

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 052 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=052>)

From: Lady Frances Pierrepont (Holme, Pierrepont, Nottinghamshire);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: [c. 1575]

Summary: Frances Pierrepont (née Cavendish) writes to her mother, Bess (countess of Shrewsbury), with New Year's wishes, enclosing linen and a drinking glass as gifts.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (67)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: Lady Frances Pierrepont | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 052: Lady Frances Pierrepont

Frances Pierrepont (née Cavendish; b. 1548) was Bess's eldest child from her second marriage, to Sir William Cavendish (1508-57). She is first mentioned in the letters as a young girl, when her mother Bess, who calls her 'franke', tells her to practise her virginal (ID 101). In 1562 she married Henry Pierrepont and they resided at Holm Pierrepont Hall, outside Nottingham (the house is still there today). Among their five children were Robert, earl of Kingston (later Dukes of Kingston and earls Manvers) and Elizabeth (b. 1567; known as Bessie) who aged four became attendant to the Scots Queen and later married Richard Stapleton. In her will, Bess left Frances a precious book, commissioned during her marriage to Cavendish, set with gold, stones and portraits of herself and Frances's father.

Other letters associated with Lady Frances Pierrepont:

[April 1603] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=53>)

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People Associated with Letter 052: 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 Holme, Pierrepont, Nottinghamshire

18 May 1562 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=55>)

Normalised view of Letter 052

to my Lady///

my most humble duty done vnto your honour with lyke desire of your blesinge vnto master pierrepont and me and our cheldren/ I haue sent vnto your honoure a peece of lawne and a drinckinge glasse as a remembrance of my intyre louynge dutie/ with most hartie wishe of manye happye newe yeares vnto your honoure then the wiche no yearthlye thinge can be more to my comforthe for I am soe muche and many wayse bounde vnto you as none can be more and so neare vnto you as none can be nearar that your longe and most happy lyfe is the graytest ioye in the wich I besecche the allmyghtye to grannte yow with all the rest of his best blessinges and so I humble tak my leue from holme thes wensdaye./

your Ladyships humble and dutiful dautter

F pierrepont/

Diplomatic view of Letter 052

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

Frances Pierpoint Eldest

Daughter to Eliz Wife of S^r

Will^m Cavendish, afterwards

Countess of Shrewsbury; &

Wife of S^r Hen Pierpoint of

Holm pierpoint in Coun Nott [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

to my Lady///

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(67) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

73 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

my most humble duty done vnto your honour w^t
lyke desire of your blesinge vnto m^r pierrepoint and
me and our cheldren/ I haue sent vnto your hon^r
honoure a peece of lawne and a drinckinge glasse
as a remembrance of my intyre louynge dutie/ w^t
most hartie wishe of manye happye newe yeares
vnto your honoure then the wiche no yearthlye thinge
can be more to my comforte for I am soe muche and
many wayse bounde vnto you as none can be more
and so neare vnto you as none can be nearar that
your longe and most happ p y lyfe is the graytest
ioye in the wich I besecche the allmyghtye to
grannte yow w^t all the rest of his best blessinges
and so I humble tak my leue from holme thes
wensdaye./.

[significant space]

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your Ladyships humble and
dutiful dautter

[significant space]

F pierrepont/

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