

QUIETNESS BEFORE GOD.

Quietness before God, especially in hours of trial, is one of the most rare and difficult of graces. Yet when it is gained, it proves one of the most wholesome in its influence. None pleases God more; none renders religion more beautiful in the eyes of men. We shudder at the sight of that surgical knife which God employs upon us. Our self-love rebels against the excruciating "operation;" but when God—who wounds in order to heal—is engaged in His providential process of amputating a darling lust, or cutting out an ulcer of besetting sin, our "strength is to *sit still*." "Keep still, my friend; be quiet," says the army surgeon to the writhing soldier under his keen knife. "Restlessness only endangers a false cut of the knife, and only aggravates the wound." So, when God is operating on the heart by sharp trials, the first duty of His child is perfect, submissive, unquestionable quietness. A score of Christians can pray and give and work for God, where one can be found ready to sit down and *suffer*. To go into battle with the bugles sounding, and the very blood leaping to the fingers' end under the impetuous charge, is full of thrilling exhilaration; but to be picked up bloody and mangled, and borne back among pitying comrades to the rear; to be laid down helpless in the hospital, and await your slow turn for the surgeon's probe; to be transferred from his knife (with one limb the less) into the nurse's silent "ward" of sufferers—to do and bear all this calls out the loftiest qualities of heroism. The battle-field costs less than the hospital. So in the spiritual conflict God puts especial honour on the grace of passive submission. He commends the "strength to sit still;" He approves that patient quietness which "behaves itself like a child which is weaned of its mother." And the loftiest saints in the Bible are those who have become the most "perfect through suffering."

—To walk with God is not only the secret of joy and fellowship; it is the condition of all acceptable service, of all real usefulness. The value of what we *do* depends upon what we *are*; and what we are depends upon our intimate fellowship with God.

—Pleasure is the mere accident of our being, and work its natural and most holy necessity.