a British peeress and society hostess . She was born in Devonshire House as the second daughter of William Cavendish , 5th Duke of Devonshire by his wife , the political hostess Lady Georgiana Spencer . Despite her parents ' turbulent marriage , Harriet had a happy childhood . Her mother 's death in 1806 led to an unpleasant situation in which her father 's long @-@ time mistress Lady Elizabeth Foster took control of the Devonshire household ; as the unmarried eldest daughter , this should have been Harriet 's role .

To help her escape this awkward domestic situation , Harriet 's maternal aunt Henrietta arranged for her niece to marry her lover of seventeen years , Granville Leveson @-@ Gower , 1st Earl Granville . The couple 's marriage proved to be happy , and it produced five children . Granville served as his country 's ambassador to France intermittently from 1824 to 1841 , and he was awarded an earldom in 1833 . With her position , Harriet acted as hostess to Parisian society , writing detailed accounts that were later published . She died in 1862 of a stroke , having been widowed fifteen years .

= = Family and early life = =

Lady Henrietta Elizabeth Cavendish was born at Devonshire House on 29 August 1785 , the younger daughter of William Cavendish , 5th Duke of Devonshire and his wife Lady Georgiana Spencer . Known as " Harriet " or " Harryo " to her family , the baby was named after Georgiana 's sister Henrietta Ponsonby and her friend Lady Elizabeth Foster . Her parents ' marriage had been unhappy from the start ; the Duchess had difficulty bringing her pregnancies to term , suffering miscarriages during their first nine years together . Her mother distracted herself by becoming immersed in society , and was soon known as a political hostess and leader of fashion .

Despite the state of her parents ' marriage , Cavendish had a happy childhood . She was devoted to her mother , and was fond of , but rarely saw , her aloof father . Her governess Selina Trimmer was a daughter of the famous children 's writer Sarah Trimmer , and encouraged her charge to be morally principled . In May 1799 , Cavendish was confirmed in Westminster Abbey alongside her cousin , the future Lady Caroline Lamb . The historian Janet Gleeson describes Cavendish as slightly plump in appearance , in possession of a clever , funny , and perceptive personality . Her biographer , Virginia Surtees , writes that although Cavendish was " no beauty , she had wit , intelligence , and shrewdness ; her sharp eye missed little but in high croak and spirits viewed with tolerance the world of drums , dandies , gossip , and matchmaking in which she moved " .

In 1802 , Cavendish 's cousin John Ponsonby , Viscount Duncannon (her mother 's sister 's son) , whom she had known her entire life , began to show romantic interest in her . Cavendish was unsure whether she cared for him enough , and they agreed to wait a year before deciding " whether they liked each other well enough to marry " . Their two families , especially his mother (and her aunt) Lady Bessborough approved of the match , but Cavendish was still undecided . During this period , John had romantic relationships with Lady Maria Fane and others ; Cavendish presented an ultimatum that he " must promise to cure himself completely of flirting , for she could not bear it " . John angrily refused that he was not ready to marry her after all , nor " bear rules to be prescribed to him by any woman living " . He became engaged to Fane shortly thereafter . Her family later encouraged a match with another cousin John Spencer , Viscount Althorp , though , during her stay at Althorp , she stated that " no reasonable woman " could think of him as anything " but as an eager huntsman " .

The Duchess of Devonshire died in March 1806 ; and Cavendish 's life at home became unhappy . Her father had been involved in a relationship with Lady Elizabeth Foster for years . Always greatly resentful of Foster 's presence in the household , Cavendish was angered when she took control of their home , for instance disliking it when her place at the head of the table was taken by Foster . As the unmarried adult daughter , this role should have been taken by Cavendish , not by Foster (who was not yet married to her father) . During this period , Cavendish frequently went to live with her

elder sister , Georgiana , who was recently married to the future 6th Earl of Carlisle ; Cavendish 's son Frederick later wrote that the experience " strengthened the tie of sisterly affection , which bound them together during the whole of their joint lives " . From 1801 onwards , Cavendish wrote to her sister almost daily until the latter 's death in 1858 . Three years after her mother 's 1806 death , the Duke married Foster .

= = Marriage = =

With her mother dead , Cavendish 's aunt Henrietta Ponsonby felt obligated to help her niece escape a difficult home situation . For her part , Cavendish had been critical of her aunt in the past but now turned to her for affection , support , and as a reminder of her mother . Once the Duke of Devonshire made clear his desire to marry Foster , Henrietta began searching for a suitable marriage prospect for her niece , and suggested Lord Granville Leveson @-@ Gower , as he was known at that time . Lord Granville had been Henrietta 's own lover by now for seventeen years ; she had borne him two illegitimate children during their relationship and declared once that she " loved him to idolatry . " Nevertheless , Henrietta encouraged her niece to consider marriage with the thirty @-@ seven @-@ year @-@ old Granville . Though still infatuated with him , she knew that Granville would need to eventually marry and produce legitimate offspring , and that when he did so , she would likely lose him . Getting her niece to marry him was one way of keeping him within her circle .

Cavendish had been acquainted with Lord Granville her whole life and never particularly cared for him , having disapproved alike of his lofty hauteur and his illicit liaison with her aunt . Now however , she came to appreciate Granville 's finer qualities : historians describe him as handsome , intelligent , of good family , and a member of the British parliament . The historian K. D. Reynolds writes that Granville was " considered one of the most handsome men of his time ; his curly brown hair , blue eyes , and sensuous features brought him strings of female admirers . " While eager to leave Devonshire House , the morally upright girl insisted that his affair with her aunt be truly over . Granville was unsure if he wanted the unglamorous Cavendish as a marriage partner , however , and spent his time pursuing other candidates ; their refusals , often in response to his womanising reputation , led him to ultimately choose Cavendish .

On 24 December 1809 , Cavendish married Granville with her aunt 's blessing . Though ageing , Granville maintained his handsome appearance and Cavendish was said to have " [in] high degree the charm of voice and manner which belongs to the Cavendish family " . Their marriage was happy ; she loved him until her death , writing in September 1810 to her sister , " I really think I am happier every hour . There never was anything so adorable as he is in every way " . Their eldest child , Susan , was born in October 1810 in London . The couple would go on to have four further children , and his two illegitimate issue with Henrietta also flourished in the happy household . Granville was made a Viscount in 1815 ; an earldom awarded in 1833 led to Harriet becoming known as Countess Granville .

The couple lived in England for their first fifteen years of marriage , sometimes travelling to the continent for short periods , but mainly dividing their time between London and the countryside . Granville rented a residence in Tixall , Staffordshire before moving to a rental in Wherstead , Suffolk , entertaining society figures at both places . During long stretches between 1824 and 1841 , Granville served as his country 's ambassador to France . The Countess helped entertain Parisian society by serving as hostess , writing detailed accounts that were later published in 1894 , 1940 , and 1990 . Granville resigned the post in 1841 only after becoming ill ; for the next two years , the family travelled across Europe before returning to England in November 1843 . They resided in houses in Brighton and London , and spent portions of their time visiting friends and family at their various country estates .

= = Widowhood = =

Lord Granville died in early 1846 , having never recovered from a stroke he suffered five years

previously . He was buried at Stone , Staffordshire . His death desolated his wife . She lived henceforth in complete retirement , residing chiefly at Chiswick House , where she turned to piety for consolation . Her contacts in the outside world were chiefly her children and step @-@ children , her brother William , and the children of her sister Georgiana . She survived her husband by fifteen years , dying on 25 November 1862 of a stroke at her London home at 13 Hereford Street .

= = Issue = =

Earl and Countess Granville had five surviving children :

Lady Susan Georgiana Leveson @-@ Gower (25 October 1810 ? 30 April 1866) ; married George Pitt @-@ Rivers , 4th Baron Rivers in 1833 and had issue

Lady Georgiana Charlotte Leveson @-@ Gower (23 September 1812 ? 19 January 1885) ; married Alexander Fullerton

Granville Leveson @-@ Gower , 2nd Earl Granville (11 May 1815 ? 31 March 1891) ; married (1) Mary Louise von Dalberg (2) Castila Rosalind Campbell

Hon. Granville William Leveson @-@ Gower (28 September 1816 ? 26 May 1833)

Hon. Frederick Leveson @-@ Gower (3 May 1819 ? 30 May 1907) ; married Lady Margaret Compton , daughter of Spencer Compton , 2nd Marquess of Northampton

= = Ancestry = =