

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 143 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=143>)

From: Bess of Hardwick;

To: Unknown correspondent;

Date: [December?] 1573

Summary: Bess (countess of Shrewsbury) writes to an unidentified addressee with advice on how to write a persuasive letter to one of her sons, suggesting that 'the more earnest and plain it is the more good it will do you'.

Archive: The National Archives, State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth I, 12/93, f 102r-102v (item 19)

Delivery status: from Bess, sent

Letter features: Seal intact - no. Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - accordion

Hands: unknown scribe | archivist | Scribe A |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 143: 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.

People Associated with Letter 143: Unknown correspondent

null

Other letters associated with Unknown correspondent:

22 October 1564 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=62>)

[1578] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=138>)

3 August [1580s?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=205>)

21 May 1591 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=215>)

Normalised view of Letter 143

The Countesse of Shrewesbury 1573

yf I were not assured of the good wyll ys borne me I should not Lyke that any Letters should be showed in the behaulfe of myne I dare vndertake no manar of harme shall faulout of yt, yf he were an enemye yt could not, as I know hym to be avery trew and good frend and can not dout but to reseue that he hath profyte in hys Letters to me of Late; yours I know wyll do good and further much he wyll Lyke that you take in good part hys formar good wyll to you and your frend and that you vnderstand by me and others the contenewaunce of hys good wyll towards you, he wylbe the more yours when he knows by your Letters that you thenke your selfe behoulding to hym and ys content to make your selfe so styll;/ your selfe wyll vse more effectuall and good words then I can deuyce./ yt wyll please you to shar your grefe for the Losse, your fauar to hym, your wylingnes to do hym good and your openyon of hys thankfulnes to them; and that you trust and desyar that inrecompence of hys Lose and for your sake that they wyll deale as well with hym for hys benefyt as she would haue don yf god had graunted he Longar Lyfe, with promys that you wyll euer bethankfull to hym and hys and to requyt yt by all the good means that shall Ly in your powar, the more earnyst and playn yt ys the more good yt wyll doe, you wyll do yt in such sort as he maybe assured yt coms from you to my sonne and for to drect yt, I stay the bearar of purpas for your Letter, I desyar to haue yt thys nyght, all myn here ys well and taks thankfully your for remembaring. them; and retourns ther dew comendatyons, so praying for your health, and the increas of your happynes I end

Diplomatic view of Letter 143

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

1573 [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

1575 [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

1575 [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

~ The Countesse of
Shrewesbury
1573

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

253 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

~~404~~ 19 [Item number, hand: archivist]

977 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

102 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

yf I were not assured of the good wyll ys borne me I should
not Lyke that any Letters should be showed in the behaulfe of
myne I dare vndertake no manar of harme shall faulout of
yt, yf he were an enemye yt could not, as I know hym
to be avery trew and good frend and can not dout but
to reseue that he hath profyte in hys Letters to me of
Late; yours I know wyll do good and further much
he wyll Lyke that you take in good part hys formar good
wyll to you and your frend and that you vnderstand
by me and others the contenewaunce of hys good wyll
towards you, he wylbe the more yours when he knows by your Letters that you thenke your
selfe behoulding to hym

and ^{ys} content to make your selfe so styl;/ your selfe
wyll vse more effectuall and good words then I can
deuyce./ yt wyll please you to shar *[deletion]* ^{your} grefe for
the Losse, your fauar to hym, your wylingnes to
do hym good and your openyon of hys thankfulnes
to them; and that you trust and desyar that inrecompence
of hys Lose ~~the~~ and for your sake that they wyll deale

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as well ^{wth} [^] hym for hys benefyt as yf aft she would
haue don yf god had graunted he Longar Lyfe, wth
promys that you wyll euer bethankfull to hym and
hys and to requyt yt by all the good means that
shall Ly in your powar, the more earnyst and playn
yt ys the more good yt wyll doe, you wyll do yt
in such sort as he maybe assured yt coms from you
to my sonne and for to deryct yt, I stay the bearrar
of purpas for your Letter, I desyar to haue yt thys
nyght, all myn here ys well and ^{taks} [^] thankful ^{ly} [^] your
for remembaring. them; and retourns ther dew
comendatyons, so praying for your health, and the
increas of your happynes I end

Version: 1.0