

## Letter of Margaret Fox to her daughters Sarah and Susanna, 1677.

---

This letter, which has been kindly lent for the purpose of transcription, is the property of Isabella Metford, of Glasfryn, Dinas Powys, near Cardiff, to whom it has come down through her grandfather, Thomas Clark, who received it from Robert Foster, of Newcastle, who in his turn had received it from a Friend at Swarthmore, who had a box of old papers relating to Friends. It consists of a single leaf,  $10\frac{1}{2}$  by  $8\frac{1}{4}$  inches, the edges of which are much worn with time, and in one of the folds it is almost divided into two portions. The handwriting is exceedingly clear and regular,<sup>1</sup> the left hand margin of nearly an inch having been exactly kept, apparently by folding the paper over, a trace of the fold appearing at the back of the sheet. That some mechanical means were used to aid the skilled penmanship is evident, as George Fox in his postscript has not trenched upon the margin, which he assuredly would have done had he been allowed! The smallness of the writing of the letter, as compared with the postscript, is shown by the relative spaces occupied, the thirty-six lines of the former requiring a depth of six inches, whilst the five lines of the heavy and vigorous strokes of George Fox take up from two and a half to three. It will be seen that not only George Fox signs, as usual, with initials merely, but a similar mode of signature is adopted for Margaret Fox and by R. ff. and e. h.

The general tenor of the letter speaks for itself; the pious expressions which form so much of the correspondence of the good Friends of the time occupy but few lines, and the main part of the letter deals with important business, and is not devoid of delightful human touches. The tender allusion of the writer to her husband's state of health is the first matter of importance after the salutation with which the letter commences. How true to twentieth century life is the picture of the young man who "looked for something more," the perception of Margaret Fox of the young man's thoughts, and the immediate response in producing the shilling from her pocket!

<sup>1</sup> The handwriting of this letter does not bear any resemblance to that reproduced as M. Fell's in Webb's *Swarthmoor Hall*;

The Sarah and Susanna to whom the letter was addressed were afterwards Sarah Mead and Susanna Ingram, as stated in one of the endorsements, which is in the handwriting of John, son of Daniel Abraham. The "Mary" of the letter and "m. l." of the postscript refer, no doubt, to Mary Lower. There is a loving touch in J.A.'s endorsement not only, as was natural, to the "Dear and Honourd Grand Mother," but also to "Dear Grand father ffox," accentuated by the words "and his own hand writing." It is pleasing to note from this and similar mention of him in many places, how dear George Fox became to his wife's children and grandchildren.

From the eighth edition of *The Journal*, vol. ii., page 255, we learn that George Fox left Swarthmore on the 26th of 1st Month, 1677, and after visiting Thomas Pearson and Thomas Camm, was taken from the house of the latter, at Camsgill, by John Blaykling to his house at Draw-well near Sedbergh.<sup>2</sup> He had visited Draw-well soon after his marriage, in company with Margaret Fox and several members of her family, on which occasion some were lodged at Francis Blaykling's, the small Draw-well farmhouse not affording sufficient accommodation for all the guests. His worthy host, John Blaykling, is mentioned several times in *The Journal*: he was a faithful minister of the Gospel who travelled much, and who died in 1705 aged 80 years.<sup>3</sup>

Two or three nights were spent at Draw-well and "large and precious" meetings were held, ending with one at the host's house, at which many assembled who were on their way to Quarterly Meeting at Kendal. Margaret Fox went back with these, as also her daughter Rachel, who had accompanied her mother and step-father from Swarthmore.

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to correspondents in Westmorland Quarterly Meeting for information as to Draw-well, which is a small "beneficiary" farm of about sixteen acres in the hamlet of Howgill, two miles from Sedbergh. The house is let as a cottage and the land is in the occupation of a neighbouring farmer. It is situated on the sunny slope of a hill, and no material alteration is known to have been made in it during the last two and a half centuries. The draw-well itself is close to the back door of the house under the Howgill Fells. In 1901 the well was dry, a condition that had not been known in the memory of living men. Away below is the river Lune which here divides Yorkshire from Westmorland, and over the brow of the fell opposite is the rock known as "Fox's Pulpit," from which George Fox preached to a large concourse of people in 1652. The occasion of which we write was not therefore the first time that he visited the neighbourhood, nor was it the first time that he had experienced the Blaykling hospitality.

<sup>3</sup> See *Piety Promoted*.

George Fox, with Leonard Fell as companion, went on through Yorkshire and thence to London, finally reaching William Mead's house at Highgate, and attending the Yearly Meeting of 1677.

ISAAC SHARP.

Draw-well y<sup>e</sup> 31<sup>st</sup> of the 1<sup>st</sup> mo<sup>th</sup>, 1677.

Deare Sarah & Susanna.

Jn y<sup>e</sup> blessed Loue & Life y<sup>t</sup> remaines for ever, in which o<sup>r</sup> deare portion and Jnheritance stands & consists, in this is yo<sup>r</sup> ffather & My deare Loue remembered vnto you, Knowing y<sup>t</sup> you have A portion and an Jnheritance in this, with Vs : and y<sup>t</sup> Jt may Jncrease & multiply, is y<sup>e</sup> desire of OUR SOULES. And by this you may Know, y<sup>t</sup> wee are well gott hither, praised bee y<sup>e</sup> Lord, and yo<sup>r</sup> ffath<sup>r</sup> Js not Altogether so weary as Hee was, but hee cannot endure to ryde but very little Journeys, & Lytes often ; but hee is pretty well & harty, praised bee y<sup>e</sup> Lord. J was this Morninge w<sup>th</sup> y<sup>e</sup> Vice Chancellor<sup>4</sup> att his house, Jn<sup>o</sup> Blayklinge went with mee : and hee was very Loveing & Kind to Vs, and J accknowledged his favour y<sup>t</sup> Hee had done for vs y<sup>e</sup> last Assizes : and J also told him how they threatned y<sup>e</sup> Bayliffe to Jndicte him, & gett him fined : and Hee said, Lett him alone for y<sup>t</sup> hee would see to that ; and then J spoke to Him Concerning y<sup>e</sup> order y<sup>t</sup> y<sup>e</sup> Judge gaue in open Court y<sup>e</sup> last Assizes, and that it was quasht by y<sup>e</sup> man's oath, after it was given in open Court ; and J desired him to acquaint y<sup>e</sup> Judge with y<sup>t</sup> order : and hee said, Hee would. And hee said, if there was not another order Recorded, to dissanull y<sup>t</sup> former order (which gaue thee thy Liberty), then they could doe well enough, but if there was another order, to Continue the Jmprisonm<sup>t</sup>, then there could bee nothing done ; And hee sent for Tho : Heblethwaite<sup>5</sup> and badd him looke out y<sup>e</sup> Pleas, and hee said, Hee had them

<sup>4</sup> I am again indebted to our local correspondents for light thrown upon the affair respecting which Margaret Fox in her business-like way interviewed the Vice-Chancellor (of the Duchy of Lancaster), who, it appears, was Sir John Otway, of Ingmire Hall. He had assisted the daughters of Margaret Fox in London, in their efforts to secure their mother's release from Lancaster Castle. Sir John Otway was the son of Roger Otway, whose first wife was Anne, daughter of James and Mary Hebblethwaite.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Hebblethwaite was Sir John Otway's cousin, and probably his Secretary. He is not known to have joined Friends, as did his brother Alexander, of Gate in Dent.

in his Poke-mantle<sup>6</sup> at Kendall, and hee would looke them out at Lancast<sup>r</sup>. thy ffath<sup>r</sup> gaue mee A Ginny to giue him, & hee was mighty well pleased, and said, Hee Loued SARAH dearly, hee would doe what ever layd in his power for her : J gaue Tho : Heblethwaite 5s. and desired him to bee carefull to looke about Jt, and told him Wee could none of Vs be there, and therefore wee Committ it wholly to you : and hee bad mee write to Rich : Cleayton to putt them in minde of Jt, and to looke about Jt, and his M<sup>r</sup> said soe too : and J gaue him the warrant, & hee called for Tho : Heblethwaite to take a Coppy of Jt : and after hee had written Jt, another young man & hee examined Jt, & gave mee Jt, and J saw hee looked for som thing more, and J had A shilling in my pockett, & J gave him Jtt : and so they were mighty well pleased, and J beleive they will doe what they cann : and wee had a fine oppertunity with them : and Jt was somthing strange y<sup>t</sup> wee should light soe, and neuer forcast for Jt : for hee has been but two nights at home : and J thinke hee goes away to Morrow ; ffor hee s<sup>d</sup> hee thought y<sup>e</sup>. Judge would bee in to day. J have written to Rich : Cleayton as they ordered mee, and desired him [*paper torn*] y<sup>e</sup> order of Henry Bodon<sup>7</sup> : and also to looke about, to see if they did any thing Against Benson<sup>7</sup> : and this is all y<sup>t</sup> wee cann doe at p<sup>r</sup>sent, but Leaues Jt to y<sup>e</sup> Lord. so Rememb<sup>r</sup> my d<sup>r</sup> & eternall loue to Mary, & J hope in y<sup>e</sup> Lord wee shall bee at home about this day weeke :

Yo<sup>r</sup> Moth<sup>r</sup> Jn the Lord

M. F.

soe be cherfull in the seed of life which is over all in which yov have satisfaction & life & yov may anser f r the next wee[k] for this j have writin to him to hovld acoraspond[ence] with yov soe mi love to you & m l & frends gff

the Jndeared salutashon of my loue is un to youe R ff.

The salutation of m[y] [d] Love is to yo<sup>u</sup> all e : h :

<sup>6</sup> Dr. J. A. H. Murray, of Oxford, writes in answer to our enquiry respecting this word :—“ *Poke-mantle* is a well-known northern form of *portemanteau*, from late sixteenth century onward. The word is, of course, French, originally *porte-mantel*. Like all foreign words it was exposed to what is called ‘popular etymology,’ *i.e.* the instinctive impulse to connect it with something already known—the process that made asparagus into ‘sparrow-grass,’ and makes bronchitis into ‘brown typhus.’ *Mantel* was easily identified, but *porte* had no intelligible meaning, so was transformed into *poke*, bag, as the thing was a travelling bag.”

<sup>7</sup> Of Boden and Benson no particulars are forthcoming.

ENDORSEMENTS.

To Sarah Fell att Swarthmoore These with care ddd in Lancashire.

My Dear and Honourd Grand Mothers Letter to my Dear Aunt Mead and Aunt Ingram before marridge. And a few Lines In the Bottom of my Dear Grand father ffoxs and his own hand writing.

m : ff : &c : to S : F : &c : y<sup>e</sup> 31. 1<sup>st</sup> mo<sup>th</sup> 1677.

Drawell

these enclosed & Compared

These are all Ingrossed and Compared

---

Inscriptions on a large unhewn stone in the old Friends' Burying Ground at Leiston, in Suffolk.

---

ON THE SOUTH SIDE.

In the year 1670, This piece of land was purchased by the Society of people called Quakers, And for many years used as a Burying Ground for their dead.

In 1786, it was planted with trees, and this stone placed.

ON THE NORTH SIDE.

Mortal ! look here, think on thy own frail state ;  
And learn from this, thy own most certain fate.  
Here, mixed with dust, obscure from mortal's eye,  
The mouldering bones of ancient worthies lie.  
This grove is raised for that sufficient end,  
To guard their dust, and mouldering bones defend,  
And this is raised, their monumental stone,  
Not to record their deeds, but say they are gone.

Written, and executed on the stone, by a member of the Society of Friends, at Saxmundham.

*Information supplied by Edwin R. Ransome, of London.*