

## WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE WINTER EVENINGS?

There is, no doubt, a great charm in the coziness of the winter evening! Outside the curtained window the storm may beat, the door into the street may be encumbered with snow, the shortened days may denote that nature has become drowsy and seeks long repose, but the mind is never so alert, our fancy never keener, than when, our evening meal being over, we turn into our den, and settle down for the rest of the evening.

How well I remember those evenings which I spent in my little bedroom years ago, just after tea; and while it may have seemed a little unseemly to withdraw from the rest of the family, yet I owe to those evenings of my business life, and after the day's work in the city was done, my acquaintance with the masterpieces of our English tongue. What with the opportunity of reading afforded by thirty-five minutes in the train to the city and thirty-five minutes back, added to the two or three hours at night, it gave me a respectable amount of time for general reading.

Nothing is more suicidal than for a young man to spend in pleasure and amusement the opportunities for self-improvement afforded by the winter evenings. To be always hastening home from the city, or the daily toil, with the idea of spending the time in recreation, is as foolish as to squander some little capital which has come down to you from your family, and which, if properly invested, might be the nucleus of a competence in after years.

I am going to give you my ideal. First, it was always accustomed to spend some little time with my Bible and some spiritual book or biography. It seemed to refresh the mind and to be a worthy prelude for whatever followed. Then other books. It is wise to have two or three in hand at the same time, because one's mind after a long day's work may be too weary for protracted study, but will be quite capable of alertness if allowed to turn from one subject to another, giving perhaps an hour to each. For instance, it is well to have always on hand a book of history, and another of poetry, and one of philosophy, of science, of essays, of general information or criticism. To have two or three books of this sort in reading will save time and coax the jaded mind, and you will do better to read three books for three hours than to read one for the same time. Mind that the lighter story-book always comes at the end of the evening, with the strong deterrent that the reading shall be limited to a certain definite portion of time, and shall not run into hours which should be spent in bed.

Happy is the man who has a hobby—who wishes to arrange the specimens of natural history or geology which he has

acquired during his summer rambles, or is able to use the lathe, the fret-saw, the telescope or microscope. An hour or so spent on this will divert the nervous energy into an altogether new compartment of the brain, and this is the true secret of getting as much as possible out of one's time. It is a mistake to think we rest best by doing nothing. The most intense rest comes by striking other chords than the one or two which show signs of being wearied to breaking.

Happier still is he who has a taste for music, and who has mastered the initial difficulties of the violin, the piano, the organ, or the cornet! Nothing is so refreshing as to be able to soothe one's self with music, or to turn to the rough sketches we have made on summer excursions with a view to completing them. An hour spent in perfecting one's self in any branch of art is well employed, and the winter evenings afford opportunities of becoming really proficient in some pursuit which brings one in contact with the beauties of the world and quickens the imagination. In your young life you may lay foundations of great excellence in regard to some study or accomplishment which will stand you in good stead in later years.

Perhaps it will be wise to vary your programme evening by evening. If you give four of the six evenings to pursuits like these, you may well give one to Christian work, and another to social enjoyment; and as you work when you work, you must abandon yourself for one night a week at least to play with all your powers of play, and if you can get to a gymnasium, so much the better. Nothing is finer than to have an evening of such exertion as will open all the pores like a Turkish bath, and compel the blood to go rushing through every vessel of the body.

How much there is for each of us to do. The difficulty arises as to what to do first. But we must have a general notion and programme laid out, or else we become dissipated amid a crowd of little things, and while we are busy here and there our opportunity is gone.—Rev. F. B. Meyer in *Northwestern Christian Advocate*.

Robert Louis Stevenson viewed life from a luminous and transparent atmosphere of which the radiant and unspoiled ether over his tropical island was finely symbolic. When he saw men with immortal souls frittering life away on the trivial and fleeting wants of that soul, and neglecting its great hungerings, he said "it was like doctoring the toothache on the judgment day."—*The Interior*.

When you find yourself alongside of another human being, settle it in your mind that you will study the correspondence, the agreement, amenities, rather than the antagonisms and differences between you two. The whole code of good manners, not to say Christian behavior, is found in this one precept.—*Frances E. Willard*.

## A GRAND OLD SCOT.

The Rev. Principal Rainy entered upon his eightieth year on Sunday, Jan. 1st. He was born on New Year's Day, 1826. He was ordained minister of Huntly in 1850, and was transferred to the High Church, Edinburgh, ten years later. In 1864 he became, by the unanimous vote of his Church, Professor of Church History in the New College, Edinburgh. In 1873, on the death of Dr. Candlish, he became Principal of the New College, and leader of the Free Church. In 1887 he became Moderator of the Free Church, the first post-Disruption minister who was elected to that office. In 1900 he saw the Union of the Free and United Presbyterian Churches, and was enthusiastically elected Moderator of the first Union Assembly. In 1904, on the first of August, he was present in the House of Lords, and heard the decision which by a majority of five Lords to two, denuded his Church of all her property in favor of the now legal Free Church. In 1905 he is vigorously leading the Advisory Committee of his Church, and is busy with the statement of the case of his Church for presentation to the Royal Commission. His many friends in the Church and country wish him a good New Year, while his most bitter opponents must admire his energy and his pluck.

The power of making friends is, above all, the power of coming out of one's self, and seeing and appreciating whatever is noble and loving in another man.—Thomas Hughes.

The Church that gives itself with passionate interest to save others receives back into its own life the richest blessing.—Capen



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