

The Family Circle.

A WORD ABOUT WORDS.

Ah me! their terrible tongues!
 Are we half aware of those mighty powers!
 Do we ever trouble our minds at all
 Where the jest may strike or the hint may fall?
 The latest chirp of that "little bird,"
 That spicy story "you must have heard" —
 We jerk them away in our gossip rash,
 And somebody's glass, of course goes smash.
 What funes have been blasted and broken,
 What pestilent sinks have been stirred,
 By a word in lightness spoken,
 By only an idle word!

A sneer—a shrug—a whisper low—
 They are poisoned shafts from an ambushed blow,
 Shot by the coward, the fool, the knave,
 They pierce the mail of the great and brave,
 Vain is the buckler of wisdom and pride,
 To turn the pitiless point aside:
 The lip may curl with a careless smile,
 But the heart drips blood—drips blood the while.
 Ah me! what hearts have been broken;
 What rivers of blood been stirred,
 By a word in malice spoken,
 By only a bitter word.

A kindly word and a tender tone—
 To only God is their value known!
 They can lift from the just the abject head,
 They can turn a foe to a friend instead:
 The heart close-barred with passion and pride,
 Will fling at their knocks its portals wide,
 And the hate that blights and the scorn that sears
 Will melt in the fountain like childlike tears.
 What icebound griefs have been broken,
 What rivers of love been stirred,
 By a word in kindness spoken,
 By only a gentle word!

THE OLD PASTOR.

"Yes, things in the church are dull—all at a standstill, so to speak. Parson Miles ought to spur up a little."

John and I were sitting on the front porch, Sabbath afternoon. He was smoking his pipe and looking over his Sunday paper, sometimes reading a bit to me, which almost put me half asleep, as it is natural enough when there's nothing to do to keep one awake. But I always get wide awake when he begins to talk, so when he said that, I said to him:

"Well, I must say I'm getting tired of the same old thing. Now, when I was at Spencerville, where they've just got a new minister, there was so much going on and everything so lively! There were all the ladies fixing up the parsonage, and everybody calling there, and presents, and the house-warming; dear me! It all seemed to make so much good feeling—"

"That's it," said John. "There's no feeling at all here. Parson Miles is a good enough man, but he's slow—yes, rather slow. It sometimes comes over me Maria"—then John spoke lower, though whether it was

in fear of being heard by the leaves that whispered in the apple-trees that shaded the porch, or by the birds building their nests there, or by old Carlo that lay on the mat, is more than I can say; but there wa'n't nothing else to hear "that perhaps we need a change, though I wouldn't be the one to start the idea."

"No, indeed," I said; "but still he's been here a long time."

"Yes, and getting a little old. A younger man, now, would 'liven things up. We could pay him a better salary, and give him a good setting out. The church is well able to do it."

"There's no fault to be found with Bro. Miles, though," I said, for I couldn't find it in my heart to hear him run down.

"Not a bit. It's only that—well—only that, perhaps his usefulness here is at an end. What do you say, Maria, to driving over to hear Parson Tuttle, this evening, just for a variety? He's more my style—beats and wincks away, and wakes folks up."

"What!" said I, "clear over to Radnor?" It was ten miles or more.

"Yes," he said, "I'll hitch up Prancer, and we can make it in an hour."

I saw he was a little restless, and rather liked the idea of a ride behind the colt, so I made no objection. As we got near Radnor there were lots of folks on the way to church.

"Great many out for evening worship," I said. "Our folks don't turn out this well."

"Parson Tuttle's a man that draws," said John; "keeps up the interest, you see."

There was quite a crowd in the entry, and, as we were waiting for some one to show us to a seat, we overheard a man say:

"You'll hear something worth hearing to-night. Mr. (I couldn't get hold of the name, though I tried) is going to preach."

I was afraid John had set his heart on hearing Mr. Tuttle, but as far as I was concerned, I didn't mind hearing a stranger, especially if he was like they said, for they were keeping right on:

"He's a strong speaker, yes, strong—that is just the word. We're always glad when we get him on an exchange. Wonder is a man like him's let stay so long in a country living. None of your hop and jump sort—don't waste any force hammering out sparks, but goes at it and drives in the truth square and solid, and then clinches it—yes, sir, he just clinches it—that is the very word."

I could see the folks were expecting something a little more than common by the way they looked as they settled into their seats. I was looking about a little, trying to see if anybody I knew was there, for I knew a few of the Radnor folks (though what with running to Eliza Jane's or to Susan's now they're married, and something or other always ailing with one or the other of the children, and the work of home, it's a wonder I ever keep track of anything else), and didn't look toward the pulpit at all till I heard the minister's voice, and then I almost jumped from my seat as I stared at him. Then I turned and stared at John, and he stared at me. It was Parson Miles as sure as you live.

If it hadn't been in church I should 'a laughed right out, to see John's blank look. But I sobered down, and then I couldn't help seeing how those people listened. It was very plain they considered Parson Miles