

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 048 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=048>)**

From: James Montague ([The Royal Court, London?]);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 10 February 1605/6

Summary: James Montague, dean of the Chapel Royal, writes to Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury) from court following discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, with news of the parliament's unanimous approval of bills 'all one in effect to have some severe execution upon the priests and recusants for the late executions of the traitors'; and about the apprehension of a Jesuit, (Henry) Garnet or Walley, 'the most dangerous man to this state that lives'.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (59)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: seal, red wax, embossed Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - tuck and fold

Hands: James Montague | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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## People Associated with Letter 048: James Montague

James Montagu (1568-1618), bishop of Winchester, was involved in the building of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and served as its first master (due to familial connections with the Sidney circle), from 1598-1608. After the accession of James I in 1603, he was preferred as dean to the Chapel Royal. He was also dean of Lichfield, and then dean of Worcester, before becoming bishop of Winchester in 1608. He seems to have been a regular advisor and informant to Bess in the first years of James I's reign: his close contact with the King made him ideal for this role and Bess left him £20 in her will. However, that Montagu was careful to control the information he passed to Bess is suggested by a letter of 11 April 1605: on this date Montague's letter to Bess was sent first to Gilbert Talbot, seventh earl of Shrewsbury, and included with it was his own seal, so that Gilbert could read the letter to Bess and re-seal it without detection (Lambeth Palace Library, Talbot Papers, Vol. L, fol. 7).

Other letters associated with James Montague:

7 March 1605/6 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=49>)

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## People Associated with Letter 048: 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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## **Other letters associated with [The Royal Court, London?]**

- 8 Mar [1560?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=100>)
- 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>)
- 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 048

To the most Honorable Lady the Countesse of Shresbury dougier these

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My most Honorable good Lady this bearer my survnte Lassels hath promised to deliuer this Lettre vnto your Honor I thinke my Lord Candish acquaynteth you with all the parlament newes It is very ioyfull matter to see how well the kinge his Lords and commons doe agree together in one this parlament and all agaynst the papistes the kinge offered his meditations to the house as his majestie called them the Lords they drue a bill and the Commons an other and these 3 bills wer all on in effect to haue some seuere execution vppon the preists and recusants for the Late executions of the traytors I am suer your Honor hath hard how they died Ther was but 2 of the 8 that would freely confesse ther fact to be a sinne agaynst god/ It is thought that the Lords shall not be arrayned but only brought into the starre chamber Ther are diuerse Iesuites and preestes Lately taken on speciall man that is the prouinciall of the Iesuites and hath his hand farre in this action which they call Garnet or Walley the kinge is very glad of his apprehension for he is the most dangerous man to this state that liueth His majestie goeth commonly to Hampton Court at the beginninge of the weeke and tarieth ther till the Latter end of the weeke I am alwayes with his majestie in these iorneyes which maketh me that I can not write so often to your Honor as I would

Thus with my humble duty to your Honor I take my leaue Courte this 10 of februarye 1605  
your Honors most faythfull frend

James Mountagu

## Diplomatic view of Letter 048

[Address Leaf]

### [Address Leaf: Notes]

This Person I take to be Iames  
Mountague afterw<sup>s</sup> Bp of Winchester  
1617. 5<sup>th</sup> Son of S<sup>r</sup> Edw.<sup>d</sup> Mountague  
K. Father to Edw.<sup>d</sup> Ld Mountague of  
Boughton & Grandfatr of Ralph D of  
Mountague. [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To the most Honora<sup>ble</sup>  
La: the Countesse  
of Shresbury dougier  
these  
§

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[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428  
(59) [Item number, hand: archivist]  
31 [Old foliation/item number, hand: archivist]

My most Honorable good La: this bearer  
my survnte Lassels hath promised to deliuer  
this Lettre vnto your Honor I thinke my Lo:  
Candish y<sup>our</sup> acquaynteth you with all the  
parlament newes It is very ioyfull mat=ter to see how well the kinge his Lords  
and commons doe agree together in one  
this parlament and all agaynst th i e  
papistes the kinge offered his medita=tions to the house as his ma<sup>tie</sup> called them  
the Lords they drue a bill and the Commons an other and these 3 bills wer all  
on in effect to haue some seuer execution vppon the preists and recusants  
for the Late executions of the traytors  
I am suer your Honor hath hard how  
they died Ther was but 2 of the 8  
that would freely confesse ther fact

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to be a sinne agaynst god/ It is  
thought that the Lords shall not be  
arrayned but only brought into the  
starre chamber Ther are diuerse  
Iesuites and preestes Lately taken  
on speciaall man that is the prouin=ciall of the Iesuites and hath his hand  
farre in this action which they call  
Garnet or Walley the kinge is very  
glad of his apprehension for he is the  
most dangerous man to this state that  
liueth His ma<sup>tie</sup> goeth comonly to  
Hampton Court at the beginninge of  
the weeke and tarieth ther till the  
Latter end of the weeke I am alwayes  
with his ma<sup>tie</sup> in these iorneyes which  
maketh me ÷ that I can not write so  
often to your Honor as I would

Thus with my humble duty to your  
Honor I take my leaue Courte  
this 10 of februarye 1605  
your Honors most faythfull frend

James Mountagu

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