

**LUCRETIA
MOTT, 1793-1880**

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Lucretia Mott, 1793-1880 by John Greenleaf Whittier

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JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

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Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth :
Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors ; and
their works do follow them.—REV. xiv : 13.

OFFICE OF THE JOURNAL,
144 North 7th Street, Philadelphia, Pa.
1880.

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Bright fund

PRESERVATION MASTER
AT HARVARD

LUCRETIA MOTT.

SKETCH OF HER LIFE.

LUCRETIA MOTT was born on the Island of Nantucket, on the 3d of First month (January), 1793. Her father was Thomas Coffin, one of a race of sea captains, descended from the stock of the English Admiral Coffin, and her mother, Anna Folger, was a descendant of Abiah Folger, whose daughter was the mother of Benjamin Franklin. In the simple life on the quaint little island, Nantucket, among a population of sailors and fishermen, most of whom were Friends, Lucretia formed a singularly well-poised character. Her father, "following the sea," left the women to manage at home, and her mother kept a store, assisted by her daughter, going sometimes, when Captain Coffin was away on a long voyage, to sell in Boston the oil and candles that were staple products of the island and purchase fresh supplies of goods. Such duties, capably and bravely performed, made self-reliant women, and of that class emphatically was Lucretia Coffin. In 1804 her father removed to Boston, "and in the public and private schools of that city," said Lucretia, "I mingled with all classes without distinction." Her father was a plain man and a strict Friend. He desired his children to be brought up in the order of the Society, and trained to habits of useful industry. When she was fourteen he sent Lucretia and a younger sister to a Friends' boarding school, at Nine Partners, in Dutchess county, New York, and there pursuing her studies with patient zeal, she remained two years without once going home for holiday or vacation. At fifteen, a teacher having left, she was made an assistant, and at the end of the second year she was tendered the place of teacher, with the inducement, besides, that her services would entitle a younger sister to her education. Her father was then a successful business man in Boston, but with his views of practical usefulness in life, the arrangement met his approval. In the spring of 1809, when she was in her seventeenth year, she joined her father's family in Philadelphia, whither they had removed, and here, to the end of her remarkable life, she continued to reside.

Of her parents' family there were eight children, Lucretia being the second born of the number. The eldest was Sarah, and the others were Eliza, Mary, Thomas, Maria, Lydia and Martha. Thomas, who came to Philadelphia with his father, was an extensive tallow chandler, and also built a dry dock at Kensington—the first in Philadelphia. Martha married David Wright, of Auburn, New York, and with her husband, bore a prominent part in the anti-slavery movement.

At the early age of eighteen Lucretia married James Mott, a member of an old Quaker family, born upon Long Island. The attachment was formed at Nine Partners, where he too was a teacher. About the time of their marriage James Mott came to Philadelphia and engaged in business with Thomas Coffin. It was then just before the war of 1812-14.

Lucretia said of this: "The fluctuations in the commercial world, owing to the 'Embargo' and the war of 1812, the death of my father and the support of a family of five children devolving on my mother, surrounded us with difficulties. We resorted to various modes of obtaining a comfortable living—at one time engaged in the dry goods business, and then resumed the charge of a school, and for another year I was engaged in teaching." One business change arose from a conscientious motive. James Mott was in the cotton business, but abandoned it on account of its connection with slave labor, thereby giving up a very comfortable income, the trade being then very good. Lucretia Mott, who had then four young children, taught, and this helped to maintain the family until her husband found employment. These times of trial, however, presently passed away. At the age of twenty-five years she began to preach in the meetings of Friends, and she pursued then, as she diligently continued throughout her life, the habit of "searching the Scriptures daily," so that her acquaintance with them became wonderfully complete. While so many quote with inaccuracy as to words, if not sense, she was always letter perfect. "I never knew any one her equal," said a member of her family, "except Charles C. Burleigh." When she began her ministry great questions, political and social, soon attracted her attention. We quote substantially her own words: "My sympathy was very early enlisted for the poor slave. The class-books in school, Clarkson's pictures of the slave-trade, Elias Hicks' condemnation of unrequited toil and refusal to use slave-

labor products, had all tended to fix my opinions. The inequality of women also impressed me; I learned at school that their education cost the same as that of men, while they received as teachers but half the salary. The temperance reform early engaged my attention, and for more than twenty years (this was said several years ago,) I have practiced total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks. The cause of peace has had a share of my efforts, leading to the ultra non-resistance ground that no Christian can consistently uphold and actually engage in and support a government based on the sword. The oppression of the working classes by existing monopolies and the lowness of wages often engaged my attention, and I have held many meetings with them and heard their appeals with compassion and a great desire for a real change in the system which makes the rich richer and the poor poorer."

In 1827 and 1828, when she was thirty-five years old, occurred the famous "separation" in the Society of Friends. It has been said by an Orthodox Friend that when this event took place, there were two persons whom they sorely grieved to part with, and one of these was Lucretia Mott. In the words of a recent memorial discourse, "Lucretia Mott believed with Elias Hicks, in a God who did not need the blood sprinkled on the sacrifice, any more than he needed the smoke that rose from the ancient holocaust." He once said, in a meeting held in Philadelphia, "To the Christ who was never crucified; to the Christ who was never slain; to the Christ who cannot die, I commend you with my own soul." In this Christ, Lucretia Mott had unquestioning faith, and to the voice within she rendered implicit obedience her life long.

Lucretia Mott was among the earliest, as she was the gentlest, most earnest and single-hearted advocate of the anti-slavery cause. In the Twelfth month (December) of 1833 she took an active part in forming the American Anti-Slavery Society, and in the following year helped to organize a local Female Anti-Slavery Society. In the Fifth month (May) of 1838, Pennsylvania Hall, in Philadelphia, dedicated to "free discussion," was burnt, on the fourth day after its opening. On the third day Lucretia Mott spoke to an audience of women within its walls while brick-bats were coming through the windows, and the next day, while the building was surrounded by a mob, she "exhorted the mem-

bers of the Convention to be steadfast and solemn in the prosecution of the business for which they were assembled."

In 1840 Lucretia Mott, with William Lloyd Garrison, N. P. Rogers and Charles Lennox Remond, constituted a delegation to the World's Anti-Slavery Convention, to be held in London in the Sixth month, (June) of that year, with Clarkson as President. English prejudice, however, prevailed, and because she was a woman, she was not admitted as a delegate, but took her seat among the spectators. William Lloyd Garrison was so indignant that he, too, withdrew, and remained only as a spectator. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who first met Lucretia Mott in London at this time, says: "She was then in her prime—small in stature, slightly built, with a large head, high, square forehead, remarkably fine face, regular features, dark hair and eyes. She was gentle and refined in her manners, and conversed with earnestness and ease."

From this time forward to the proclamation by Lincoln, her part was one of the most prominent among the Abolitionists. Garrison was hardly more famous or more abused than Lucretia Mott. Even Friends soon showed signs of a great lack of "unity" with her, and from 1833 forward, there was for many years a strong party in the society who would willingly have seen her quit their membership. There was a minority, indeed, who would have disowned her, but this could not be done. She knew her rights perfectly. The order of the Society and its discipline were so familiar, that she might be termed a good constitutional lawyer upon all questions relating to them. Never suspending her ministry or her attendance at meetings, the opponents of her anti-slavery work could never catch her in the wrong.

The following, showing her influence at meetings, is from an editorial on her life and character in the Lancaster, Pa., *Inquirer*: "The writer of this heard her speak at the Quarterly Meeting of Friends, at Brick Meeting House, Cecil county, Md., in August, 1843, to a very large and attentive but somewhat excited audience. At that day the prejudice against the anti-slavery movement, in that section, was powerful and bitter, and it is questionable whether a man would have been permitted to express the plain and powerful truths that were presented by Mrs. Mott. But there was a magic in her eloquence, a power in her calm, deliberate but pitiless logic that seemed to sway the minds of her

hearers even against their will. She spoke for more than two hours, and never have we listened to a more impressive discourse."

In 1859 occurred the famous Daniel Webster Dangerfield case. The man who bore this name was claimed as the property of a citizen of Maryland, and was seized on a farm near Harrisburg. He was handcuffed and taken to a railroad station just before the departure of a train, so that there could be no interference on the part of the neighbors. The charge made at the time was that the man was a thief. The case was tried in Philadelphia before United States Commissioner J. Cooke Longstreth. George H. Earle, Edward Hopper, (a son-in-law of Lucretia Mott,) and William S. Peirce, now one of the Judges of the Common Pleas of Philadelphia, defended Dangerfield. The trial occupied one day and two nights. The room was crowded, and among the many women in the audience was Lucretia Mott. She left the prisoner's side during the protracted sittings only when it was necessary to take refreshment. With her sewing or knitting in her hands, she watched every phase of the proceedings. The man was finally declared to be free, and set at liberty. It is said that the crowd would have helped to take him and send him to Maryland, but through the assistance of Lucretia Mott and other friends, he was passed through on the "underground railroad" to Canada. Benjamin Harris Brewster, the distinguished lawyer of Philadelphia, appeared for the alleged master. Soon afterward he joined the party of freedom. It is said that when asked how he dared, with so many interests on the other side, to make this change, he answered: "Do you think there is anything I dare not do after sitting down in that court room for so many days and seeing Lucretia Mott sitting near me and wishing me; all the time in hell?" Yet how mistaken he was! That was the last thing that the sweet-spirited philanthropist would wish any one. It is probable that she never had a bitter thought.

Of her acquaintance with Channing, the great New England preacher, a recent writer says: "She read his writings with avidity, and considered him one of the foremost divines of the day. It was, however, a real pang to her, brought up as she was in that peaceful society which looked upon all persons who were paid for preaching the Gospel as "hireling" ministers, when she learned that her favorite preacher received a regular salary from his congregation. There was a time of doubt and perplexity in