

The Marriage of Judith Crowley

THE name of Judith Crowley is almost unknown even to those familiar with the by-paths of Quaker history in the eighteenth century, yet her hand was sought by members of the Society of Friends as eminent as James Logan, William Penn's Secretary to his colony of Pennsylvania, and John Pemberton, the Midlands ironmaster, whilst the successful suitor was ultimately Cornelius Ford, a minister of the Church of England, and cousin of the great Doctor Johnson. The fortunate survival of letters now scattered in several collections both in this country and across the Atlantic has enabled some of the threads of this fascinating story to be drawn together.¹

Judith Crowley was born at Stourbridge, Worcestershire, in 1681, and her failure to marry such eligible suitors, or indeed to marry at all until over 40 years of age, suggests that her temperament was difficult. This suggestion is confirmed by references in letters to her from her eventual husband, Cornelius Ford. Nevertheless, in the early years of the eighteenth century, the wealth and connections of the Crowleys encouraged marriage alliances with the family. Judith's father, it is true, was possessed of no great wealth. He was Ambrose Crowley the elder, father of the great industrialist Sir Ambrose. But in the early years of the eighteenth century, when her hand was being so ardently sought, there was already great wealth in the family. Her half-brother, Sir Ambrose, had achieved a position of wealth and influence in the City of London before his death in 1713. Two of her sisters, Sarah and Mary, had married the brothers Charles and Sampson Lloyd, whose iron businesses in Wales and Birmingham were growing steadily. Though her father, an ironmonger of Stourbridge, was only a man of moderate means, he was a well-known Friend in Worcestershire. Generosity, which ate deeply into his resources, so that he died almost a poor man, had earned the name of Crowley respect and admiration throughout the meetings of Worcestershire and the Birmingham area. Through the brothers

¹ I am greatly indebted to Mr. Frederick B. Tolles, of Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania, for assistance in solving some of the references in letters, and for the supply of photostats and transcriptions.

Lloyd the family was linked closely with other well-known Quaker families in the Midlands—the Pembertons, the Parkes, and the Norrises.

At a time when Sir Ambrose Crowley was offering £10,000 with the marriage of his daughters,¹ it is not surprising that the hands of the remaining spinsters of the Crowley family should be sought with enthusiasm. The earliest known suitor of Judith's was Benjamin Braine. In 1703, Sir Ambrose wrote to Sampson Lloyd: "I have found a very great civility in the Carrage of Mr. Benja. Braine sence I came home but have not entred in to any discourse with him relating to Sister Judeth—but Peter Bowen telleth mee hee beleiveth that family hath a great inclynation to bee nearly related to us—I doe not thinck their will ever bee a better offer on the Anvill than this soe doe advise my Father to lett my sister Judith com for London this Springe."² Who Benjamin Braine was is not known, but clearly nothing came of the project, and it is another eight years before there is any record of a further marriage project.

This time the suitor was a man of the highest distinction and achievement. James Logan, then Penn's Secretary in Pennsylvania, later became Chief Justice of the Colony and President of the Council, as well as being probably the most distinguished scientist, philosopher and bibliophile in Pennsylvania.³ In 1709, political difficulties in the colony brought Logan to England. He brought with him a letter of introduction from Isaac Norris addressed to the Lloyd and Crowley families. Norris would probably have had in mind the fact that Sampson Lloyd in Birmingham was the nephew of Thomas Lloyd, Penn's deputy, who had died in 1694. In this way Logan was led into Ambrose Crowley's family circle at Stourbridge.⁴ A friendship thus struck up with Judith evidently ripened into a love affair and a proposal of marriage.

¹ Lettice Crowley, who married Sir John Hind Cotton in 1707, Mary, who married James Hallett in 1708, and Anne, who married Richard Fleming in 1713 (?), each had portions of £10,000. His fourth daughter, Elizabeth, married Lord St. John of Bletsoe in 1725, many years after her father's death and it is not known what her marriage portion was.

² 23rd February, 1702/3, in possession of Mr. Humphrey Lloyd, Marlow, to whom I am indebted for permission to quote.

³ See F. B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House* (University of North Carolina, 1948), Chapter 8, *passim*.

⁴ N. Penney (edit), *Correspondence of James Logan and Thomas Story* (Philadelphia, 1927), p. 3.

There has survived a letter of his of October, 1711, which starts, "My Dearest Life," and ends, "Thy most faithful and affectionate J. Logan."¹ Possibly Logan had proposed marriage to Judith already when this letter was written, for five weeks earlier, she had written to him: "I dare not nor cannot comply with thy request for severall reasons. I should still remember I am and must be under subjection, this consideration will by no means admit me. No I must not act without my ffrds. aproving it."² Judith's letter suggests rather less ardour than does Logan's, for it begins "Respected J.L.," and she merely signs herself "Thy ffriend J.C." Logan apparently made no secret of his intention to marry Judith, and to take her back with him to Pennsylvania. As early as November, 1710, Isaac Norris, who was Judith's second cousin, had written to him, "I am now to thank thee for ye Stepps thou art making towards bringing over my 2d."³ By August, 1711, Norris wrote to Logan, "I gather yt you two are agreed. . . ."⁴

The proposed marriage, however, occasioned considerable hostility in the Crowley and Lloyd families. There was some reluctance to lose Judith across the Atlantic. In 1712, for example, Judith's brother-in-law, Sampson Lloyd, wrote to her urging that "I beleive thou maist be satisfied that all thy relations will be against thy removall out of thy Native Countrey. . . ."⁵ Probably a more important reason for the family's reluctance to lose Judith was that her departure would leave no one to care for her father in his old age. In 1711, old Ambrose Crowley was 76, and suffered at times from loss of memory. His second wife had died in 1701, and of his five daughters, Sarah and Mary had married in 1693 and 1695 respectively; Susanna was married before 1711; and the date of Phoebe's marriage is uncertain, but it was being negotiated in 1711. She was married at the time her Father made out his will in 1713, and it seems most likely that the wedding took place early in 1712. After this marriage, Judith

¹ 23rd October, 1711, in possession of Mr. Humphrey Lloyd.

² 15th September, 1711, *Logan Papers*, Vol. X, 12, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. This letter has been printed in the *Correspondence between William Penn and James Logan*, II (Philadelphia, 1872), 437.

³ 29th November, 1710, *Norris Letter Book*, 1709-16, 226, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁴ 28th August, 1711, *ibid.*, 286.

⁵ 30th August, 1712, Lloyd MSS., Friends House Library, London.

alone of the daughters remained at home, and the problem of looking after their father may seriously have conditioned the attitude of other members of the family to the question of Judith's marriage to Logan.

Logan's only surviving letter to Judith, written in October, 1711, refers not at all to their own affairs, but is a panegyric on Elizabeth Pemberton, John Pemberton's first wife, who had just died. Elizabeth Pemberton was a sister of Sampson and Charles Lloyd. Her death left John Pemberton a very eligible widower, and in their anxiety to prevent the match which would remove Judith to America, it may well be that the Crowley and Lloyd families both looked to John Pemberton as their saviour. Sampson Lloyd's letter of August, 1712, to Judith was carried to her by John Pemberton, with the wish that "thou wilt give him such encouragement as I believe his cordial respect deserves which I shall be hearty glad to hear. . . ."¹

It was unfortunate for Logan that he was obliged to return to America. He left England on the 10th December, 1711, less than two months after Elizabeth Pemberton's death. Though his departure seems to have put an end to his chances of marriage to Judith, the door of his heart remained open for yet another year or two, for in September, 1713, he wrote to Hannah Penn, "Thou hinted to me that my frd. J.C. is still single. I am told as much lately, very favorably, from her own hand; but while she has such Relations, I doubt little is to be expected. I have ventured, however, to putt it now to a Trial, and shall at least, by that means, bring it to an end."² The jibe at the Crowleys, Lloyds, and Pembertons, seems to be fully justified. There is little doubt that Judith's reply to his final request was negative.

Pemberton, it has been alleged, began to pay court to Judith "almost immediately" after the death of his first wife.³ The massive family support which he mustered evidently told, for he became formally engaged to Judith. But the engagement can only have been of short duration, for on 27th August, 1713, Judith formally released him.⁴ This was a

¹ 30th August, 1712, Lloyd MSS., Friends House Library, London.

² 14th September, 1713, *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd Series, (Harrisburg, Penna., 1890), VII, 44.

³ J. Hill and R. K. Dent, *Memorials of the Old Square* (Birmingham, 1897), p. 22.

⁴ Bevan-Naish MS. 4041, 36. Woodbrooke College, Birmingham.

mere fortnight before Logan's letter to Hannah Penn referred to above, so that it appears that Judith finally rejected Logan in 1713 within a few weeks of rejecting Pemberton. It seems that the reason for Judith's breaking off the engagement was that Pemberton was simultaneously conducting an affair with another lady. On 17th August, Judith wrote to one of her brothers, "As to Coosen Pember request I thinke 'tis all together needless to give my self ye trouble of writting another, for you may assure your selves, had Coosen been ye most excellent of your sex my thoughts are to exalted, to lay a claim after he has addressed ells were. Coosen may depend upon't he'll meet with no interruption from me, for I can't yett belive my self to be at my last Prayers. I hear by freind Parker that he setts out for Bristoll on 5 day; I wish him a very good journey. . . ." ¹ Pemberton's journey to Bristol which earned him the sarcastic good wishes of his late fiancée was almost certainly to meet Hannah James whom he married before the year was out. ² Logan, too, finally rejected in 1713, found comfort across the Atlantic. There he fell in love with Sarah Read, whom he eventually married. There is a love letter of Logan's to Sarah dated September, 1714. ³

In 1713 Judith was 32, and her prospects of marriage, after the rejection of such distinguished and eligible suitors as Logan and Pemberton, must have seemed slight. Indeed, family correspondence during the next few years contains no further reference to her affairs, and it seems that the family must have regarded her as comfortably "on the shelf". At all events no more is known of any marriage projects until Cornelius Ford came on to the scene. Cornelius was the son of Joseph Ford, an uncle of the great Doctor Johnson, ⁴ and he was described by Boswell as being "a man in whom both

¹ 17th August, 1713, Lloyd MSS., Friends House Library, London.

² T. S. Ashton, *Iron and Steel in the Industrial Revolution*, (Manchester, 1924), p. 215.

³ A. C. Myers, *Hannah Logan's Courtship* (Philadelphia, 1904).

⁴ Ford's marriage to Judith Crowley created a relationship, admittedly somewhat tenuous, between Dr. Johnson and Lord Chesterfield. The late A. L. Reade believed that Lord Chesterfield must have been aware of the existence of this relationship when Johnson, as he wrote in his famous letter, "waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door." See A. L. Reade's letter in *The Sphere*, 30th October, 1915. See also J. and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, part 1 vol. 2, p. 157, for Cornelius Ford's career.

talents and good dispositions were disgraced by licentiousness."¹ He was, however, well known as a widely read scholar and a brilliant and witty talker, and was a Fellow of Peterhouse from 1720 to 1724.² The Ford family had long been acquainted with the Crowleys, and Cornelius' father, Joseph, was one of the executors of Ambrose Crowley senior's will.³ He had also witnessed the marriage of Sarah Crowley and Charles Lloyd in 1693.⁴

Judith Crowley's marriage to Cornelius Ford in 1724 ended what must have been a long courtship, for there have survived three of Ford's letters to her of the year 1719.⁵ The letters are rather extravagantly sentimental, and suggest that the course of true love was not running quite smoothly. Indeed, the contrast of Judith's obstinacy with Ford's flashy brilliance can hardly have conduced to smooth relations. Ford complained, for example, in one letter: "I do not doubt but you love me, but I desire you would not hereafter fail to give me proofs of it by being as bountiful of your writing as you have been of your heart." In another place he speaks of her "suspicion and uneasinesses and complaints." His assurances of constant devotion ring a little hollow when he has to apologize for having forgotten to send his felicitations on her birthday, and writes a week late! "Tis true I pay you my compliments a little out of season, yet I beg you would receive them with the same love with which they are sent to you. . . ." His letter of 18th April announces his failure to win a Fellowship; this fell to him in the following year.

On 3rd June, 1724, they were married at Rustock in Worcestershire under circumstances which suggest some haste. Judith gave her residence as Pedmore in Worcestershire, though until her father's death in 1720, she had always lived in Stourbridge. A marriage licence was issued at Worcester on the same day, and Rustock lies half way between Worcester and Pedmore. As Judith had been a Quaker all her life, she had first to be baptised, for which the Bishop's permission had to be given. In the following January, Ford was

¹ James Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson* (Everyman Edition) I, 21.

² Information kindly sent by the late A. L. Reade.

³ P.C.C. 125, Buckingham.

⁴ Marriage Certificate in Lloyd MSS., Friends House Library, London.

⁵ 5th March, 18th April, and n.d. The letters, which are in the possession of Mr. Humphrey Lloyd, are not dated with the year. Internal evidence, however, enables them to be ascribed to the year 1719, with some certainty.

ordained deacon in the Church of England, becoming a priest in 1727.¹

It seems a pity that all the effort that was put into getting Judith married should have produced so short a married life for her, for Cornelius Ford died in 1731, after only seven years of married life. Judith was 43 when she married, though the entry she made in Rustock parish register gave her age as "about 40," and there were no children of the marriage. After Ford's death in 1731 no trace can be found of what became of Judith. Still only 50, she may have lived for many more years, and even—though one shudders to think of the troubles involved—have married again. Lacking any great distinction herself, her name nevertheless creeps into the biographies of several of the more distinguished men of the early eighteenth century.

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New Green World. By Josephine Herbst. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954. 15s., illustrated.

This is an agreeable and somewhat colloquial account of two American Friends, John Bartram (1699-1777) and his son, William (1739-1823). These notable explorer-botanists maintained correspondence with subscribers in England, to whom were sent seeds gathered in journeys stretching from the Great Lakes to Florida.

Their consignments enriched many English parks and gardens, and introduced many new species of shrubs, trees and plants to this country. Friends Peter Collinson and John Fothergill were among their principal correspondents.

If the father is the more notable as a botanist, his son William's accounts about their travels were more widely influential as literature, and provided Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey and others with romantic themes; and descriptions clearly based on Bartram's travels occur in their works.

These literary influences are but lightly touched upon by Miss Herbst; they have been thoroughly elucidated in other works, such as *William Bartram, Interpreter of the American Landscape*, 1933, by N. B. Fagin; *The Road to Xanadu*, 1927, by J. L. Lowes; and *John and William Bartram*, 1940, by Ernest Earnest. A reviewer of the present work in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History* (1954) shows that in reviving so readably a knowledge of our debt to the Bartram's the author has in a number of cases made an inaccurate use of the sources, though not sufficiently to rob the general picture of its validity and interest. A table of contents or an index, or both, and page headings, would have improved an otherwise well-produced book.

¹ A. L. Reade, *Johnsonian Gleanings*, Pt. II (1912), 110; Pt. III (1922), 147; Pt. IV (1923), 8.