

An unpublished Letter of Hannah Penn, née
Callowhill, the second wife of William Penn,
addressed to Thomas Story.

Hannah Callowhill was the daughter of Thomas Callowhill, of High Street, Bristol, linen draper, by his wife, Hannah Hollister, eldest of the four daughters of Dennis Hollister, of Bristol, grocer. She was born at Bristol, 18th of April, 1664, and married there in her thirty-second year, 5th of March, 1695/6, William Penn, then of Warminghurst, co. Sussex, Esquire, as his second wife. By this marriage, William Penn had four sons and three daughters, of whom John, Thomas, and Richard became proprietors of Pennsylvania and the latter two of whom married and had issue.

The second daughter, Margaret, born at Bristol, 1704, married Thomas Freame, and had issue. She was buried at Jordans, 12th of February, 1750/51. The remaining children died young or in infancy.

In the folio *Journal of Thomas Story*, 1747, we find¹ "A Journal from Pennsylvania to Barbadoes, &c., in the Year 1714," and that the writer, "by reason of contrary Winds, landed not at *London* till the 6th of the Tenth Month, and lodged at *John Crouche's*, in *Crown-Court*, in *Grace-Church-Street*."²

John Crouch was, we believe, a son of the well-known William Crouch, of London, upholster (1628-1710), one of the pioneers of Quakerism in London.

Story continues later,³

On the 15th [of the 10th month, 1714], being the Fourth Day of the Week, accompanied by *John Crouch*, with whom I lodged, I went to *Ruscomb*, to visit *William Penn* and his Family. He was then under the lamentable Effects of an apoplectick Fit, which he had had some Time before : for his Memory was almost quite lost, and the Use of his Understanding suspended ; so that he was not so conversible as formerly : and yet as near the Truth, in the Love of it, as before : Wherein appeared

¹ *Journal*, p. 457.

² *Idem*, p. 462.

³ *Idem*, pp. 463, 464.

the great Mercy and Favour of God, who looks not as Man looks : For though, to some, this Accident might look like Judgment, and no doubt his Enemies so accounted it, yet it will bear quite another Interpretation, if it be considered how little Time of Rest he ever had from the Importunities of the Affairs of others, to the great Hurt of his own, and Suspension of all his Enjoyments, till this happened to him : by which he was rendered incapable of all Business, and yet sensible of the Enjoyment of Truth, as at any Time in all his Life.

When I went to the House, I thought myself strong enough to see him in that Condition ; but when I entered the Room, and perceived the great Defect of his Expressions for want of Memory, it greatly bowed my Spirit, under a Consideration of the Uncertainty of all human Qualifications ; and what the finest of Men are soon reduced to by a Disorder of the Organs of that Body, with which the Soul is connected, and acts during this present Mode of Being. When these are but a little obstructed in their various Functions, a Man of the clearest Parts, and finest Expression, becomes scarce intelligible. Nevertheless, no Insanity or Lunacy at all appeared in his Actions ; and his Mind was in an innocent State, as appeared by his very loving Deportment to all that came near him : and that he had still a good Sense of Truth was plain, by some very clear Sentences he spoke in the Life and Power of Truth, in an Evening Meeting we had together there ; wherein we were greatly comforted : so that I was ready to think this was a sort of Sequestration of him from all the Concerns of this Life, which so much oppress'd him ; not in Judgment, but in Mercy, that he might have rest, and not be oppress'd thereby to the End.

On the 18th, being the Seventh of the Week, I went thence to *Reading*, and lodged that Night at *William Lambell's*.

From Maria Webb's *Penns and Peningtons*[†] we learn that

On the 24th of Fifth-month, 1712, William Penn commenced a letter to James Logan, in which, after feelingly alluding to the death of his wife's father and mother, his pen suddenly stopped under the pressure of a paralytic seizure. It was the third time he had been assailed by paralysis, but on the present occasion far more severely than ever ; and his intellect never recovered from the effects of this attack. His sweet temper and happy spirit remained, and a heart overflowing with love to God and man was as visible as in his brighter days. In fact, the memory of all recent things, and with it mental anxiety and intellectual power, had vanished, whilst the spirit remained the same.

He continued to attend Friends' meetings, and sometimes spoke a few sentences exhorting Friends to love one another ; whilst, with a countenance beaming with sympathy and kindness, he used to meet with and part from them. In this condition, life wore away with little variation for five years.

[†] 1867, pp. 410, 411.

LETTER OF HANNAH PENN TO T. STORY. 135

In *The Family of William Penn*,⁵ by the late lamented Howard M. Jenkins, are letters of Hannah Penn, and other particulars showing the home-life at Ruscombe.

Maria Webb gives an abstract from a letter of Hannah Penn, dated "Ruscombe, 2nd First-month, 1717"⁶:—

My poor dearest's life is yet continued to us ; but I know not how long it may be, for he is very weakly. I have for these last three or four years continued this large house, only to keep him as comfortable as I can ; for he has all along delighted in walking and taking the air here, and does so still when the weather allows ; and at other times diverts himself from room to room. The satisfaction he takes therein is the greatest pleasure I have in so large a house, which I have long found too much for me, with our shrunk income.

Maria Webb continues, "It should be mentioned that Thomas Story and Henry Gouldney, of London, were not only Hannah Penn's personal friends, but her chief advisers in matters connected with Pennsylvania, as well as her own pecuniary affairs."

These extracts introduce us to the condition of things at Ruscombe, near Twyford, in Berkshire, where the illustrious Founder of Pennsylvania was rapidly nearing the end of his strenuous life, and from which place the letter we are about to describe and transcribe was written.

The letter in question was amongst the papers of the late Thomas Thompson, of Liverpool, the well-known Quaker chemist, who has been described by the present writer's mother, who was then resident at Liverpool as Elizabeth Robson, Junior, as taking with his friend, Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool,⁷ "sweet counsel together" over their mutual hobby of autograph collecting. Thomas Thompson's valuable collection of American autographs, etc., was purchased of him by the late Charles Wilson, of Southport, for £350, and afterwards disposed of by Messrs. Sotheby, we believe. His Quaker collection was inherited by his son, Silvanus Thompson, of York, who, for £150, sold it to the late George Stacey Gibson, of Saffron Walden, by whom it was bequeathed to the

⁵ 1899, pp. 88-103, etc.

⁶ *Penns and Peningtons*, p. 412.

⁷ Brother to Sir Stamford Raffles.

Society of Friends, and now forms one of the most interesting and precious collections in the Reference library at Devonshire House.⁸

A few loose Quaker letters and papers were sent by Thomas Thompson to his friend, Charles Wilson aforesaid; and by his son, Dr. Claude Wilson, of Tunbridge Wells, they were kindly presented recently to the present writer.

Hannah Penn's letter is a quarto of over two and a half pages. It was evidently sent by hand, as there is no postal mark upon it, and it has been folded in womanly fashion in flap-shape at the top. It is addressed "To Thomas Story at John Crouche's house Jn Crown Court Jn Grace Church street, London," and is endorsed in Story's neat hand "27 12m. 1715, Hannah Penn." It has been sealed in red wax.

Hannah Penn's caligraphy is bold and plain. The letter is dated, "Ruscombe, ye 27th of 12th mo., 1714/15," and is as follows:—

"Dear Friend, this Comes to lett thee know J recd thine Last night, with thy Noble Present; for so it was in both Quantity & Quallity, J am {much Obliged to thee for thy Loue therin, But am ready to be Sorry for the Largness of thy present, doub[t]ing thou haue made too Great a breach on thy own store, a smaller present of these so valluable Comoditys would haue been highly acceptable, both to my selfe & second-selfe,⁹ who was much pleasd wth the Orring[e] Wine & Greatly delighted with the Cittron water, which of all Cordialls is his fauourite one. The bottles came both safe, as did ye 4 of wine, both Exelent good, and for which my Poor Dearest, as well as he Can, returns thee his hearty Acknowledgm^{ts} and his very dear Loue, as does all my Young folks, Whom thou hast Wonderfully delighted with the present of Nuts, In which Pegge¹⁰ as Proprietores[s] Vallues herselfe, but Obliged her brothers¹¹ wth the sight & tast[e] of one of them last night w^{ch} proued

⁸ D. Gibson Bequest MSS.

⁹ William Penn.

¹⁰ Margaret Penn, later Freame, as above-named.

¹¹ Probably Thomas and Richard Penn, the younger brothers.

a very Entertaining subject, & good of the sort. Pegge has been very desireous to write to thee herselfe, so J allowd her, & she has wrote thee the Inclosed every Stroak With her own hand. J shall now let thee know y^t my Dearest is J think near as Vsual; he was at Reding Meeting this morning & in himselfe fine & Comfortable as he Generally is, blessed be the God of all our Mercys, which are many & Great, or J had not been at this day in the Land of the Liuing to praise the Lord for his Continued goodness, as my soule desires to do this day.

“ J shall be sorry if thou cannot haue the sight of those papers J am by my Kinsman in Pursuite after, and on which & some other Vrgent affairs J haue thoughts of seeing London this week; but whether before thou goes or not J cannot be sure but will endeavour it, if my husbands health holds & nothing unforeseen hinder.

“ However J would not keep thee an hour past thy time from thy poor fathers¹² [“ account ” deleted]. But this J desire that if thou should go before 5th day that thou will be so kind as leaue me in writing (tho in never so Rough a draught) thy opinian how J ought to Proceed in the Case & in fauour of this — Groathousan.¹³ J shall not further Jnlarge expecting yet to see thee, But if J should not, I heartyly wish thee a Comfortable Journey every way, and with renewed Salutations of dear Loue from me & husband J conclude & am

“ Thy Oblieged Lo[ving] fr[ien]d,

“ H. PENN.

“ My dear loue to frd Crouch & wife, of whose misfortunes J am sorry to hear.”

The remaining years of Penn's life are alluded to in the three volumes above mentioned, *viz.*, in Story's *Journal*, Jenkins's *Family of William Penn*, and Webb's *Penns and Peningtons*.

T. Story paid a visit to the Penns at Ruscombe from the 25th to the 29th of May, 1718. Two months

¹² Story was at Justice Town, near Carlisle, his father's residence, no less than five times in April, 1715: he states that “ he was very aged, and without sight, but exceeding glad of my arrival, and very kind,” And later “ I took leave of my Father in great Tenderness, who was much troubled to part with me.”

¹³ We do not understand this allusion.

138 LETTER OF HANNAH PENN TO T. STORY.

later Hannah Penn wrote to T. Story a letter, dated "Ruscombe, 28th of y^e 5th Mo. 1718," telling him of her husband's serious state of health, and adding two postscripts, the latter dated, "30th," "My poor Dearests last breath was fetcht this morning between two and three o'clock."¹⁴ Story informs us of the receipt of this communication when he was staying with Brice Webb at Bristol; he arrived at Ruscombe with William Penn's eldest son of the second family, John Penn, on the 1st of Sixth Month.

We arrived at *Ruscomb*, late in the Evening, where we found the Widow and most of the Family together. Our coming occasioned a fresh Remembrance of the deceased, and also a renewed Flood of many Tears from all Eyes. A solid Time we had, but few Words among us for some Time; for it was a deep baptizing Season, and the Lord was near at that Time.

Here I staid till the 5th, and that Day accompanied the Corpse to the Grave, at *Jordan's* Meeting-place in the County of *Bucks*, where we had a large Meeting of Friends, and others, from many Places.¹⁵

The diary of Rebekah Butterfield, of Stone Dean, Jordans, further informs us that on "4th day, 30 v. 1718, our friend, William Penn, departed at Rushcom In Barkshire, in y^e 74th year of his Age, and was Buried att Jordans y^e 5th of y^e 6th mo, y^e 3rd day of y^e week; their was 20 or 30 Publick friends & a Vast Number of friends and others; he was often at Jordans Meeting In his Life time and often Lodg'd at Stone De[a]n."¹⁶

¹⁴ See *Penns and Peningtons*, p. 414. The original letter is in D. (Gibson Bequest MSS.)

¹⁵ *Journal*, p. 607.

¹⁶ Stone Dean (adjoining Jordans Meeting House), so well known to Friends, was built in 1691 by Peter Prince, a Friend of Hammersmith, and uncle to Rebekah Butterfield. A large portion of the original building with its quaint windows still remains, but it has long been new-fronted and spoiled in the process; within a few years the ancient kitchen range and smoke-jack were removed. On the marriage, in 1769, of Joseph Green of London, with Mary Andrews of Barking, granddaughter of Daniel Van de Wall, clerk to London Yearly Meeting in 1734, Rebekah Butterfield vacated Stone Dean for the Dean farm, and Joseph Green and his young bride came to reside at Stone Dean, where they remained until October, 1779, entertaining many public Friends at their house; they then removed to High Wycombe, from whence Joseph Green was buried at Jordans in 1786, aged 38. Joseph Markes Green of Saffron Walden, the present writer's grandfather, the eldest son of Joseph and Mary Green, was, with three of his sisters, born at Stone Dean.

After the funeral we find Story returning to Ruscombe, "being solicited thereto by the Family, in order to some further Advice concerning their Affairs; being of great Moment, and accompanied with many and considerable difficulties."

The brave widow, Hannah Penn, whose Christian character and unusual business ability, excellent judgment, and tact enabled her to surmount the almost stupendous trials and difficulties which she had to encounter before and after the death of William Penn, was, some four years after her husband's decease, attacked with paralysis, from which she partially recovered, and she lived till 1726. She was buried in her husband's grave at Jordans, 26th December, 1726, in her sixty-third year; "several Publick friends their," adds Rebekah Butterfield's Diary.

We may add that from the same source as the above-named letter of Hannah Penn, we received a manuscript in the beautiful caligraphy of Thomas Story, being a list of Friends' Meetings in Somersetshire in the North, South, Middle, and West Divisions, some thirty-six Meetings in all.

At the foot is a cutting from a book or paper, also in Story's autograph: "Thomas Story, of Philadelphia in Pensilva, now residing [in] London, 1721."

JOSEPH J. GREEN.

At a Quarterly Meeting of Friends held at our Meeting-house in Huntington, y^e 1st day of y^e 7^{mo}, 1719, noted, as followeth:—

We having now rec^d a letter from our Friends in Cambridge shire, signed by severall at their monthly meeting in Cambridge, y^e 7th day of 6^{mo}, 1719, Requesting our assistance in their building a new meeting house at Swaevy in y^e Room of their other w^{ch} was lately demolished by Fire:—

It is our desire (in answer thereto) that Friends in this County would afford assistance, & that a Collection for y^e same may be made in each Particular meeting, wth all Convenient Speed.