

**AN APPEAL ON THE SUBJECT OF THE  
ACCUMULATION OF WEALTH:  
ADDRESSED TO THE SOCIETY OF  
FRIENDS, USUALLY CALLED QUAKERS,  
INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY**

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An Appeal on the Subject of the Accumulation of Wealth: Addressed to the Society of Friends,  
usually called Quakers, individually and collectively by William Phillips

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**WILLIAM PHILLIPS**

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# AN APPEAL

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE

## ACCUMULATION OF WEALTH,

ADDRESSED TO THE

### SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,

USUALLY CALLED

### QUAKERS,

*INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY.*

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— the deceitfulness of riches choke the word. JESUS CHRIST.

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February 3, 1942

## TO THE READER.

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It may be objected against the following pages, that the writer has not placed his name in the title-page; but he shrinks from the idea of having the finger pointed at him as a public accuser, as by some he might be termed; he therefore masks himself the more studiously, though not for the purpose of indulging in the licence, too often assumed by anonymous writers, of launching at others the shafts of folly or of vengeance from behind a screen; he hopes, however, to be acquitted of folly, and has no feeling of revenge to gratify.

Whether the writer be in membership with the Society of Quakers or not, is of no importance; but he can honestly say, that he admires all those which he esteems to be their fundamental principles, and has no doubt of their ultimately prevailing, to an extent far beyond their present limit.

In this tract, its subject, the accumulation of wealth, is treated of in a moral point of view, but in a more important degree in connexion with Christianity, and with Quakerism, as founded upon it. It is not however so much the wish of the writer to insist upon and justify his own opinions on the subject, as to present to the consideration

deration of the Society of Quakers, and of its individual members, certain injunctions relating to it, recorded as having been promulgated by the Founder of the Christian's faith, and which, since his injunctions pre-eminently constitute the laws of the Christian, must necessarily, it should seem, require the religious observance of the Quakers, especially as Christians of the highest order,—a distinction which they claim for themselves;—offering at the same time such observations, whether his own or of better authority, as he imagines to be consistent with the views of the “*true Quaker*.” but he feels assured that he has by no means exhausted the subject, and equally so that the well-being, perhaps even the existence of the Society, is involved greatly in its future legislation on this important point.

Some of the observations contained in the annexed pages, may possibly induce the rich to flout them, as the capricious opinions of a contemner of riches, and to say with lord Bacon, “Believe not much them that despise riches, for they despise them that despair of them;” but the writer can say with the author of the *Economy of Human Life*, “The man to whom God hath given riches (or as John Woolman expresses it, who is *tried with plentiful estates*), and blessed with a *mind to employ them aright*, is peculiarly favoured, and highly distinguished.”



## AN APPEAL, &c.

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**I**T is declared by a late writer, that "throughout the religious system adopted by Friends, there exists an unbroken harmony, a real adaptation of practice with practice, and of part with part; and no sooner is any one of our testimonies forsaken, than this harmony is interrupted, and the work is in some degree (whether greater or less) marred on the wheel\*." He also observes, that "Friends have been led to adopt a higher and purer standard of action, and one which appears to be more exactly conformed to the requisitions of the divine law, than that which generally prevails among their fellow-Christians†." Again; "The religious system of Friends—is bottomed on the unvarying principles of the law of God ‡."

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\* "Observations on the Religious Peculiarities of the Society of Friends, by Joseph John Gurney," London, 1824, p. 363.

† Ibid, p. 299.

‡ Ibid, p. 325. Of this work the writer has not yet perused the whole; but so much as he has read of it, appears to be written with great clearness and force.

The ground taken by the author in the sentences above-quoted, though elevated and imposing, is such as is not likely to meet with disputation on the part of the true Quaker—of him who has thought, and read, and judged for himself, and who must long have desired that some member of the Society, worthy of the task, and equal to it, should arise to vindicate its tenets; for the scholastic form which its great apologist gave to his work, is not adapted to the taste even of the most determined readers of the present day, and still less to those among the Quakers who read but little, and that little too often confined to the productions of their own members. The Society of Friends however, so far as the writer's opportunities allow him to judge, is becoming better versed than heretofore in the lore of the present, and of former times. Education of a more general range is fast taking place among its youth, and now that the world at large views its tenets and peculiarities with less horror, and the individuals composing it more as *men*, and less as empty enthusiasts, than was formerly the case,—now that the temper of the times—the religious temper—is calmed by a better feeling of the true spirit of Christianity, and that man judges of his fellow rather by his actions, than by little differences in creed, the Society is gaining a reputation which it appears to deserve, as enclosing within its pale, men who exert themselves to the best of their abilities, and according to their station, for the public and private good.

*The writer has turned over almost every page*  
of

of the work which furnished the preceding extracts, *wishing* to find some part of it, some chapter, dedicated to the consideration of the influence upon the Society of Friends, as a Christian people, of that indulgence in the accumulation of riches, which in these times of superabundant wealth, is manifestly making great inroads upon the feelings and actions of too many of its individual members.

No such chapter, however, is to be found: at page 306 there is, indeed, a note composed of extracts from the printed "Epistles," containing advices against covetousness and earthly-mindedness, and cautions respecting trade generally; but without any direct injunction against the accumulation of great possession. Yet it will doubtless be acknowledged by the author, who, if the writer mistake not, is a preacher among the Quakers, that it can scarcely be hoped for the rich man, that he shall be divested of the love of that power, and the indulgence, in a greater or less degree, of that pride and vanity, which are too observable among the rich of every society, and which are utterly inconsistent with that "plainness of speech, behaviour, and apparel," so strongly inculcated by the Quakers, as a part of their religious system of Christianity. These subjects are treated of by the author, in a chapter dedicated to the *moral views* of the Society: and as the note, on the subject of wealth, is appended to a sentence in that chapter, it may be concluded, that the author views it only as a *moral* question.