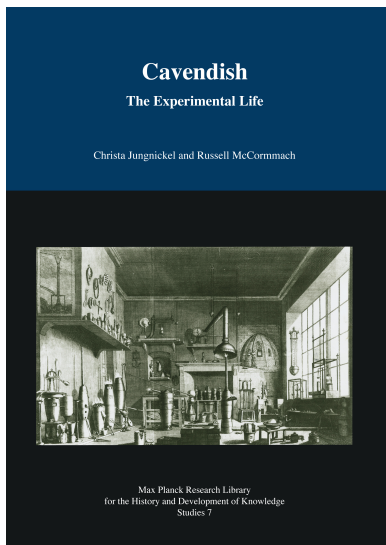


Max Planck Research Library for the History and Development of Knowledge

Studies 7

Christa Jungnickel and Russell McCormach:
Politics



In: Christa Jungnickel and Russell McCormach: *Cavendish : The Experimental Life* (Second revised edition 2016)

Online version at <http://edition-open-access.de/studies/7/>

ISBN 978-3-945561-06-5

First published 2016 by Edition Open Access, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science under Creative Commons by-nc-sa 3.0 Germany Licence.

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/de/>

Printed and distributed by:

PRO BUSINESS digital printing Deutschland GmbH, Berlin

<http://www.book-on-demand.de/shop/14971>

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

Chapter 2

Politics

Early Years and Education

Born on 17 March 1703/1704,¹ Charles Cavendish joined three sisters and two brothers in the nursery of William and Rachel Cavendish, Lord and Lady Hartington. Two brothers had died in infancy, the first born male, William, and the first boy to be named Charles, in the year before our Charles was born. Three more girls and one boy entered the family over the next few years. Charles grew up probably not particularly noticed in the middle of his siblings.

Like all his brothers and sisters, Charles was born at Hardwick, Derbyshire. Rebuilt in the late sixteenth century by the energetic Elizabeth, countess of Shrewsbury, Hardwick Hall was a fine specimen of Elizabethan architecture. This founder of the House of Cavendish also built Chatsworth House in Derbyshire, further testimony to her opulent ambition. When Charles was three, his paternal grandfather died, and his father took title and possession of the extensive properties of the Devonshires: Hardwick, Chatsworth, and other houses, including Devonshire House in Piccadilly, all of which the Cavendish children could call home, even if they did not live in all of them. For a while their homes also included Southampton House, the London residence of their maternal grandmother, Lady Rachel Russell. They visited the houses of their other Russell relatives: Woburn Abbey in Bedfordshire, their mother's girlhood home; Stratton House in Hampshire, their grandmother Russell's country estate; and Belvoir Castle in Leicestershire.²

Inside their various substantial four walls, the Cavendishes enjoyed informal relationships. Unlike many aristocratic families, for example, the duke of Kent's, Charles's family did not use formal titles for one another. In their letters, even after they were adults, Charles's sisters referred to their mother as "Mama," not "her Grace," the title appropriate for a duchess, and they wrote of "brother Charles" rather than "Lord Charles" and of "Grannama Russell" rather than "Lady Russell." Charles's sister Elizabeth suggests the warmth of their relationships when in 1721, after the death of their oldest sister, Mary, and their youngest brother, John, she wrote to another brother James, who was abroad, about Charles, who was about to join him: "It was some comfort to have one of you but when both are gone I shall find great change when I consider I was once happy in ye company of so many brothers and ss ; but it is a thought I cannot bear to think of."³

¹*The Peerage: A Geneological Survey of the Peerage of Britain ...*, comp. D. Lundy (<http://www.thepeerage.com>).

²Lois G. Schwoerer (1988, 222). The author lists the Russell family homes and refers to Lady Russell's closeness to her children. Various family letters refer to members of the family visiting one another.

³Elizabeth Cavendish to James Cavendish, 13 Feb. and 24 Apr. [1721], and Rachel Morgan to James Cavendish, 26 Sep. [1723], *Devon. Coll.*, 166.0, 166.1, and 167.0.

Of his siblings, two brothers, William and James, and four sisters, Mary, Rachel, Elizabeth, and Anne, survived into adulthood with Charles. Their earliest education was probably under the care of tutors and governesses. Their grandmother, Rachel Russell, who on her mother's side was of Huguenot origins, had advocated using French refugees as tutors in the 1680s.⁴ Later she entertained some negative views of instruction by French tutors, but she nevertheless took considerable trouble to find one for her grandchildren by another daughter.⁵ The Cavendishes may have followed her lead, since the whole family continued the close connection with their Huguenot Ruvigny relatives, now settled in Greenwich and parts of Hampshire.⁶ When James and Charles toured the Continent in 1721–24, they did so under the care of a Frenchman, a Mr. Cotteau.⁷ The Cavendish daughters were educated to interests as commonsensical as their brothers. On her honeymoon, Rachel reported to her brother James on a visit to the Derby silk mills, “thought to be one of the finest inventions that ever was seen of the kind.”⁸ Elizabeth was impetuous and independent, if we can judge from the few extant letters. Seeing her life as “idle,” she wrote to James: “I only wish I was your brother instead of your sister and then I would have bin partaker with you in your travels.” Forced to remain behind, she informed her brothers of the politics of the day. Looking at it from the heights of her father's position, she approved of a minister who did not enrich himself by his office, and she reported the birth of a prince causing “very great” joy among the people as a political advantage, the birth coming “very seasonably to stir up ye spirit of loyalty in ye people who are in a general dissatisfaction with ye king and parliament who they think don't go ye way to redrys their grivances caused by ye south sea.”⁹

The Cavendish boys received only the beginnings of their education at home. Their grandmother Rachel Russell was of the opinion that “our nobility should pass some of their time” at the university, noting that among them university education “has been for many years neglected,”¹⁰ a view which was shared by her daughter and son-in-law Devonshire, who sent their eldest son, the sixteen-year-old William, to Oxford in 1715, entering him at New College. As a member of a Whig family in a Tory citadel, William joined with other Whigs, only to find their group the target of a mob. In 1717, two months after they were attacked, he was granted the degree of Master of Arts and left Oxford. The family biographer comments on how quickly a duke's son could attain that degree; considering that prudence was a characteristic trait of the Cavendish family and, in particular, of William's parents, his political adventures and his leaving Oxford may have been related.¹¹ His brothers, in any case, were not sent to a university.

Charles and James began their formal schooling at Eton, where they were entrusted to Dr. Andrew Snape, headmaster from 1711 to 1720, on the recommendation of Robert Walpole, their father's friend and political ally. In 1718, for which there exists a “Bill of Eton Schole,” Charles, then fourteen, was in the fifth year, a grade in the Lower School

⁴Mary Berry (1819, 73).

⁵Schwoerer (1988, 227).

⁶Samuel Smiles (1868, 208–211, 314).

⁷Rachel Cavendish, duchess of Devonshire, to James Cavendish, 20 Mar., 12 July, and 11 Nov. 1723, and 13 Feb. 1724, Devon. Coll., 30.10–14.

⁸Rachel Morgan to James Cavendish, 26 Sep. [1723].

⁹Elizabeth Cavendish to James Cavendish, 24 Apr. [1721].

¹⁰Lady Rachel Russell to John Roos (Manners), 5 Nov. 1692, in Lady Rachel Russell (1793, 550).

¹¹Joseph Foster (1891, 231). Francis Bickley (1911, 189–190).

known as Lower Greek, and James was two years ahead of him.¹² Neither boy finished the entire course, which for Charles would have required another five years. Both were heading in a direction other than the university, for which they probably were not prepared in their knowledge of ancient languages in any case. Young noblemen had other options, as the advice given to the father of one of them in 1723 shows. Though his son “does not ply his book close,” it may not proceed from the want of capacity and inclination:

but rather from his studying in the dead languages, which he has not been well grounded in. I have knowen severall instances of this and if it be the case or perhaps his being too much indulged in sloth when younger, I do not see why either of them should be a reason for breaking off his studies. He can read in Italian and French most of the things that are necessary for a gentleman, and tho’ he should not give a very close application, something usefull will stick; and who knows but by degrees he may come to like what he now has an aversion to. Were he mine, I would make him spend some time at Geneva in the studie of the law, should it be only to keep him from being imposed upon by pettyfoggers. Historie and geometry are accomplishments fitt for a gentleman and surely he can never serve his country or famely without knowledge, and geometry, if he give in to it, will at all times be ane amusement when he cannot be more profitably employ’d. When he has made a tolerable progress in these, it will not be amiss that he make a tour in France and Italy that he may learn from observation what he has not gote by reading.¹³

The reference was to the by now obligatory grand tour that began in France, perhaps passed through Holland and Switzerland, and then settled down to a residence in Italy, home of Rome and the Renaissance. No Englishmen could pretend to an education or any degree of sophistication without this tour, two or three years abroad being the rule, a just compensation for having been born in backwater England.¹⁴ Some formal study might be combined with the sightseeing and cultural exposure. Anthony and Henry de Grey, sons of the duke of Kent and brothers of Charles’s future wife, Anne, had followed this course several years earlier. In 1716, as Henry de Grey was planning to go to Geneva, Anthony sent him advice from Venice:

Att Geneva you will find several persons that will be very helpful to you I don’t doubt, and I shall send a letter or two to some of the best I knew there who are of the best familys, men who are pretty well acquainted with the world and whose conversations will be agreeable as well as instructive, that shall wait upon you and do any service that lies in their power as soon as ever you arrive; there are like wise some of the young men I was acquainted with who will be ready enough to introduce you into any other company you shall like or care for. I

¹²R.A. Austen Leigh (1907, xxiv–xxvii, 14–18). J.H. Plumb (1956–1960, 1:253). The “lower master” of the lower school in 1718 was Francis Goode, who held that position from 1716 to 1734, succeeding Thomas Carter. There were four lower school assistants that year, Thomas Thackeray, Adam Elliot, John Burchett, and Charles Willats, three of whom were drawn from King’s College, Cambridge, the other, Burchett, from Peterhouse, Cambridge. *Eton College Lists*, xxxv. It was customary at Eton for the “sons of wealthy persons to have private tutors,” who were not the same as the assistant masters. H.C. Maxwell Lyte (1911, 284).

¹³Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, (1924, 3:287–288).

¹⁴J.H. Plumb (1963, 55–60).

suppose you intend to study a little of the Civil Law there; the person I had and who is accounted one of the best is Mr. Guip a diligent and Studious man and likewise understanding in History and Chronology.

Having followed his own stay in Geneva with travels in Italy, Anthony displayed in the remainder of his letter that he had profited from the lessons in history, having become a careful observer of “antiquities.”¹⁵

James Cavendish, whose later exploits suggest an early interest in horsemanship and an active life, was probably, and quite appropriately, intended for the military. By 1721, he had gone from Eton to the “academy” in Lorraine, and Charles was then about to join him. Two years later, James wrote to his mother from Geneva, with the likelihood that he continued his education in both Lorraine and Geneva.¹⁶

The “Académie d’Exercices” at Nancy, the capital of Lorraine, had been established in 1699, soon after Lorraine had been taken back from the French and reconstituted a duchy by the Treaty of Ryswick of 1697. Although the dukes of Lorraine were allowed no army of their own, their military Academy attracted young foreign aristocrats, some carrying “the greatest names of Europe.” By 1713 the Academy had added a course in public law to its curriculum, and Duke Leopold himself established one in natural law. The Academy had the purpose of educating cadets for the court guards, the only military body aside from a civilian militia still remaining to the dukes. This close association with the court affected the location of the Academy. In 1702, at the beginnings of the War of the Spanish Succession, the French had reoccupied Nancy, forcing Leopold to withdraw with his court to his castle at Lunéville, a building then too ancient to be suitable for an eighteenth-century ducal residence. Leopold replaced the old structure with a large, new residence, which gradually became the official capital of the dukedom even after Nancy had been freed from the French again in 1714. In 1719 a fire temporarily set back this development by destroying the ducal apartments at Lunéville, apparently forcing the court back to Nancy for a short time. It was during this period that James Cavendish joined the Academy. Seeing an opportunity for further building, Duke Leopold added a “cabinet des herbes,” a good library, and a physical cabinet to his Lunéville residence. Under the influence of Newton’s physics and determined to do his own experimenting, he constructed some of the necessary instruments himself, buying for the rest a beautiful and expensive collection from London. In the spring of 1721, just before Charles joined his brother in Lorraine, the duke moved his military Academy from Nancy to Lunéville,¹⁷ bringing it into the immediate neighborhood of the scientific facilities he had assembled there.

Charles Cavendish left London for his education and tour abroad in March 1721, undoubtedly with another party traveling to Paris, since he was to be met there by his brother James’s valet, and as the seventeen-year-old son of a duke he would not have been sent off alone.¹⁸ Expected to be with James by mid-April, he instead stayed on in Paris three weeks

¹⁵Anthony de Grey to Henry de Grey, about 1760, Bedfordshire Record Office, Wrest Park Collection, Dale 30/5.

¹⁶Elizabeth Cavendish to James Cavendish, 13 Feb. and 24 Apr. [1721]. Rachel Cavendish, duchess of Devonshire, to James Cavendish, 11 Nov. [1723].

¹⁷Michel Parisse, Stéphane Gaber, and Gérard Canini (1982, 43). Michel Antoine (1968, 70–72), and Claude Collot (1968, 218). Edmond Delorme (1977, 3, 17, 18, 111). Pierre Boyé (1980, 3–4).

¹⁸Elizabeth Cavendish to James Cavendish, 13 Feb. [1721]. A party bound for Paris that Charles might have joined was that of the English ambassador to France Lucas Schaub, who planned to leave London for Paris on 23 February/6 March. That plan, given that the trip took four to five days if all went well, would have put him in Paris in the

longer than planned. As Anthony de Grey had informed his brother a few years earlier, in Paris there were “many things” to be “observed”

You will not stay long there perhaps the first time only to see a little of the Town. ... You wont ommitt however the sight of the most principal things, as the Louvre, the Tuilleries, Place Vendosme & Victoire, Place Royal, the Luxemburg, the Church of Notre dam, L’hotel des invalids, Versailles, Trianon.¹⁹

Both his initial visit to Paris and his stay there with James for several months in 1723–24 came at a favorable stage in English-French relations, during the regency of the duke of Orléans and immediately after. The friendly climate toward England at court was accompanied by a resurgence of cultural life in Paris as, following the death of Louis XIV in 1715, French aristocrats returned from Versailles to Paris.²⁰ The flourishing arts, operas, theater, and other entertainments lured so many of the British to Paris in these years that the resident at Paris, Thomas Crawford, complained in 1723 that we “should have had the halfe of the people of England” there if it had not been for the unsafe conditions of the roads; “this town began to be full of London apprentices that came running over here with their superfluous money instead of going to Tunbrige,” an English resort.²¹ The regency was also marked by another interest of the duke of Orléans, this one much closer to Charles’s eventual concerns, the natural sciences and the “improvement of the implements and appliances of the mechanical arts.”²² René Antoine Réaumur, the regent’s protégé at the Paris Academy of Sciences, published his important study of the iron and steel industry in Paris in 1722, which may well have come to Charles’s attention, given the practical bent of his family and their ownership of Derbyshire lead mines.²³ As a Cavendish, indeed, he may have enjoyed even more direct exposure to the Parisian scientific world, but we have no evidence for that.

After Paris, if he proceeded as planned, Charles joined James at Lunéville, and for nearly two years after that, until late in 1722 or early in 1723, his activities and whereabouts can only be conjectured. Given the pattern of his brother’s stay abroad, Charles may well have spent a year at Lunéville. During the winter of 1722–23, the brothers were traveling together with a tutor, probably in the south. James had been tempted into gambling, prompting his mother to point out to him that the “right use” of their travel should be “seeing what is most curious in ye places you pass thru & making yr observations upon ‘em.” The following March, James was staying with a prince and princess, an “expensive enuff” way of life, his mother commented in a discussion of his allowance. Neither the duchess’s letter to James in March nor another one in the middle of July refers to Charles, making it likely that Charles spent some time on his own in Geneva, from where he had written to his mother that summer or fall.²⁴

second week of March, the time when James was to send his valet to meet Charles. In the event, Schaub did not leave London until March 1/12, a possible reason for the delay in Charles’s plans too. Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission (1931, 3:49–52).

¹⁹Anthony de Grey to Henry de Grey, about 1716.

²⁰James Breck Perkins (1892, 374–396, 554–557, 559–562).

²¹Thomas Crawford to Lord Polwarth, 9 Oct. [28 Sep.] 1723, in Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission (1931, 3:308–9).

²²Perkins (1892, 556).

²³J.B. Gough (1975, 328).

²⁴Rachel Cavendish, duchess of Devonshire, to James Cavendish, late 1722 or early 1723, and 20 Mar. 1723.

The “Académie de Calvin” in Geneva had attracted not only the sons of the duke of Kent, but also the sons of several great English and Scottish families, including the Cavendishes. In 1723, four professors at the Academy offered courses in civil and natural law and in philosophy, including, apparently, natural philosophy, since one of its students, the later mathematician Gabriel Cramer, had only recently completed a thesis on sound and next year would compete for the chair of philosophy; he received a share in the chair of mathematics instead, with the assignment of teaching algebra and astronomy.²⁵ If Charles did not meet Cramer at the Academy that year, he may have become acquainted with him through Cramer’s brother Jean, the new professor of civil and natural law, who was only twenty-two at the time. At any rate, when Gabriel Cramer visited London sometime between 1727 and 1729, he was easily received into the circle of mathematicians and fellows of the Royal Society connected with Charles.²⁶

In November of 1723, James and Cavendish were together again, having only just arrived in Paris. Their stay in France required a doubling of their allowances, each now getting £100 annually, and advice about greater caution on the roads: “be very carefull now you are in France,” their mother wrote, “how you travel, & also of being out late in ye streets wch they tel me is very dangerous, murthers being there soe common.”²⁷ They spent the winter there, still under the care of Mr. Cotteau, with mail reaching them through the banker Jean Louis Goudet. In February 1724, when the end of their tour was in sight, they appealed to their parents to stay a few months longer. “Relating to yr return into England,” the duchess wrote, “I believe yr father in that wo’d be willing to do what he thought was most agreeable to yr own inclinations. Mr. Cotteau writs were you employed yr time so well, that he thinks it might be for yr advantage if you stay’d in France some months longer, but in yr next you may let me know what yrown thoughts are, yr coming back by Holland is what I believe my Ld designs if you like it.”²⁸ Charles and James had their way. They also followed their father’s plan of returning home by way of Holland, a detour that very nearly cost Charles his life. On 24 September that year, in “blowing Stormy weather,” Captain Gregory of the Katherine Yacht at Ostend “about Three in the afternoon was unhappily Surprised by a Passage Boat oversetting just under my Stern, in which were Two of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire’s Sons, viz the Lord James and Charles, with their Governor and Servants, who by the assistance of my People were all most miraculously Saved, particularly Lord Charles, who Sunk under My Counter, and Was Carried by a Very Strong Tide between me and another Ship under water, till he got as far forward as my Stern, where he arose, and got hold of my Shoar fast, from whence we Saved his Lordship, though almost Spent.” James and Charles had been on their way to Calais, which suggests that they were coming from

²⁵Charles Borgeaud (1900, 442, 641–642). According to the registers of students, the Cavendishes who attended the Geneva Academy were Charles Cavendish’s great-grandfather William Cavendish, who was accompanied there by his tutor Thomas Hobbes, the philosopher, and Charles’s grandfather William Cavendish, later first duke of Devonshire. However, the registers are not complete, particularly on foreign nobleman, who might have stayed in Geneva only a few months. Anthony de Grey, who studied law in Geneva for a while, for example, does not appear in the registers; the absence of Charles’s name is not an indication that he did not attend the Academy or study with a private teacher in Geneva. Sven Stelling-Michaud and Suzanne Stelling-Michaud (1959–1972). On the registers: Michael Heyd (1982, 245–247).

²⁶Cramer and Charles Cavendish were exact contemporaries. Cramer’s travels were a part of his appointment at Geneva and intended for his further education. The scientists he met in England included Nicholas Saunderson, Edmond Halley, Hans Sloane, Abraham de Moivre, and James Stirling. Phillip S. Jones (1971, 459).

²⁷Rachel Cavendish, duchess of Devonshire, to James Cavendish, 11 Nov. [1723].

²⁸Rachel Cavendish, duchess of Devonshire, to James Cavendish, 13 Feb. [1724].

Holland, probably The Hague. After losing “most of their Baggage and Apparel, except what they had Ordered to Calais,” in the accident, the Cavendish brothers decided to stay with Captain Gregory for the crossing. The captain’s report of the accident reached their father by courtesy of the Admiralty on 5 October.²⁹ Charles and James undoubtedly followed close behind, Charles having been abroad for three and a half years.

House of Commons

In 1725 the year after his return from his tour of the Continent, Charles Cavendish was elected to the House of Commons. Taking his seat as a Member of Parliament for Heytesbury, Wiltshire,³⁰ in the parliamentary session of 1725–26, he joined all but two of the adult males of his family: his eldest brother, Lord Hartington, his uncle Lord James Cavendish, his two brothers-in-law, Sir Thomas Lowther and Sir William Morgan, and a first cousin. The two exceptions were his father, who as duke of Devonshire sat in the House of Lords and was then lord president of the privy council, and his brother James Cavendish, who was in the military, putting off his brief stint in the House of Commons by fifteen years, until just before his death. Charles Cavendish could have had no doubt about what was expected of him. To get a proper image of the inevitability of that particular blueprint for an aristocrat’s life it should be noted that except for his uncle, Charles and his relatives in the Commons were all under thirty, he being the youngest at twenty-one. This dense representation in the Commons of an aristocratic family was only partly due to politics; apart from his father’s close association with Robert Walpole, the head of the current Whig administration, Charles was in the Commons as a representative of his family’s private interest. Very suitably, he made his first appearance in the Journal of the House of Commons in April of 1726 in connection with a private bill drawn up by his brother concerning the estate of his brother-in-law Sir Thomas Lowther, who had petitioned the Commons that his family be granted the inheritance of Furness monastery in Lancashire, establishing permanently an old family claim.³¹ In the same year Cavendish dealt with another private bill that was at the same time about a matter of public importance, and it was also his first parliamentary exposure to a technical problem. The bill followed a long series of parliamentary acts providing for the draining of the Bedford Level fens, a huge track of marshland to the south and west of The Wash in eastern England. In the seventeenth century, Francis Russell, fourth earl of Bedford, and his son and successor, William, later first duke of Bedford (Charles Cavendish’s ancestors), had organized about eighty landowners into a corporation of “adventurers” to finance the draining of these plains, which were still common land, in return for a portion of the resulting farmland. Having invested more in this undertaking and also profited more than any of the other members of the corporation, the Russells were still at the head of it in 1726, but the present duke was then a minor and the project was in the hands of his uncle and guardian, the duke of Devonshire. For Charles Cavendish, it even had a direct connection, since as a younger son he derived income from his mother Rachel Russell’s interest in the Russell estate. With the methods then in place to drain the Bedford Level, the new farmland was

²⁹“Copy of a Letter from Captain Gregory of the Katherine Yacht to Mr Burchett dated the 25th of September 1724 O.S. From Ostend,” Devon. Coll., 179.0.

³⁰Romney Sedgwick (1970, 536).

³¹Great Britain, Parliament, *House of Commons Journals* 20:600–70. Entries from 4 Mar. 1726/27 to 19 Apr. 1727. Hereafter *HCI*.

frequently flooded, and the bill Cavendish was involved in was a proposal to reduce flooding by constructing a new, steeper “outfall.”³²



Figure 2.1: House of Commons, 1741–42. From an engraving by Benjamin Cole, after John Pine, 1749. Lord Charles Cavendish represented three successive constituencies in the Commons between 1725 and 1741. Frontispiece, Romney Sedgwick (1970).

Reelected in 1727, but from the large constituency of Westminster instead of small Heytesbury,³³ Cavendish’s participation in the House’s activities increased in 1728 and 1729, only to be followed by four years of personal problems arising especially from his wife Anne’s struggle with tuberculosis, which kept him away from his duties much of the

³²Samuel Wells (1830, 424–426, 661–662, 744–745). 4 Mar. 1725/1726 and 10 May 1726 *H.C.J.* 20:599, 697. H.C. Darby (1936, 456–459).

³³Sedgwick (1970, 1:285). 21 July 1727, St. Margaret’s Vestry, Minutes 1724–1733, Westminster City Archives, E 2419.

time. When, in 1733, his wife died, Cavendish immersed himself in his duties in the Commons. The regular problems of Westminster were typical of cities: repairing streets in “ruinous Condition,” clearing them of “Filth and Dirt,” and keeping them safe at night.³⁴ In 1729, for example, Cavendish and his colleagues crafted a bill to correct the ill effects of having several different privately owned “waterworks” lay water lines and cover them with pavement that was neither level nor strong and lasting enough.³⁵ A few weeks later he and his fellow member of Parliament William Clayton were ordered “to bring in a Bill for appointing a better nightly Watch, and regulating the Beadles... and for better enlightening the Streets, and publick Passages.”³⁶ He worked on such problems for Westminster again in 1736 and 1737 though he had left this constituency.³⁷ Westminster was at times difficult to represent because it was the seat of Parliament and because it was contiguous with London. Popular dissatisfaction with local or national matters sometimes took on tangible form: the street bills in 1729, for example, brought out a great crowd, whose complaints the Commons refused to hear. During these years the city was in vehement opposition to much of Walpole’s administrative program, as in 1733, when Walpole’s handling of the proposed excise on tobacco brought not only local opponents but also the London mob to Westminster. Members of Parliament complained of a “tumultuous Crowd” who “menaced, insulted, and assaulted” them as they left the House. By order of the Commons, Cavendish and Clayton were directed to notify the high bailiff of Westminster that such actions constituted a crime and an infringement on the privileges of the Commons.³⁸

After representing Westminster for seven years Cavendish was elected Member of Parliament for Derbyshire in 1734, his last constituency, which he also served for seven years. At Westminster, like his predecessors there, Charles had been elected with Whig support. Derbyshire, however, had long been in the hands of the Tories, Cavendish being the first Whig to be elected for the county since his father had lost his seat over thirty years before, and Cavendish’s election was close.³⁹ His fellow Member of Parliament there was in fact a Tory, Nathaniel Curzon, a lawyer and land- and mine-owner who voted consistently against the administration.⁴⁰ Other counties in the area, such as Lancashire, Cheshire, and Yorkshire, were also represented by Tories, even ardent Jacobites. Cavendish was often not nominated to committees dealing with matters of concern to Derbyshire, although as its representative he could not be excluded from such committees, since the speaker of the House had the obligation to add to a committee any member who had a legitimate interest in the matter in question.⁴¹ Cavendish was very actively engaged in only a few private acts initiated by his constituency in Derbyshire, drawing up only four bills for them, but he worked on

³⁴ 4 Feb. 1728/1729, *HCB* 21:208.

³⁵ 19 Feb. 1728/1729, *ibid.*, 229.

³⁶ 10 Apr. 1729, *ibid.*, 313.

³⁷ 16, 25 Mar. 1735/1736 and 14, 21 Feb. 1736/1737, *HCB* 22:633, 652, 746, 756.

³⁸ 12, 13 Apr. 1733, *ibid.*, 115–126. Plumb (1956–1960, 2:262–271).

³⁹ Sedgwick (1970, 1:223). In his first run for a seat from Derbyshire, Cavendish’s vote was 2081, the runner-up Tory Curzon’s, 2044, and the third candidate, the loser Harper’s, 1795. Places where the Cavendishes owned property such as Normanton gave almost all their votes to Cavendish. Other places such as Thornhill and Pisleigh, just outside Chatsworth, gave him virtually no votes. *A Copy of a Poll Taken for the County of Derby, The 16th, 17th, 18th, and 20th Days of May, 1734 before George Mower, Esq.; High-Sheriff for the Said County* (Derby, n.d.), Devon. Coll., 95/81.

⁴⁰ Sedgwick (1970, 1:599).

⁴¹ P.D.G. Thomas (1971, 58).

a number of private acts that benefited Derbyshire even if they did not deal with the county directly.

The subject of these private acts was road repair. The administration of English roads had been undergoing an important change from the beginning of the century. As the uses of the roads evolved from mainly local foot and animal traffic to through traffic for carriages and wagons, the roads were gradually converted into turnpikes, forcing the principal users to contribute to their upkeep. At the initiative of the local parishes responsible for road maintenance, and other interested parties, Parliament passed private acts establishing trusts responsible for setting up, financing, and maintaining the new turnpikes. The earliest of these had been along the main roads leading to London, two of which, the Great North Road and the road from London to Manchester, by the 1730s had already been turnpiked over considerable distances and in some areas the original turnpike trusts were already up for renewal. For Derbyshire coal trade, industry, and agriculture, it was important to complete the turnpiking of these roads and the east-west roads lying between them as well.⁴²

In 1735 Cavendish had himself assigned to his first turnpike committee, this one dealing with the part of the London-Manchester road closest to London.⁴³ Three years later he and Curzon drew up the act that was to close the longest stretch of that road yet to be turnpiked, thirty-nine miles between Loughborough and Hartington, in Leicestershire and Derbyshire, respectively.⁴⁴ Altogether he worked on twelve private acts for turnpikes either on or near the two important highways and in addition on five turnpike bills for roads west and southwest of London.⁴⁵ To no other subject did he devote as much work; his interest is strongly confirmed by his related committee work on repairing bridges, above all, by the decade of work he devoted to the building of Westminster Bridge.

For the entire sixteen years Cavendish served in Parliament, Walpole was prime minister; Cavendish stepped down in 1741, Walpole in 1742. If Cavendish felt a family loyalty to Walpole, he did not always vote with Walpole. In 1725, the year Cavendish entered Parliament, William Pultney broke with Walpole,⁴⁶ and there is at least the suggestion that Cavendish sympathized with Pultney's opposition Whigs. In any event, Cavendish had other important interests to serve, namely, his family's, of course, but also Westminster's. His interest would seem to have been closer to the commercial and financial interests of the city than to those of the country (he sold his country home in 1736 and moved to the city) and the colonies, as is borne out by the episode of Walpole's excise tax on tobacco in 1733. Walpole almost fell from power because of it, with Cavendish doing nothing to help him. Walpole's tax was in the interest of Virginia growers, who had long resented control over their business by the London tobacco brokers. There was violent opposition to this tax in the city. Walpole's bill passed by a narrow vote, whereupon the city raised a petition against it, and Walpole's majority melted away, though he did manage to get the Commons to refuse to hear the petition. Walpole survived but not without a riot outside the Commons. Cavendish supported the bill in the beginning, but then he voted with the opposition on the city's petition against it. The king, who strongly sided with Walpole on this bill and regarded opposition

⁴²Sidney and Beatrice Webb (1920, 70). William Albert (1972, 31–43).

⁴³18 Apr. 1735, *HCJ* 22:469.

⁴⁴9, 20 Mar. 1737/1738, *HCJ* 23:73, 107.

⁴⁵Information from *HCJ*.

⁴⁶Plumb (1956–1960, 2:122–124, 127).

to it as treason, called Charles Cavendish “half mad” and James Cavendish, who voted as Charles did, a “fool.”⁴⁷

Cavendish’s political career ended not by defeat but by choice. In 1741 he turned his Derbyshire seat over to William Cavendish, marquess of Hartington. Whether he sensed it or not, he left politics at about the time his family could dispense with his services. Up to the 1740s, but not beyond, the outcome of the Revolution of 1688–89 remained in question, for until then the Tories were predominantly a Jacobite party ready to ally with France to restore the Stuart dynasty. With the defeat of the Jacobite rising of 1745, intended to seat the Catholic Stuart pretender on the throne, the vigilance of the Devonshires could be relaxed, and Charles Cavendish could with clear conscience leave politics for good and consider another path for the remainder of his long life.

As we will see, the Royal Society largely assumed the place that the House of Commons had occupied in Cavendish’s life. In making this change, he followed his own bent, for his political activities and associations did not in any obvious way point him in the direction of science. Of the roughly 200 members of Parliament with whom he served on committees during his sixteen years in the Commons, only a few were fellows of the Royal Society, at most a dozen, with maybe another half dozen becoming fellows after he had left Parliament, and none was to become a close scientific associate of his. Elected to the Royal Society about two years after he was elected to the Commons, Cavendish served on the Council of the Society for the first time in 1736. He did not serve again until the year after he left Parliament; after that time he served on the Council almost without interruption for twenty-five years.

Gentleman of the Bedchamber

The duke of Kent was gentleman of the bedchamber to George I, and in 1728 his future son-in-law Charles Cavendish was appointed to the same position, only to the Prince of Wales Frederick. Cavendish was indeed a “gentleman,” though as son of the duke of Devonshire he was referred to as “lord” of the bedchamber.⁴⁸ With this position, Cavendish was a consort to the person who stood next in line for the throne, required to be in attendance for much of the day when it came his turn. The activities surrounding the prince’s court could be tedious and stupid, but Frederick had a serious interest in the arts, being a passable cellist and a collector of works by old masters. Although he probably had little more interest in science than had his father, George II, which was practically none, he was willing to be seen in the company of men of science, attending a meeting of the Royal Society at which experiments were performed.⁴⁹ Known for his rakehell living, the prince would have had little in common temperamentally with his studious gentleman of the bedchamber, but the relations between the two young men evidently were good, for Cavendish’s second son was named Frederick after the prince, who served as his godfather.

⁴⁷Plumb (1956–1960, 2:250–271). Thomas (1971, 68–71). Lord John Hervey (1848, 200). Sedgwick (1970, 1:537).

⁴⁸John Edward Smith and W. Parkinson Smith (1923, 272). James Douglas, earl of Morton, who became president of the Royal Society while Cavendish was a member, had held a parallel position at court, as lord of the bedchamber. “Douglas, James, Fourteenth Earl of Morton,” *DNB*, 1st ed. 5:1236–37, on 1236.

⁴⁹Michael De-la-Noy (1996, 107, 115–116, 127, 194).

As it turned out, this prince did not live long enough to become king, but long enough to be a political force in his own right and the scandal of the reign. Frederick was born in Hanover in 1707 and remained there until December 1728, when he was brought suddenly to England because word was received at court that he was about to marry the princess royal of Prussia. The marriage had been negotiated and sanctioned by George I, but in 1727 Frederick's father, now George II, called it off. Although Frederick submitted, he detested his father for keeping him dependant, and when he married, with his father's approval, Princess Augusta, daughter of Frederick, duke of Saxe-Gotha, he turned this marriage into a weapon against his father. Competing with the king for popularity in the country, the prince formed an opposition court, welcoming into his household ambitious young men like Pitt, Lyttleton, and the Grenvilles, and he developed an intense dislike for his father's favorite minister, Robert Walpole. Confronted with the prince's passionate rebellion, the king drew the line in 1738; thereafter no one who paid court to the prince of Wales or his wife was admitted to the king's presence at any of the royal palaces.⁵⁰ Charles Cavendish, however, had left his post before the prince's banishment, having resigned in October 1730.⁵¹

⁵⁰Duke of Grafton to [Theophilus, earl of Huntingdon], 27 Feb. 1738, in Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission (1928–47, 3:22).

⁵¹Entry on 17 Oct. 1730 in *The Historical Register*, vol. 15: *The Chronological Diary* (London, 1730), 64.