

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 058 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=058>)

From: Margaret St. Loe;

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 13 June [1560?]

Summary: Margaret St. Loe writes to her daughter-in-law, Bess (Lady St. Loe), regarding Margaret's son Edward's plot to poison Bess and Bess's husband, William St. Loe. Included is a detailed report of a conversation on this subject had between Margaret and an unnamed woman who came to visit her a month or more ago.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (74)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

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

Hands: Margaret St. Loe | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 058: Margaret St. Loe

Lady Margaret St. Loe was Bess's mother-in-law following Bess's marriage to Margaret's son, William St. Loe (c.1520-65?) after the death of Bess's second husband, Sir William Cavendish (1508-57). She was the wife of Sir John St Loe (d. 1559) who owned lands in Somerset and Gloucestershire.

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People Associated with Letter 058: 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 058

To my good lady Sayntloo be thys delyueryd

good madam with my very hartly commendacyns as sche that desyrys to here how yow & my son sayntloo doth & also to sertyfy yow wat I here of dyures & I haue ben exed wat the maters ys be twexte my son sayntloo & hys brother edward I haue made anser I was suer my sone Sayntloo wolde not mysse leke with hym with owte a gret caues/ & many hath sayde to me thay here say Edward scholde go abowte to powson hys brether & yow & I haue tolde them I know hyt not so here hys a gret talke of hyt/ & apone amonth or more ther cam alady hether to me/ & was very earnest with me to know wher euer I harde eny sych thyng & sayde sche scholde here hyt at longeyes moth who browte hor leter or token from besse sayntloo & sche wolde ahade me synde to long & I wolde not// but I tolde hur I was suer yow where powsonyd when I was at London & yeffe yow had not ade a present Remedy ye had dyed wych sche made hyt straynge sche neuer harde of hyt afor/ wych I am suer sche dyd/ sche hath byn more & senyte & yet is at Edward sayntloes besdon schall tell yow more of hur talke to me now I know suer sche cam hether to here wat I wolde say & wat sche code vnderstand by me/ sche tolde me how hur coson edward had send to hur often to cometo hym but sche wolde not but I tolde hur wat I thought of hym wych I am suer sche myslekyd me for/ but sche sayde sche was sory ther scholde beeny varyances be twen vs for sche dyd know I haue vsed hym wery well but I thynk sche sayth the contrary now to hym/ I perceue ther heddes be foll of thys mater as thay haue letell grace so god send them letell powre to do my son sayntlo or yow eny horte thys was the good wyll he bare yow when he cam vp to London to se yow as he sayde was nonother caues hys comyng/ wych I know the contrary for he lekyd no thyng your maryege/ hys good frynychype to yow & to me ys all on/ the lyuyng god defende vs all from sych fryndes I pray yow madam send me worde how thys deuell deuysys be gan & how hyt can to lyte thankes be to god ye know hyt I wyll troboll yow no lenger but I pray god sende yow both long lyffe & good helth

with moch worchyppe wryton the xiiij of Iune by yowres most assurydly as long as I haue lyffe

margret Sayntloo

Diplomatic view of Letter 058

[Address Leaf]

[Address Leaf: Notes]

Eliz Saintlowe Mother to
S^r W^m Saintlow, who mar^d
Eliz Widow of S^r W^m Cavendish
after his Death she married
Geo E of Shrewsbury.

Curious.

Both Poisoned as appears by
this Letter by his Brother
Edw^d Saintlowe, but recover. [Later editorial note, hand: archivist]

To my good lady Sayntloo
be thys delyu^r yd

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428
(74) [Item number, hand: archivist]
41 [Old foliation/item number], hand: archivist]
25 [Old foliation, hand: archivist]

good madam w^t my very hartly commendacyns as sche
that desyrys to here how ^{^yow^} & my son sayntloo doth &
also to sertyfy yow wat I here of dyuers & I haue ben
exed wat the maters ys be twexte my son sayntloo & hys
brother edward I haue made anser I was s e uer my sone
Sayntloo wolde not mysse leke w^t hym w^t owte a
gret caues/ & many hath sayde to me thay here say
Edward scholde go abowte to powson hys brether & yow
& I haue tolde them I know hyt not so here hys a
gret talke of hyt/ & apone amonth or more ther cam
alady hether to me/ & was very earnest w^t me

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to know wher euer I harde eny sych thyng & sayde
sche scholde here hyt at longey's moth who browte
hor leter or token from besse sayntloo & ^{^sche wolde^} ahade me
synde to long & I wolde not// but I tolde hur I was
suer yow where powsonyd when I was at London &
yeffe yow had not ^{^ade^} a present Remedy ye had dyed
wych sche made hyt straynge sche neuer harde of
hyt afor/ wych I am suer sche dyd/ sche hath byn
more & senyte & yet is at Edward sayntloes besdon
schall tell yow more of hur talke to me now
I know suer sche cam hether ^{^to here^} wat I wolde
say & wat sche code vnderstand by me/ sche tolde
me how hur coson edward had send to hur
often to *cometo* hym but sche wolde not but
I tolde hur wat I thowght of hym wych I am suer
sche myslekyd me for/ but sche sayde sche was sory
ther scholde beeny varyances be twen vs for sche
dyd know I haue vsed hym wery well but I thynk
sche sayth the *contrary* now to hym/ I *perceue* ther
heddes be foll ^{^of thys mater^} as thay haue letell grace so god send
them letell powre to do my son sayntlo or yow eny
horte thys was the good wyll he bare yow when he
cam vp to London to se yow as he sayde was nonother
caues hys *comyng*/ wych I know the *contrary* ^{^for^} he lekyd no
thyng yo^r maryege/ hys good frynychype to yow & to me
ys all on/ the lyuyng god defende vs all from sych
fryndes I pray yow madam send me worde how thys
deuell deuysys be gan & how hyt can to lyte thankes
be to god ye know hyt I wyll troboll yow no lenger
but I pray god sende yow both long lyffe & good helth

w^t moch worchyppe wryton the xiiij of Iune by
yowrs most assurydly as long as I haue lyffe

margret Sayntloo

§

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