

gested at these times ought to push our lives farther and farther in the mental world.

ELLA WEEKS.

### A QUAKERS' MEETING.

Reader, would'st thou know what true peace and quiet mean ; would'st thou find a refuge from the noises and clamours of the multitude ; would'st thou enjoy at once solitude and society ; would'st thou possess the depth of thy own spirit in stillness, without being shut out from the consoling faces of thy species ; would'st thou be alone, and yet accompanied ; solitary, yet not desolate ; singular, yet not without some to keep thee in countenance ; a unit in aggregate ; a simple in composite ? Come with me into a Quaker's Meeting.

Dost thou love silence as deep as that "before the winds were made ?" Go not out into the wilderness, descend not into the profundities of the earth ; shut not up thy casements ; nor pour wax into the little cells of thy ears with little-faithed self-mistrusting Ulysses, retire with me into a Quaker's Meeting.

For a man to refrain from good words, and to hold his peace, is commendable ; but for a multitude, it is great mastery.

What is the stillness of the desert compared with this place ? What the uncommunicating muteness of fishes ?—here the Goddess reigns and revels.—"Boreas, and Cecias, and Argestes loud," do not with their inter-confounding uproars more augment the brawl, nor the waves of the blown Baltic with their clubbed sounds, than their opposite (silence her sacred self) is multiplied and rendered more intense by numbers and by sympathy. She, too, hath her deeps, that call unto deeps. Negation herself has a positive more or less, and closed eyes would seem to obscure the great obscurity of midnight.

There are wounds which an imperfect solitude cannot heal. By imperfect I mean that which a man enjoyeth

by himself. The perfect is that which he can sometimes attain in crowds, but nowhere so absolutely as in a Quakers' meeting. Those first hermits did certainly understand this principle when they retired into Egyptian solitudes, not singly, but in shoals, to enjoy one another's want of conversation. The Carthusian is bound to his brethren by this agreeing spirit of incommunicativeness. In secular occasions, what so pleasant as to be reading a book through a long winter evening, with a friend sitting by—say, a wife—he, or she, too (if that be probable), reading another, without interruption or oral communication ? Can there be no sympathy without the gabble of words ? Away with this shy, single, shade-and-cavern-haunting solitariness. Give me, Master Zimmerman, a sympathetic solitude.

To pace alone in cloisters, or side aisles of some cathedral, time-stricken :

Or underhanging mountains,  
Or by the fall of fountains ;

is but a vulgar luxury, compared with that which those enjoy who come together for the purposes of more complete, abstracted solitude. This is the loneliness "to be felt." The Abbey Church of Westminster hath nothing so solemn, so spirit-soothing, as the naked walls and benches of a Quakers' Meeting. Here are no tombs, no inscriptions.

———Sands, ignoble things,  
Dropt from the ruined sides of kings,

But here is something, which throws antiquity herself into the foreground—*silence*—eldest of things—language of old Night—primitive Discourser—to which the insolent decays of mouldering grandeur have but arrived by a violent, and, as we may say, unnatural progression.

How reverend is the view of these hush'd heads

Looking tranquillity !

Nothing plotting, nought caballing, unmischievous synod ! convocation without intrigue ! parliament without debate ! what a lesson dost thou read to council and to consistory !—If my pen treat of you lightly—as