

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 100 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=100>)

From: Bess of Hardwick ([The Royal Court, London?]);

To: James Crompe;

Date: 8 March [1560?]

Summary: Bess (Lady St. Loe) instructs her servant James Crompe on the management of several builders; and perceives how 'Sir James is much disliked for his religion but I think his wisdom is such that he will make small account of that matter'. She also relates a message for her aunt Marcella Linacre about a garden for the new house, enclosing '3 bundles of garden seeds'.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (83)

Delivery status: from Bess, sent

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

Hands: unknown scribe | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 100: 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.

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People Associated with Letter 100: James Crompe

James Crompe was perhaps Bess's most trusted servant. He entered her service following her marriage to William Cavendish (in 1547), and later oversaw the building of Chatsworth when she was Lady St. Loe (in the 1560s).

Other letters associated with James Crompe:

20 November [1565?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=17>)

26 February [1566?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=18>)

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Other letters associated with [The Royal Court, London?]

- 13 Dec [1568] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=66>)
- 20 Feb 1576 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=165>)
- 19 Nov [1576?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=115>)
- 28 Feb 1579 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=174>)
- 23 Mar 1591 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=24>)
- 10 Feb 1606 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=48>)
- 7 Mar 1606 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=49>)
- 13 Feb 1607 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=14>)
- 22 Jun 1607 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=34>)

Normalised view of Letter 100

To Iames crompe

crompe I do vndearestande by your Leters that worth sayth he well departe at our ladeday next I wyll that you shall haue hym bundon yn a noblygacyon to avoyde at the same day for sure I wyll troste nomor to hys promes and were he doth tell you that he ys to any peny behend for work done to master cauendyssh or me he doth Lye Lyke a false knaue for I am moste sure he ded neuer make any thyng for me but ij vaynes to stande vpon the huse I do very wel Lyke your sendeynges sawyers to pentrege and medoplecke for that well furder my workes and so I pray you yn any other thyngs that well be a helpe to my byldeynge Let yt be done and for tomas mason yf you can here were he ys I would very gladely he were at chattesworth I wyl Let you know by my next leters what worke thomas mason shall begine one furste when he doth come and as for the other mason wyche sur Iames towld you of yf he wyll not aplye hys worke you know he ys no mete mane for me and the masons work wyche I haue to do ys not muche and tomas mason well very well ouer se that worke I perseue sur Iames ys muche myslyked for hys relegyn but I thenke hys wesdom ys suche that he well make smale acounte of thatt mater I woulde haue you to tell my aunte Lenecke that I woulde haue the letell garden weche ys by the newe howse made agarden thys yere I care not wether she bestow any grate coste ther of but to sowe yt with al kynde of earbes and flowres and some pece of yt with malos I haue sende you by thys carerer iij bundeles of garden sedes all wreten with wellem marchyngtons hande and by the next you shall know how to youse then yn euery pynte frome the courte the viij of march

your mystres

E Seyntelo

Diplomatic view of Letter 100

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

curious [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To Iames crompe

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(83) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

5 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

crompe I do vndearestande by your Leters that worth sayth he
well departe at our ladeday next I wyll that you shall
haue ^{hym} bundon yn ^a noblygacyon to avoyde at the same day
for sure I wyll troste nomor to hys promes and were he doth
tell you that he ys to any peny behend ~~of an olde~~ for work
done to m^r cauendysshe or me he doth Lye Lyke a false knaue
for I am moste sure he ded neuer make any thyng for
me but ij vaynes to stande vpon the huse I do very wel
Lyke your sendeynges sawyers to pentrege and medoplecke
for that well furder my workes and so I pray you yn any
other thyngs that well be a helpe to my byldeynge Let yt
be done and for tomas mason yf you can here were he
ys I would very gladely he were at chattesworth I wyl
Let you know by my next leters what worke thomas
mason shall begine one furste when he doth come
and as for the other mason wyche sur Iames towld
you of yf he wyll not aplye hys worke you know
he ys no mete mane for me and the masons work
wyche I haue to do ys not muche and tomas
mason well very well ouer se that worke
I perseue sur Iames ys muche myslyked for
hys relegyn but I thenke hys wesdom ys suche
that he well make smale acounte of thatt mater

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I woulde haue you to tell my aunte Lenecke
that I woulde haue the letell garden weche
ys by the newe w^o howse made agarden thys
yere I care not wether she bestow any grate coste
ther of but to sowe yt w^t al kynde of earbes and
flowres and some pece of yt w^t malos

[page break]

I haue sende you by thys carerer iij bud
bundeles of garden sedes a n ll wreten w^t wellem
marchyngtons hande and by the next you
shall know how to youse then yn euery
pynte frome the courte the viij of march

your mystres

E Seyntelo

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