FRUITS OF SOLITUDE IN REFLECTIONS AND MAXIMS RELATING TO THE CONDUCT OF HUMAN LIFE

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Fruits of Solitude in Reflections and Maxims Relating to the Conduct of Human Life by William Penn

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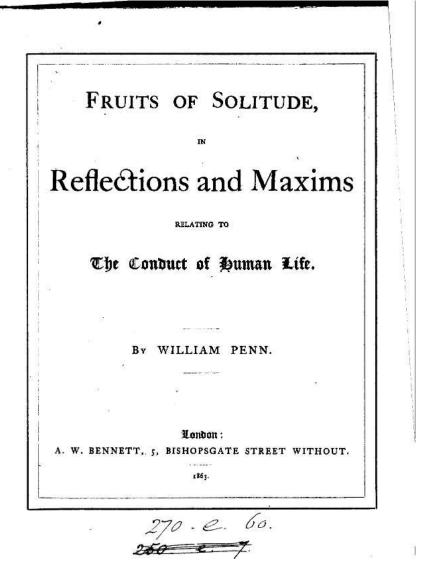
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WILLIAM PENN

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Preface.

THE

READER,

THIS enchiridion, I prefent thee with, is the fruit of folitude: a fchool few care to learn in, though none inftructs us better. Some parts of it are the refult of ferious reflection; others the flafhings of lucid intervals: written for private fatisfaction, and now published for an help to human conduct.

The author bleffeth God for his retirement, and kiffes that gentle hand which led him into it: for though it fhould prove barren to the world, it can never do fo to him.

He has now had fome time he could call his own, a property he was never fo much mafter of before: in which he has taken a view of himfelf and the world; and obferved wherein he hath hit and miffed the mark; what might have been done, what mended, and what avoided, in his human conduct; together with the omiffions and exceller of others, as well focieties and governments, as private families and perfons. And he verily thinks were he to live over his life again, he could not only, with God's grace, ferve him, but his neighbour and himfelf, better than he hath done, and have feven years of his time to fpare. And yet, perhaps, he hath not been the worlt or the idleft man in the world; nor is he the okdeft. And this is the rather faid, that it might quicken thee, reader, to lofe none of the time that is yet thine.

There is nothing of which we are apt to be fo lavish as of time, and about which we ought to be more folicitous; fince 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.

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It is of that moment to us in reference to both worlds, that I can hardly with any man better, than that he would ferioufly confider what he does with his time: how and to what end he employs it; and what returns he makes to God, his neighbour, and himfelf for it. Will he never have a ledger for this; this, the greateft wifdom and work of life?

To come but once into the world, and trifle away our true enjoyment of it, and of ourfelves in it, is lamentable indeed. This one reflection would yield a thinking perfon great inftruction. And, fince nothing below man can fo think, man in being thoughtlefs mult needs fall below himfelf. And that, to be fure, fuch do, as are unconcerned in the use of their most precious time.

This is but too evident, if we will allow ourfelves to confider, 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 purfue falle knowledge, and miftake education extremely. We are violent in our affections, confuded and immethodical in our whole lite; making that a burden, which was given for a bleffing, and fo of little comfort to ourfelves or others; milapprehending the true notion of happinefs, and fo miffing of the right ufe of life, and way of happy living.

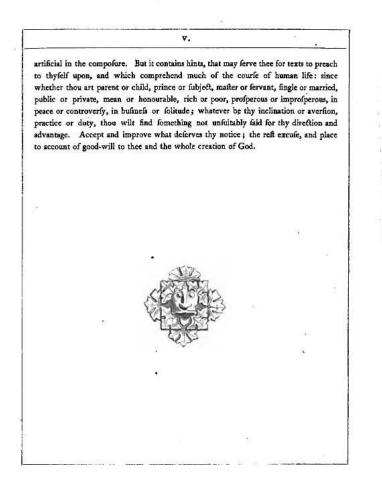
And until we are perfuaded to flop, and flep a little afide, out of the noify crowd and incumbering hurry of the world; and calmly take a profpect of things, it will be impoffible we flould be able to make a right judgment of ourfelves, or know our own mifery. But after we have made the juft reckonings, which retirement will help us to, we fhall begin to think the world in great measure mad, and that we have been in a fort of Bedlam all this while.

Reader, whether young or old, think it not too foon or too late to turn over the leaves of thy paft life: and be fure to fold down where any paffage of it may affect thee: and beflow thy remainder of time, to correct those faults in thy future conduct, be it in relation to this or the next life. What thou wouldft do, if what thou haft done were to do again, be fure to do as long as thou livefl, upon the like occafions.

Our refolutions feem to be vigorous, as often as we reflect upon our paft errors; but alas! they are apt to flag again upon fresh temptations to the same things.

The author does not pretend to deliver thee an exact piece; his bufiness not being oftentation, but charity. It is mifcellaneous in the matter of it, and by no means

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Fruits ol Solitude,

REFLECTIONS AND MAXIMS.

PART I.

Ignorance.



T is admirable to confider how many millions of people come into, and go out of the world, ignorant of themfelves, and of the world they have lived in.

2. If one went to fee Windfor Caftle, or Hampton Court, it would be ftrange not to obferve and remember the fituation, the building, the gardens, fountains, etc., that make up the beauty and pleafure of fuch a feat. And yet few people know themfelves: no, not their own bodies, the houfes of their minds, the moft curious ftructure of the world; a living, walking tabernacle; nor the world of which it was made, and out of which it was fed; which would be fo much our benefit, as well as our pleafure to know. We cannot doubt of this when we are told that the "invifible things of God are brought to light by the things that are feen;" and confequently we read our duty in them, as often as we look upon them, to him that is the great and wife author of them, if we look as we fhould do.