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Bess of Hardwick: Empire Builder

Mary S. Lovell

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"The best account yet available of this shrewd, enigmatic and remarkable woman."—*Sunday Times* [London]

From the author of *The Sisters*, a chronicle of the most brutal, turbulent, and exuberant period of England's history. Bess Hardwick, the fifth daughter of an impoverished Derbyshire nobleman, did not have an auspicious start in life. Widowed at sixteen, she nonetheless outlived four monarchs, married three more times, built the great house at Chatsworth, and died one of the wealthiest and most powerful women in English history.

In 1527 England was in the throes of violent political upheaval as Henry VIII severed all links with Rome. His daughter, Queen Mary, was even more capricious and bloody, only to be followed by the indomitable and ruthless Gloriana, Elizabeth I. It could not have been more hazardous a period for an ambitious woman; by the time Bess's first child was six, three of her illustrious godparents had been beheaded.

Using journals, letters, inventories, and account books, Mary S. Lovell tells the passionate, colorful story of an astonishingly accomplished woman, among whose descendants are counted the dukes of Devonshire, Rutland, and Portland, and, on the American side, Katharine Hepburn.

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