

ROUND THE TABLE.

IT is a little odd, and shows how superficially average people think, that one so often hears it observed with surprise that quarrels should arise or friendships be broken up by such apparently inadequate causes. Undoubtedly some people are in the habit of magnifying every trifle which concerns themselves, till they resemble nothing so much as a wild gooseberry, which you cannot touch without suffering from its prickles; and there are comparatively few who are free from at least a touch of the same tendency. But we all know that character comes out as strongly in trifles as in greater things, perhaps more strongly, as these will often elude the power of a strong will, which for obvious reasons will often keep disagreeable traits well covered, unless beguiled into forgetfulness in some small matter that does not seem worth minding. And where a friendship has any foundation in esteem, and is not a mere outgrowth of accident or habit or propinquity, the discovery of an unworthy trait in a trifling matter, is just as painful and just as likely to undermine the mutual regard, as if the occasion were in itself far more important. The man who over-reaches us in a matter of a few cents, we are hardly likely to trust in a transaction where thousands of dollars are involved; and so the friend whom we find ungenerous or treacherous, or selfishly absorbed in his own interests in a small matter of every day life, is hardly more likely to retain the esteem which was the inspiration of our friendship, than if the same trait had come out in an affair of far greater intrinsic consequence. In the latter case our selfish sense of material loss would be far greater, but in the

other we have just as much reason for disappointment in our friend, and for the change of opinion which can hardly fail to impair any friendship worthy of the name. And it is quite reasonable that it should be so. A straw will show the direction of a current quite as well as a plank. And if friendship be, as Jeremy Taylor tells us, 'the greatest union of minds of which brave men and women are capable,' then the discovery—be the occasion ever so slight that our supposed friend's mind (by which I mean moral sympathies) is quite incompatible with our own—must make it impossible that the friendship can long survive.

F.

—There is no tax on the time of busy people so annoying as the incursions of idle people, a fact which idle people whose time often hangs heavy on their hands, find it difficult to realise. You are in the midst of a busy morning—every hour and half hour filled up in anticipation with work that has to be done, yourself in good working order and getting on briskly—when the door opens and your friend, Mr. Drone, enters leisurely, good humoured and conversational, and you inwardly groan, for you know you are in for half an hour's gossip on his part, and impatiently patient civility on yours. He is a man full of the liveliest interest in his neighbour's affairs, which, having nothing particular to do this morning, he is able to discuss with a fulness of detail, which in other circumstances might amuse you, but which, at this particular time, when the clock's hand tells you of your shortening morning and your undone work, is inexpressibly