

## WINTER EVENINGS ON THE FARM.



THE autumnal equinox is past. Gradually, but surely, the days are shortening, while the nights are correspondingly lengthening and the cold, northern breezes, the occasional frosts, and the falling leaves admonish us that winter, with its early evening twilight is rapidly approaching.

The leisure hours brought by this not altogether unpleasant season of the year, afford abundant opportunities for the intellectual improvement of those who may feel inclined to advance themselves in this direction, and especially should the younger members of every country household advantageously employ the time thus given them and strive, by their zeal and industry, to make amends for the usually limited advantages they enjoy for mental and social culture. Activity is the normal condition, not only of the body, but of the mind. Very few young persons are of such sluggish, mental temperament, as to be entirely insensible to the pleasures to be derived from the exercise of the intellectual faculties, while the majority of them have a natural and innate desire for such enjoyments.

Away from the city, the country bar or other store-room is too often the resort of young persons, who might employ their time much more profitably than in listening to the rude joke, coarse witticism, and tedious story, which always find attentive appreciators in such places. The fact that they will sit for hours and eagerly hearken to the recital of such things, in evidence that they could interest themselves in something better, were proper influences used to effect such a result. The question then arises, cannot home be made sufficiently attractive to induce them to discontinue their visits to such unprofitable resorts? We think so. If parents (we speak only of the country) would only interest themselves a little more in the educational welfare of their children, provide them with books, newspapers, periodicals, &c., and encourage them to read them, a desire for knowledge would gradually grow upon them, till at last their minds would become engrossed in the new and substantial delights of learning, and their former associates be renounced as unfit companions for social intercourse.

The fires of knowledge once lighted are not easily quenched; as the flames grow

stronger, heavier fuel would be required. The long evenings of winter would be devoted to study and improvement, everything not perfectly understood would be investigated, nature's acquaintance would be more closely cultivated; her beautiful process of growth and decay would be watched and wondered at, and farm life be regarded as something more than mere manual in drudgery. Agriculture would be known a *science* worthy the attention of the weightiest minds. But are these things so? We fear not. Here, then, is a wide field for reform. It has even now, we are happy to say, many noble workers in it. But the harvest is very, very heavy, which makes the reapers seem fewer.

The farmer himself must be a prime mover in this direction. He must look to the manner in which his children spend their leisure moments; he must teach them to love to acquire an intimacy with the pleasures of intellect. Set them to learning something sensible, no matter what, since the direct tendency of all research and study is to elevate and refine the man and mind, and lead to further desire to taste the waters that flow from the fountain of truth. He must make them not theoretical, but practical philosophers; he must not sit nor sing drowsily before the kitchen fire, neither knowing nor caring that his sons are taking their initiatory lesson in tobacco chewing at some dirty bar-room, and his daughters stitching lazily at some garment that could be made much more cheaply by the sewing machine he thought was good economy not to purchase, although in a short time his boys will send double the sum off in cigar smoke that would be required to buy, not only a sewing machine but a dozen other conveniences needed by his family. His children may not be very profound or erudite, but they will be very far from superficial, and with principles of perseverance and uprightness incorporated in their characters, the true man and woman may be hidden by the, perhaps rough exterior. We repeat it, the farmer himself must be the agent in whose trust the responsibility for inaugurating such a revolution lies. He must effect his own regeneration, and establish his claims to respectability by his own unaided efforts. And the first step taken should show him, that not only charity, but other things, may begin at home, and that the tallow candle burning in the very centre of the family circle may light the way to as