

## The Family Circle.

### PARSON BROWN'S PASTORATE.

"YES, things in the church are dull—all at a standstill, it seems to me. I think Parson Brown ought to open up a little."

Mary and I were sitting on the front porch, Sabbath afternoon; Mary was reading sensational stories in a Sunday paper, sometimes reading aloud to me. I was little interested and finally began dozing; but managed to get wide awake before Mary indulged in the foregoing remark.

After a moment's thoughtful hesitation, I remarked:

"Well, I must say I'm getting tired of the same old thing, Sunday after Sunday. The same face, the same voice, the same gestures, and sometimes the same illustrations. Now, when I was at Spencerville, where they had just received 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 making presents—and the house-warming! dear me! It all seemed to make so much good feeling—"

"That's it," said Mary. "There is no feeling at all here. Parson Brown is a good enough man, but he is so slow—positively, so slow! It sometimes comes over me, John"—then Mary lowered her voice, whether it was in fear of being heard by the leaves of the apple-tree near by, or by the robins building their nest in the tree-top, or by the old dog Mudge that lay on the mat by the wire dog, I cannot say—"that perhaps it would be best for us to have a change of pastors—though I would not like to be the one to start the idea in the parish."

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

"Yes, and getting a trifle old, a little worn—shelf-worn, if we were to use a mercantile term. A younger man, now, would 'live up' things. We could pay him a better salary and give things a new start," answered Mary.

"There is no fault to be found with Brother Brown, though," I said, for I could not find it in my heart to hear him run down; "not a bit I not a bit. It's only that—that—perhaps his usefulness here is at an end. What do you say, Mary, to driving over to hear Parson Jones this morning—just for a change. He is more my style; beats and wakes folks up, so they say."

"What," said Mary, "clear over to Pipetown?" It was ten miles away.

"Yes," I said, "I'll hitch up in a few minutes, and we can make the trip nicely in an hour."

Mary made no objection, in fact, rather enjoyed the suggestion, and in a little while we were spinning on our way. As we neared Pipetown we saw many people on their way to church.

"Great many people out for morning services," said I. "Our folks do not turn out this way."

"Parson Jones is a man that draws," said Mary; "keeps up the interest in the church, you see."

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

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

I looked at Mary. I was afraid she had set her heart on hearing Mr. Jones, but as far as I was concerned I didn't mind hearing a stranger, especially if he was like what they said, for they were talking right on.

"He's a strong preacher; yes, strong—that's just the word. We are always glad when we get him in an exchange. Wonder he has stayed so long in the country. He's none of your hop-and-jump sort—does not waste any force in hammering out sparks but goes straight to the truth and drives it home—and clinches it—yes, that is just the word, clinches it."

I could see the folks were expecting a little something uncommon by the way they looked as they settled into their seats. I was looking about a little to see if I knew anybody present, for I had frequently been to Pipetown.

I did not look towards the pulpit till I heard the minister's voice, and then I almost jumped from my seat as I stared at him.

Then I stared at Mary and Mary stared at me. It was Parson Brown, as sure as you live! If it had not been in church I should have laughed right out, to see Mary's blank look. But I sobered down. Then I could not help observing how the people listened. It was very plain that they considered Parson Brown a great preacher.

Their interest set me to noticing him more carefully. I finally concluded that, while he was not a handsome man, it is not often you see a more scholarly face or hear more earnest words. Then I noticed the deep lines of care on his face, made largely by the heavy church burdens he was obliged to carry. I thought of the children he had baptized; of the funerals he had conducted; of the sorrowing hearts he had comforted; of the many kind and helpful words he had spoken, and, as I kept on thinking, I felt tears swell in my eyes and run down my cheeks.

When he came to his text, Mary gave me a nudge, for if you will believe me, it was the same we had heard the Sunday before. But I am willing to confess that it was mostly new, for I did not listen well before—in fact, I had gotten into the way of thinking that Brother Brown's sermons were not edifying to me. I saw the man we heard in the entry nod his head as much as to say, "Didn't I tell you so? That's one of his clinchers." After the sermon was finished and the hand-shaking time came, I think Mary and I were just a little proud to have folks know that Parson Brown was our minister.

We didn't speak a word for more than half the way home, and then I said:

"I say, Mary, there's such a thing as going farther and faring worse."

"Well," said Mary, "if that's what you mean, we have been faring just about the same."

"No, that isn't what I mean. Mary, how much more ought we to do for Brother Brown? Yes, it ought to be done. These things need stirring up, and I for one am going to stir them up." Here I jerked the lines till the horse fairly jumped. "I am going to take hold with the pastor with greater heartiness than ever before. The old parsonage needs lots of repairing. The church ought to be renovated. I'll talk to the men about it if you will talk with the women."

To this proposition Mary gladly consented.

"Yes, Mary, we'll set things humming in our church. I guess we have been wrong in our judgment. The fault of slowness or dullness must partly lie with us. I am sure we can make much more of our church and pastor. We can be regular attendants. We can be good listeners. We can encourage him with kind words. We can endeavor to preach through the week what we hear him preach on Sunday. Mary, what do you say to giving Brother Brown a housewarming next week? We will let him know before we get through that he is worth more than a new preacher."

"Get up, old horse. We're home—and home we'll stay."—*Hartford Times.*