

George Fox's Leather Suit

JN the seventh volume of *The Journal*, p. 78, is a transcript of part of an ancient manuscript in **D** consisting of notes on the life of George Fox. It is there stated: "He was made to get Lethern Breeches and Doublet," and a note points out that while the fact of Fox wearing leather breeches was well-known, this was, so far, the only known reference to a *suit* of leather. I have now come on another.

There has lately been presented to **D** a large manuscript volume written by Thomas Thompson, of Skipsea in S.E. Yorkshire, who died in 1704, aged seventy-two or seventy-three years. The earlier part is entitled: "Of the Sufferings of God's People, &c.," and it sets forth a history of sufferings endured for conscience sake in England and elsewhere during the four or five hundred years preceding the writer's time. The sixth part, beginning on p. 296, is entitled: "Being a Relation of Some of The Sufferings of The People of God Called Quakers." It starts with an account of George Fox, the writer evidently summarising the early part of Fox's *Journal* as edited by Ellwood, in 1694, but sometimes adding information within his own knowledge. In my *Personality of George Fox*, pp. 11, 13, I have quoted, from one of Thompson's printed works, passages descriptive of Fox's appearance and habits. On page 299 of the manuscript volume, Thompson tells of Fox coming into Holderness in 1652 (*Jnl. bicent. i.* 96), near to where he (Thompson) lived, and of his own conviction by means of Fox's preaching, he himself having already "had some sense of the working of an inward principle." He adds:

"Shortly after, the name Quakers was in scorn giuen us in these parts, for when George was here it was not used but He was Generaly Called by the worlds people Leather Coat because he wore Leather Breeches and doublet, though the name Quaker was given Him at Darby, long before he came here." The "long before" was in 1650.

About the time that George Fox was wearing a leather suit, Thomas Traherne (1636 (?)-1674), the writer of devotional meditations, was doing the same in order to live economically. He writes:

"When I came into the country, and being seated among silent trees, and meads and hills, had all my time in mine own hands, I resolved to spend it all, whatever it cost me, in the search of happiness, and to satiate that burning thirst which Nature had enkindled in me from my youth. In which I was so resolute, that I chose rather to live upon ten pounds a year, and to go in leather clothes, and feed upon bread and water, so that I might have all my time clearly to myself, than to keep many thousands per annum in an estate of life where my time would be devoured in care and labour." *Centuries of Meditations*, ed. Dobell, 1908, second issue, p. 194.

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