

*Quaker Armor in S. Weir Mitchell's Fiction*

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Did the 19<sup>th</sup> century version of the Quaker testimony on Equality extend to lovers of their own sex, such as Walt Whitman, Henry Clapp, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Susan B Anthony, Phebe Ann Coffin Hanaford, and Henry Scott Tuke? Two decades of my research suggests that it did. But how did Friends manage to negotiate the dangerous backlash inherent in Victorian society? My answer has always been that they were protected behind “the fence” of Quaker prohibitions against the arts and against worldly fashion. This is further suggested by S. Weir Mitchell, Walt Whitman's physician, and author of the extremely queer novel, *Hugh Wynne, Free Quaker*:

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“I suppose,” said I, desirous to turn the talk from what seemed to me dangerous ground,—“I suppose there is no rule about Friends’ dress, is there ? Who sets the fashions for Friends?” ...

...“It has little beauty,” said Oldmixon, “this Friends' dress, but it may have its use, for all that. For instance, no one would insult or strike a man in drab, however great the provocation he might give. It is as good as chain-armor.”

S. Weir Mitchell. "Thee and You," in *Hephzibah Guinness: Thee and You; and A draft on the bank of Spain*. (New York: The Century Company, 1899).