

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 053 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=053>)

From: Lady Frances Pierrepont;

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: [April 1603]

Summary: Frances Pierrepont (née Cavendish) writes to her mother, Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury), reporting on news received from a recent visitor, John Hales: to do with the king's movements and supposed peace in southern parts of the country in spite of Lord Beauchamp's 'feeble assemblies'.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (68)

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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Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 053: 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:

[c. 1575] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=52>)

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

People Associated with Letter 053: 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.

Normalised view of Letter 053

to my Lady/

may yt please your honour sur Ihon halles cam post from london vppon tuesday last and yesterday went towards barwike wher he dothe heare bi on of the kinges chamber that his majesti woll be on Saterdag nexeste and ther stay vntil he hath setled the parts ther aboutes also he sayeth that al thinges in the southeren partes proceede peaceably only my lord beauchamp is sayd to mak some assemblyes whic he hopeth wil soddenly dessholfe into smoke his forse beyng feble to make hede agenst so grayt an vnyon so geueynge your honour most humble thankes for your moste honourable and continuall bonty to me and most humble crauyng your Ladyship's blesinge I humble tak my leue beseeching the almighti to send you long lyfe al comfort and happines this present friday

master pierrepoint remenbers his humble duti to your honour

your Ladyships humble and obedyent dautter

F pierrepont

Diplomatic view of Letter 053

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

an Insurrection [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

to my Lady/

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(68) [Item number, hand: archivist]

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

69 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

may yt please your honour sur I ̄ hon halles cam
post from london vppon tuesday last and
yesterday went towards barwike wher
he dothe heare bi on of the kinges
chamber that his ma:^{ti} woll be on Satterday
nexeste and ther stay vntil he hath settled
the parts ther aboutes also he sayeth
that al thin k ges in the southeren partes
proceede peaceabl e y only my lord beauchamp
h is sayd to mak some assemblyes whic he
hopeth wil soddenly desholfe into smoke his
forse beyng feble to make hede agenst
so grayt an vnyon so geueyng your honour
most humble thanks for your moste honourable
and continuall bonty to me and most humble
crauyng your ^{La:} blesinge I humble tak my
leue beseeching the almighti to send you
long lyfe al comfort and happines this
present friday

m^r pierrepoint remenbers
his humble duti to your

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honour

your Ladyships humble
and obeyent dauter

F pierrepont

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