

HOW SHALL WE SPEND OUR WINTER EVENINGS.

BY THE REV. LEWIS O. THOMPSON.

The world offers so many temptations to the young, that it is a pious effort to give such practical disposal to their spare hours that they shall be shielded from these allurements. We shall be wise if we combine the profitable with what is entertaining, and despise not mirth that is joined to innocence.

An early temptation to which youth is subjected is that of impure literature, bad pictures, and what has been called "yellow covered literature." Pomeroy, the boy murderer, when asked in prison how he felt after devouring a "dime novel," answered, "I felt as if I wanted to kill somebody."

Bad books and pictures have a corrupting influence, and often leave an ineffaceable mark upon the imagination. I was much struck with the remark which I heard the other day, that if we could keep the young men of the land (those less than forty years of age) from places of evil resort, within ninety days every saloon, every gambling den and every place of infamy would have to close from lack of profitable support. The truth may be overstated, but no one not cognizant of the facts has any idea of the variety and power of those temptations to which young men are subjected. He who made the remark had been a commercial traveler, and during that time had been asked a thousand times to "take a drink," but not once to "go to church."

We shall help the very young—those in the school period of life—if we make home so attractive that they shall prefer it to strange places. In a household there need be no end to the programmes that may be formed to combine amusement with instruction. There are games of skill, distinguished from those of chance, that may be played; there are readings, recitations, charades, song and music; there are occasional gatherings of a select circle for the pursuit in common of some agreeable and comprehensible subject; there are all these and more. In any associated work, such as the reading of history, it will be necessary for some one to guide the young in a judicious way. How much might not pastors, superintendents or teachers accomplish in this way for their Sunday-school classes.

Some one may ask, "Is it worth so much pains in order to amuse and instruct our children?" Let him be answered with a counter question: "Is it worth while at all to prevent the ruin of our children? Are they worth saving?"

But even if the young, as they grow up, should escape what is vicious and corrupting, there is danger that men, giving themselves wholly to business, shall read nothing but the periodicals; and women, devoting themselves as exclusively to dress, shall study nothing but the fashion plates and the latest novel. The reading of novels might not be so bad, if we could be assured that it was merely a transition to something better. But the appetite for sensational literature lives by what it feeds upon, and rarely leads to the reading of more elevated works, such as