

TOBOGGANING.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

Facilis descensus toboggani! A new word this for a new style of winter amusement. The custom of "coasting" is as old as our American civilization, and probably the sons of Miles Standish and Bradford and Brewster, rode down "Burial Hill" at Plymouth on a hand-sled. From our Canadian neighbors we have imported a new method of doing the thing. When nature has provided no hills, the toboggan-clubs construct one of timber, and then arrayed in picturesque caps and belts, tunics and leggins, they spin merrily down the artificial slope on low sleds, which are constructed like the Irishman's stone wall, that "when it tumbled over was higher than when it stood up." A very pretty and exhilarating sport is tobogganing, and it does not seem to be falling, like the roller-skate business, into the hands of the devil. Benny Franklin drew some memorable morals from paying too dear once for a whistle; and in like manner I am reminded of several other things, when I see the merry crowd coasting down their snow-slides.

I notice that they all start slowly at the top of the hill. That is just the way that Harry Tipplecup began with his champagne glass. He felt some twinges when he swallowed his first glass of wine at a party; but he had tried another before he left the parlors, for a stylish friend asked him to drink with him, and so gave a push to the toboggan. Harry saw plenty of ale and Bourbon on the tables of the businessmen at the restaurant where he took his daily lunch. Some called for it to "help digestion," and he soon fancied that it helped his also. The subtle appetite increased so rapidly, that last year his employer said to him: "Harry, I cannot have a book-keeper in my store who has to go out three or four times a day for his dram, and who is not fit to go home to his family at night. I must discharge you." The poor fellow had very little idea when he started his toboggan so merrily that he would so soon lose all control of it, and be capsized with his bloated face and empty pocket into ruin. The danger with him now is that instead of a total abstinence pledge, he will drink all the harder to "drown his troubles."

Two other acquaintances of mine are about as thoroughly wrecked as Harry is,

but their down-hill slide began at the card-table over what they called "a small stake just for fun." The insidious gambling mania soon got them into pool-rooms and betting, and the poisonous company which haunt the sporting resorts. One of them has lost his situation in a bank for handling the money too freely; the other is dependent for his daily bread on the old father whom he is disgracing. Satan ices that toboggan-slide of gambling now-a-days with such seductive and slippery devices, that not only heedless youths, but many a speculator and stock-broker and dabbler in risky business-ventures, find themselves capsized before they dream of it. *To get something for little or nothing*, is the seductive bait that starts every gambler—I don't care under what name it is practised—on the down-grade to destruction.

I am reminded just now of a young couple who set off on the same toboggan—and a gaily trimmed one it was, too—a few short years ago. The young man fell in love, which is all very well, provided that (as Dr. "Rab" Brown says) he picks himself up at once, and looks around to see how the land lies. But the girl who bewitched him knew more about "society" than sense. They started off with plenty of jewellery and opera-tickets, and took a room in a fashionable "family-hotel." The last time I saw the seedy-looking husband, he came to me for a loan; high life had driven him to borrowing, until nobody would lend to him, and to-day the toboggan of extravagance has landed him and his dowdy wife and two babies in a cheap "flat" in a by-street. They have had their fast and jolly ride down hill; now they are beginning to walk up. May God give them wisdom for the hard pull! Extravagance is a sin, like the love of drink, which is not easy to break off.

But it is not only among the votaries of this world that certain kinds of tobogganing have come into vogue. The fashion has crept into the Church. Here is a certain man who in his plainer days was regular at the devotional meetings, and useful in the Sunday-school. Prosperity brought with it a finer and more expensive style of living, a round of social entertainments and amusements, with an occasional dip into the theatre, and a thorough slavery to the "lust of the eye and the pride of life." That brother is a backslider. His costly toboggan is carrying him away from