

THE HOME CIRCLE.

MOTHERS' WORDS.

As I crossed the end of a lane in a thickly-peopled town I heard a loud and angry voice, and turned to see who spoke. A knot of women stood talking at one of the doors. The voice came from one of them, who broke off from the conversation to call to her little boy, who was playing with another child some way down the lane. "Come here, child," cried the mother. The boy looked up, but did not stir. "Come here, this minute," was repeated in a louder tone. Still the child did not come. "Do you hear?" shouted the woman at the full pitch of her voice. "You come when I call, or I'll break every bone in your skin when I catch you." The two children only gathered up their marbles, and moved off to a greater distance, out of sight and sound. The mother gave one angry look after them, and then turned round and continued the conversation as if nothing had happened. As for me, I went sadly on my way; and as I went, I thought on "mothers' words." Here are some of my thoughts.

I thought of my own mother, long since gone to her rest. I remembered that her words were always gentle, and always minded. No harsh word ever passed her lips—to her children at least. There was love even in her reproofs. But there was truth also. She never said what she did not mean; and what she said, we knew she would do, though sorry to give us pain. And so her children loved her. And long after she was gone from among them, they loved her still. A mother's love kept a deep place in their hearts: her words were not forgotten.

I thought to myself, Will that little boy love his mother's memory? Does he love her now? Does he respect, or even believe her? Certainly there was no sign of love on either side: on her side, loud, angry words, which meant nothing; on his cool disobedience. He thought it as well not to let her "catch" him; but he did not think her in earnest. He knew full well that her words would end in nothing, if he did but get away for the moment; so off he went. And he judged rightly. The woman whose words were so outrageous was the next moment deep in gossip again, and when next the boy came in her way, most likely had forgotten all that had happened. And so, probably, this mother and son went on together always. The boy got many angry words, and many a cuff too; but his mother had no control over him. How should she, when there was neither truth nor love in her conduct towards him? Most probably he did much as he liked, and cared little for his mother or her words. What will be his recollection of his mother when gone? What influence will her words have on him in after life?

I fear there are many such mothers. I have often been pained at hearing how mothers speak to their children. They seem to think words are nothing. If one ventures to reprove them,—but this must be done with judgment, for some will hardly bear it,—"Oh!" they cry, "it's only words: I don't mean anything."