

**At the Door of the Year.**

The corridors of Time  
Are full of doors— the portals of closed years;  
We enter them no more, though bitter tears  
Beat hard against them, and we hear the  
chime  
Of lost dreams, dirge-like, in behind them  
ring  
At Memory's opening

But one door stands ajar—  
The New Year's; while a golden chain of  
days  
Holds it half shut. The eager foot delays  
That presses to its threshold's mighty bar;  
And fears that shrink, and hopes that shout  
around  
Around it wait and crowd.

It shuts back the unknown,  
And dare we truly welcome one more year,  
Who down the past a mocking laughter hear  
From idle aims like wandering breezes blown?  
We whose large aspirations dimmed and  
shrank  
Till the year's scroll was blank.

We pause beside the bed.  
Thy year, O God, how shall we enter in?  
How shall we thence Thy hidden treasures  
win?  
Shall we return in beggary, as before,  
When Thou art near at hand, with infinite  
wealth,  
Wisdom and heavy health?

The footsteps of a child  
Sound close behind us. Listen! He will  
speak.  
His birthday bells have hardly rung a week,  
Yet has He trod the world's press undefiled.  
"Come with Me!" hear Him through His  
smiling say,  
"Behold, I am the way!"

Against the door His face  
Shines as the sun. His touch is a command;  
The years unfold before His baby hand!  
The beauty of His presence fills all space,  
"Enter through Me," He saith, "nor  
wander more;  
For lo! I am the door."

And all doors openeth He,  
The New-born Christ, the Lord of the New  
Year,  
The threshold of our locked hearts standeth  
near;  
And while He gives us back love's rusted key,  
Our future on us with His eyes has smiled,  
Even as a little child.

**Harry's Christmas.**

IT takes but a few strokes of the  
artist's pencil to picture the deso-  
lation and wretchedness of the  
drunkard's home. There are the bare  
walls, through whose crevices the  
winter wind drifts the snow, and piles  
it in little heaps across the fireless  
hearth; there are the few broken  
chairs, the leafless table, upon which  
no other food except a few potatoes or  
a scanty loaf ever finds its way; there  
are the children shivering, with half-  
clad bodies, quarreling perhaps over  
the last remaining crust. The pale-  
faced wife is waiting with trembling  
the coming of him whose step was  
once hailed with delight. It is a sad  
picture, but not overdrawn; it is too  
true to life.

But this is only the result of a few  
rapid strokes of the artist's brush.  
Who can describe the heartache of the  
young wife when she first meets her  
husband reeling home in a state of  
intoxication, and so on day after day  
and week after week, until all hope  
has well-nigh fled? Can we know the  
hunger of the little ones, who have  
cried for bread when not a crust had  
the mother to give? This is beyond  
our skill; none but our Heavenly  
Father, who heareth every cry of dis-  
tress, will know the real wretchedness  
of the drunkard's home.

It was such a home as this in which  
Harry Marsten lived with his two  
sisters. They were the unfortunate

children of a father who regarded not  
their tears, but spent for rum the  
money that should have clothed and  
fed them. Harry was eight years old,  
and aided his mother and sisters, as  
many a child of twice his years would  
not have attempted. Their wretched  
home was in a dirty and obscure street  
in a large city, and the only outlook  
from the dingy window was upon  
scenes of distress as great as their  
own. Harry was a newsboy, and  
every morning, no matter how cold,  
would tie his ragged comforter about  
his neck, shuffle on a pair of shoes  
three times too large for him and full  
of holes, and drawing his scanty clothes  
closer around him, would hurry down  
to the office for his morning supply of  
papers; after which he would be found  
on the busy street crying his old song  
of "Papers—morning papers!" while  
he would shift the bundle from one  
arm to the other to better warm the  
blue fingers in his pockets.

It was the day before Christmas,  
and Harry had hoped, by saving his  
pennies, to buy something for their  
dinner the next day. He had risen  
early that morning before the great  
city was astir, and tiptoed past his  
father, who lay drunk on the floor, and  
started out to begin his day's work.  
It was a busy day for him, and more  
than one bright nickel found its way  
to his pocket. Evening found his  
bundle of papers all sold, and he  
found he had nearly two dollars. Oh,  
how proudly he turned to go home,  
feeling rich with his little store. He  
had not gone far when a rough voice,  
he knew too well, accompanied by a  
shake, brought him to a sudden stop.  
"See here, boy, have ye any mo-  
ney?"

Poor Harry! Here was an end to  
his plans. The tears filled his eyes as  
he vainly tried to slip from the vice-  
like grasp of his father.

"Come—none of yer whimpering;  
fork it over! I must have it!"

"Father!" began he, "I haven't  
much, and I was going to get some-  
thing for dinner, so we can have Christ-  
mas again as we used to."

"Christmas be bothered! I want  
it," and with these heartless words he  
emptied the little pocket and staggered  
away, leaving his boy penniless and  
well-nigh heart-broken. Sadly he  
walked towards the hovel called home,  
and lifting the latch entered, and going  
directly to his mother, buried his face  
in her lap and sobbed.

"Mother, it's no use trying. I can't  
do anything nor have anything but it  
must all go for whiskey," and the tears  
flowed afresh as he told her the whole  
story.

Softly the mother smoothed the tum-  
bled hair, while she tried to comfort  
him in his great sorrow. Poor mother!  
hope had long since died in her heart,  
but she lived in her boy—he was her  
sole support.

Twilight deepened into night, and  
after eating his scanty meal he crept  
away to bed with such a heavy heart  
as none but a drunkard's child can  
know.

Let us follow the wretched father to  
the haunt of sin. Entering the door  
he immediately walked to the counter,  
when his attention was arrested by a  
conversation between the landlord and  
his wife concerning the dinner next  
day, for which great preparations were  
being made. For the first time in  
years his deadened conscience gave a  
throb of remorse, as he thought of the

family at home with nothing to eat on  
the coming day, while his money went  
to help load the table of the whiskey-  
seller with luxuries. Putting the  
money back in his pocket, he turned  
into the street and walked rapidly on,  
not knowing whither he went. A  
great conflict was going on in his  
mind, but the good angel triumphed,  
and an hour later found him on his  
way to his own home with bundles for  
the Christmas dinner such as had not  
found their way to his dwelling for  
years.

Harry was awakened next morning  
by the bells ringing out on the frosty  
air, "Peace on earth, good will to  
men." Hastily dressing, he found, to  
his great surprise, his father sober and  
kindling a fire in the broken stove,  
while his little sisters were eagerly  
devouring such rosy apples as he had  
brought for them. The day was like a  
dream to Harry. The father, although  
restless had remained at home, not  
daring to trust himself in reach of the  
old temptation. When evening came  
he started out but soon returned, and  
tossing a paper into his wife's lap, sat  
down and wept like a child. Catching  
the paper from his mother's hands,  
Harry read, "Temperance Pledge," and  
his father's name in bold letters at the  
bottom. Clapping his hands, he  
danced for joy, shouting:

"Oh, this is merry Christmas, mother;  
this is 'Peace on earth' to us. Good-  
bye to cold and hunger now; father's  
signed the pledge!" and in his childish  
enthusiasm he caught the father round  
the neck and pressed a kiss on the  
poor man's lips. Lifting his face to  
ward his wife, the penitent father,  
with choking voice, exclaimed:

"Wife! children! so help me God,  
I'll never, never touch rum again, and  
from this Christmas-day I'll be a better  
man," and he kept his word.

Harry and his two sisters went to  
school, and through many years, peace  
and prosperity smiled on that once  
desolate home.

**By-Gone Christmas Customs.**

THE manner in which this period of  
the year has been observed has often  
varied. The observances of the day  
first came to be pretty general in the  
Catholic Church about the year 300.  
By some of our ancestors it was viewed  
in the double light of a religious and  
joyful season of festivities. The mid-  
night preceding Christmas day every  
person went to mass; on Christmas day  
three different masses were sung with  
much solemnity. Others celebrated it  
with great parade, splendour, and con-  
vivality. Business was superseded by  
merriment and hospitality; the most  
careworn countenance brightened on  
the occasion. The nobles and the  
barons encouraged and participated in  
the various sports; the industrious  
laborer's cot, and the residence of proud  
royalty equally resounded with tumultu-  
ous joy. From Christmas day to  
Twelfth-day there was a continued run  
of entertainments. Not only did our  
ancestors make great rejoicings on, but  
before and after, Christmas day. By a  
law in the time of Alfred, the "twelve  
days" after the nativity of our Saviour  
were made festivals. Thus we have  
the origin of Twelfth day. It appears  
from Bishop Holt that the whole of the  
days were dedicated to feasting.

Our ancestors' various amusements  
were conducted by a sort of master of  
the ceremonies, called the "Lord of

Miscule," whose duty it was to keep  
order during the celebration of the dif-  
ferent sports and pastimes. The uni-  
versities, the lord mayor and sheriffs,  
and all noblemen and gentlemen, had  
their "lords of miscule." These "lords"  
were first preached against at Cam-  
bridge by the Puritans, in the reign of  
James I., as unbecoming the gravity of  
the university; but the custom was too  
generally practiced to be suddenly  
checked.

The custom of serving boars' head at  
Christmas bears an ancient date, and  
much ceremony and parade were occa-  
sionally attached to it. Henry II.,  
"served his son (upon the young prince's  
coronation) at the table as server, bring-  
ing up the boar's head with trumpets  
before it."

The custom of strolling from street  
to street with musical instruments and  
singing, seems to have originated from  
a very ancient practice which prevailed,  
of certain minstrels who were attached  
to the king's court, and other great  
persons, who paraded the streets, and  
sounded the hour—thus acting as a sort  
of watchmen.

**Boys and Girls' Temperance Lessons.****LESSON I.****Alcohol.**

**QUESTION.** What is Alcohol?

**ANSWER.** Alcohol is a clear, colour-  
less, inflammable fluid.

**Q.** What one thing does it most  
resemble in appearance?

**A.** Water.

**Q.** We said that Alcohol was clear  
and colourless. What do these words  
mean?

**A.** Clear means pure, unmixed; and  
colourless means something that we  
can see through, as we can through  
glass or the air.

**Q.** We said that Alcohol was in-  
flammable. What does this mean?

**A.** It means that it will burn. You  
put some of it in a saucer and touch it  
with a lighted match, and it will be  
covered with a blue flame, and in a  
short time the Alcohol will be gone  
and the saucer dry.

**Q.** Is there any scent in Alcohol?

**A.** There is. You can smell it at a  
distance of several yards.

**Q.** How does alcohol taste?

**A.** It has a fiery burning taste.

**Q.** What effect does it have upon  
the skin?

**A.** If you put it on the tender part  
of your arm, and hold it there a little  
time, the skin will grow red and you  
will feel a smarting pain.

**Q.** Suppose you hold your tongue in  
a saucer of alcohol, what will be the  
effect?

**A.** It will burn and smart, and the  
tongue will be made sore.

**Q.** Suppose you swallow some of it,  
how will it affect the throat and  
stomach?

**A.** You cannot swallow it unless it  
is mixed with water.

**Q.** Why cannot you swallow it?

**A.** Because when unmixed it is so  
fiery and burning, that the throat will  
not allow it to pass into the stomach.

**Q.** But suppose you could swallow  
it—what then?

**A.** It would burn your throat and  
stomach as it did your arm and tongue.

\*We purpose giving a series of these Temperance  
Lessons, which, we hope, will train up our boys and  
girls to be thorough teetotalers.