

**THE LIFE OF MARGARET FOX, WIFE
OF GEORGE FOX: COMPILED
FROM HER OWN NARRATIVE AND
OTHER SOURCES WITH A
SELECTION FROM HER EPISTLES**

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The Life of Margaret Fox, Wife of George Fox: Compiled from Her Own Narrative and Other Sources with a Selection from Her Epistles by Margaret Fox

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MARGARET FOX

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THE LIFE
OF
MARGARET FOX.
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WIFE OF GEORGE FOX.

COMPILED FROM HER OWN NARRATIVE, AND OTHER SOURCES;

WITH A

SELECTION FROM HER EPISTLES, ETC.

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1859.

P R E F A C E .

THE Society of Friends has numbered within its ranks many eminent women, who have enunciated and explained its doctrines and testimonies, both by their ministry and writings; and have illustrated its Christian faith by the consistency of their lives and conversation, and their patience under persecution. Amongst these, none shone more conspicuously, in the early days of the Society, than the subject of this memoir. Having been convinced by the baptizing ministry of George Fox, she became a faithful member of the church; her influence and reputation in the community, as well as her ministry and writings, greatly contributing to advance the cause of truth. As a preacher of the Gospel, she was fervent and weighty; as a writer, bold, earnest and persuasive;

in her disposition, charitable and hospitable; and a warm sympathizer with the afflicted and persecuted.

Her works having been long out of print, and almost unknown in this country, it is believed that the following compilation, giving a brief account of her life, a selection from her epistles, and a few extracts from her other writings, will prove acceptable to the reader.

L I F E
O F
M A R G A R E T F O X.

CHAPTER I. 1614-1658.

HER BIRTH—PARENTAGE—MARRIES THOMAS FELL, AND SETTLES AT SWARTHMORE — RELIGIOUS LIFE — VISITED BY GEORGE FOX — SHE AND HER CHILDREN CONVINCED — DISPLEASURE OF HER HUSBAND—LETTER FROM R. FARNSWORTH — JUDGE FELL RECONCILED, AND A MEETING ESTABLISHED AT HER HOUSE — TESTIMONY OF A. PIERSON AND WILLIAM CATON TO THE EXEMPLARY CHARACTER OF THE FAMILY — DEATH OF HER HUSBAND — HIS CHARACTER — LETTER OF CONDOLENCE FROM A. PIERSON — THEIR CHILDREN.

MARGARET FOX was born at Marsh Grange, in the parish of Dalton, in Fournis, Lancashire, England, in the year 1614. She was the daughter of John Askew, who was of an ancient and honourable family; he was honest, pious and charitable, and a man of estate and education.

She was married, in her eighteenth year, to Thomas Fell, of Swarthmore, a barrister-at-law, afterwards a justice of the Quorum in his county, a member

of several Parliaments, vice-chancellor of the county Palatine of Lancaster, and also a judge in the circuit of West Chester and North Wales, &c. Strict integrity and love of justice, tempered with mercy and moderation, were conspicuous traits in his character.

In the seventy-sixth year of her age she wrote a short biographical sketch, rehearsing some of the principal events of her life, which has been largely used in the preparation of this work; in which, speaking of her husband, she says:—"We lived together twenty-six years, in which time we had nine children. He was a tender and loving husband to me, and a tender father to his children, and one that sought after God in the best way that was made known to him. I was about sixteen years younger than he, and was one that sought after the best things, being desirous to serve God, so that I might be accepted of Him; and was inquiring after the way of the Lord, and went often to hear the best ministers that came into our parts, whom we frequently entertained at our house; many of those that were accounted the most serious, godly men, some of whom we then called lecturing ministers; and often had prayers and religious exercises in our family. This I hoped I did well in, but often feared I was short of the right way; and after this manner I was inquiring and seeking about twenty years, when, in 1652, it pleased the Lord, in his infinite mercy and goodness, to send George Fox into our country, who declared unto us the eternal truth, as it is in Jesus; and by the Word and power of the eternal God,

turned many from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

The powerful and awakening nature of the spiritual ministry of George Fox, and the effect produced by it on her own mind, and his discourse on this occasion, she thus describes:—

"Our house being a place open to entertain ministers and religious people, one of George Fox's friends brought him thither, where he staid all night; and the next day being a lecture or fast-day, he went to Ulverstone steeple-house, but came not in till people were gathered; I and my children had been a long time there before. And when they were singing, before the sermon, he came in; and when they had done, he stood up, upon a seat or form, and desired 'that he might have liberty to speak;' and he that was in the pulpit said he might. And the first words that he spoke were as followeth: 'He is not a Jew that is one outward, neither is that circumcision which is outward; but he is a Jew that is one inward, and that is circumcision which is of the heart.' And so he went on and said 'that Christ was the light of the world, and lighteth every man that cometh into the world; and that by this light they might be gathered to God,' &c. I stood up in my pew, and wondered at his doctrine; for I had never heard such before: and then he went on, and opened the Scriptures, and said: 'The Scriptures were the prophet's words, and Christ's and the apostles' words; and what, as they spoke, they enjoyed and possessed, and had it from the Lord:' and said:

'Then what had any to do with the Scriptures, but as they came to the spirit that gave them forth. You will say Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst *thou* say? Art *thou* a child of light, and hast walked in the light; and what thou speaketh, is it inwardly from God,' &c. This opened me so, that it cut me to the heart; and then I saw clearly we were all wrong. So I sat down in my pew again, and cried bitterly; and I cried up my spirit to the Lord: 'We are all thieves; we are all thieves;* we have taken the Scriptures in words, and know nothing of them in our 'yes.' So that served me, that I cannot well tell what he spoke afterwards; but he went on declaring against false prophets, priests and deceivers of the people. And he came to our house again that night, and spoke in the family amongst the servants, and they were all generally convinced. And I was struck into such sadness, I knew not what to do, my husband being from home. I saw it was the truth, and I could not deny it; and I did as the apostle saith: 'I received the truth in the love of it;' and it was opened to me so clear, that I had never a tittle in my heart against it; but I desired the Lord that I might be kept in it, and then I desired no greater portion."

George Fox, in describing the circumstances attending his visit to Swarthmore at this time, after

* Probably in allusion to John x. 1: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief, and a robber."