

# **LIFE'S QUIET HOURS**

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Life's quiet hours by Samuel Burnham

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**SAMUEL BURNHAM**

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## Introductory Chapter.

The broad highways of life are, and have ever been, the resort of the many. The lanes and hedge-row paths are trodden but by few. There is no doubt that the projector of a new railroad renders a much more important service to his country than he who is only occupied in trimming a hawthorn hedge: but all are not constituted alike; and as the hedge must be trimmed, it is well that there are those whose inclination as well as powers alike dispose them to linger in the shade.

A stranger rambling through a beautiful hamlet, far removed from the noise and tumult of the busy world, was struck with the

air of exceeding quiet which prevailed around. The leafy woods which rustled with the soft breeze that moved among the branches, and the clear stream that, winding along among the underwood, formed ever and anon a waterfall among the broken ground that constituted its channel, produced the only sounds which fell upon his ear. As he advanced, a solitary woodman appeared coming up the glade, and in one or two cottages a stray female and a little child. "Where are all your people gone?" said he. "O, they are all away," said the woodman; "some to the election, and some to the fair, and some to this new railroad business. I think our folks' heads are turned." "And why are you not gone too?" said he. "I have no mind to it," said the old man; "I have been collecting firewood for my dame." "And you too," said the stranger, addressing a young woman who was kneading flour at the door of her cottage. "Why, sir," said she, "we are best at home: you see, some must stay to prepare the even-



ing meal, and keep the house in order; and if our people do not come home before, you see they are sure to come at night."

It seems to us, gentle reader, that a parallel might be drawn between the world around us and the inhabitants of this quiet village. The world is in a high state of feverish excitement. "Many are hurrying to and fro, and knowledge is increased." The great events which are crowding one upon another, each one of which is sufficiently important to form a distinct volume in future history, may well call forth the deepest energies of our race, and send out the most capable and stirring spirits among us to mingle in the mighty fray, and from the tangled and complicated mass to draw forth the thread which shall guide the nations into peace.

And while some are thus engaged, others are tracing back the chart of prophecy, and endeavoring to read from its mysterious pages the meaning of the mighty events which are rolling on with such fearful rapidity. With

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earnest and inquiring heed do they ponder the amazing theme, and all-absorbing is the interest to their spirits. And yet do they, notwithstanding all their deep research, fail to meet in one common result; so that we are almost tempted to believe that the subject is too high for man's feeble powers to reach. Yet let them press on; for the Scripture, speaking of the sure word of prophecy, says, "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed." It is a high and mysterious, but not a forbidden subject of research, if man, deeply conscious of his feeble powers, will prosecute the search with humility.

Others, again, are watching with anxious eyes the incursions of that superstition which threatens again to desolate our land, and are preparing with holy zeal to stem the torrent ere it break down all our barriers. By public disputation, by private argument, by intense study, by prayer and meditation, they are making ready all the weapons of their warfare to cope with their wily foe. And well does it

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believe them to gird on their spiritual armor, and to see that helmet, shield, and sword are at hand for the conflict; for they "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

And if they who read the signs of the times are reading aright, this dim twilight which is gradually obscuring our noonday beam is but the precursor of a midnight darkness more awful than any which the sons of men have yet been called on to witness,—even the darkness of infidelity, where neither sun nor star appeareth. May "He who sitteth upon the circle of the earth," watching in the calm majesty of omnipotence over this chaos of confusion, give to his children wisdom, and knowledge, and strength, and a firm, unshaken trust in Him, that they may be able to "withstand in the evil day," and look forward without dismay even to the time when "the heavens shall pass away with a great