

**FRUITS OF SOLITUDE: IN  
REFLECTIONS AND  
MAXIMS, RELATING TO THE  
CONDUCT OF HUMANLIFE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649590131

Fruits of Solitude: In Reflections and Maxims, Relating to the Conduct of HumanLife by  
William Penn

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Cover @ 2017

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By WILLIAM PENN.

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PHILADELPHIA:  
HENRY LONGSTRETH,  
No. 738 SANSON STREET,  
1877. \*

## PREFACE.

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READER, this enchiridion, I present thee with, is the fruit of solitude: a school few care to learn in, though none instructs us better. Some parts of it are the result of serious reflection; others the flashings of lucid intervals; written for private satisfaction, and now published for a help to human conduct.

The author blesseth God for his retirement, and kisses that gentle hand

which led him into it; for though it should prove barren to the world, it can never do so to him.

He has now had some time he could call his own, a property he was never so much master of before; in which he has taken a view of himself and the world; and observed wherein he hath hit and missed the mark; what might have been done, what mended, and what avoided, in his human conduct, together with the omissions and excesses of others, as well societies and governments, as private families and persons. And he verily thinks, were he to live over his life again, he could not only, with God's grace, serve him, but his neighbor and himself, better than he hath done, and have seven

years of his time to spare. And yet, perhaps, he hath not been the worst or the idlest man in the world; nor is he the oldest. And this is the rather said, that it might quicken thee, reader, to lose none of the time that is yet thine.

There is nothing of which we are apt to be so lavish as of time, and about which we ought to be more solicitous; since without it we can do nothing in this world. Time is what we want most, but what, alas! we use worst; and for which God will certainly most strictly reckon with us, when time shall be no more.

It is of that moment to us in reference to both worlds, that I can hardly wish any man better, than that he would seriously consider what he does



with his time; how and to what end he employs it; and what returns he makes to God, his neighbor, and himself for it. Will he never have a ledger for this; this, the greatest wisdom and work of life?

To come but once into the world, and trifle away our true enjoyment of it, and of ourselves in it, is lamentable indeed. This one reflection would yield a thinking person great instruction. And, since nothing below man can so think, man, in being thoughtless, must needs fall below himself. And that, to be sure, such do, as are unconcerned in the use of their most precious time.

This is but too evident, if we will allow ourselves to consider, that there

is hardly any thing we take by the right end, or improve to its just advantage.

We understand little of the works of God, either in nature or grace. We pursue false knowledge, and mistake education extremely. We are violent in our affections, confused and immethodical in our whole life; making that a burthen, which was given for a blessing, and so of little comfort to ourselves or others; misapprehending the true notion of happiness, and so missing of the right use of life, and way of happy living.

And until we are persuaded to stop, and step a little aside, out of the noisy crowd and incumbering hurry of the world, and calmly take a prospect of

things, it will be impossible we should be able to make a right judgment of ourselves, or know our own misery. But after we have made the just reckonings which retirement will help us to, we shall begin to think the world in great measure mad, and that we have been in a sort of Bedlam all this while.

Reader, whether young or old, think it not too soon or too late to turn over the leaves of thy past life: and be sure to fold down where any passage of it may affect thee: and bestow thy remainder of time, to correct those faults in thy future conduct, be it in relation to this or the next life. What thou wouldst do, if what thou hast done were to do again, be sure to do as long as thou livest, upon the like occasions.