

When the New Year Comes.

BY GUY WETMORE CARRYL.

When January breezes blow,
The New Year comes across the snow,
So pure and young, so straight and slender,
His eyes alight, his cheeks aglow;
And round him, shifting to and fro,
The whitened world of drifted splendour.

Within the yard the children play,
Attacking in a cruel way
A tall snow-man, who stares about him,
And, smiling coldly, seems to say,
No icy cannonading may
Suffice ingloriously to rout him.

The frozen pond is smooth and wide;
The skaters swing from side to side,
And little boys, pursuing after,
Arrayed in furs and filled with pride,
Upon the glassy surface slide,
And fall in heaps with shouts of laughter.

Within the house the fire glows,
And ruddy apples, ranged in rows
Before the blaze, are blithely peeling.
The sun to bed discreetly goes,
And then the doors of daylight close,
And clear and cold the night comes stealing.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 26, 1896.

"A HAPPY NEW YEAR."

Do you want to make your wish come true? If you try to fill each day with kind words and helpful acts, you will be helping your wish to come true for other people, and it will come true for yourself when you try to make it true for others.

Suppose this new year that has just come to us were a large book with three hundred and sixty-five pages. Each page is clean and white, and suppose every day you were to fill a page with a picture of your acts that day. When the year was done and you had filled up the last page of your book, would you be proud or sorry to turn over the leaves and show your pictures to any one? Would any of the pictures represent a boy who would not lend his sled or bicycle or a girl with a pout on her lips or a disagreeable manner? You could not change any of the pictures then, and you would feel so much better if all the pictures were good ones. Perhaps one might be a girl tending the baby or helping her mother, with a happy face; another might be a group of boys trying their sleds on the hill, with no bad temper or selfishness to spoil the fun.

I hope you will leave a beautiful record on every day of this new year

It is customary at this season to make good resolutions. These resolutions are so frequently broken, that sneering at them has also become a custom. Pick up almost any newspaper next week, and you will be pretty sure to find a number of small jokes at the expense of the penitents who have been "swearing off." That many New Year's resolutions should be treated in this way is not a matter of wonder. Many of them are thoughtlessly made and quickly broken. Still,

the making of such resolutions is a hopeful thing. It shows that the maker has within him a desire—feeble it may be, but still a desire—to be a better man, and to lead a better life. That desire is a good thing. A man is never in a more hopeless condition than when he has no desire to be or do better. The New Year's resolution shows that the man who makes it thinks at least once a year. He takes stock, and tries to form a reasonably correct estimate of himself. That, too, is a good thing. There is little hope for a man who does not think seriously once a year. Instead, then, of belittling New Year's resolutions, let all look upon them as good as far as they go as evidence that the maker still measures himself morally, and has a desire to do and be better.—Canadian Presbyterian.

THINGS EVERY BOY SHOULD KNOW.

I believe in schools where boys can learn trades. Peter the Great left his throne and went to learn how to build a ship, and he learned from stem to stern, from hull to mast, and that was the beginning of his greatness. I knew a young man who was poor and smart. A friend sent him to one of those schools up North, where he stayed two years, and came back a mining engineer and bridge builder. Last year he planned and built a cotton factory, and is getting a large salary.

How many college boys are there who can tell what kind of timber will bear the heaviest burden, or why you take white oak for one part of a wagon and ash for another, and what timber will last longer under water and what out of water?

How many know sandstone from limestone or iron from manganese? How many know how to cut a rafter or brace without a pattern? How many know which turns the faster, the top of the wheel or the bottom, as the wagon moves along the ground? How many know how steel is made, or how a snake can climb a tree? How many know that a horse gets up before and a cow behind, and the cow eats grass from her and the horse to him? How many know that a surveyor's mark on a tree never gets any higher from the ground, or what tree bears fruit without bloom?

There is a power of comfort in knowledge, but a boy is not going to get it unless he wants it badly. And that is the trouble with most college boys. They don't want it; they are too busy, and haven't got time. There is more hope of a dull boy who wants knowledge than of a genius, who generally knows it all without study. These close observers are the world's benefactors.—A Southern Writer.

SINGULAR NEW YEAR CUSTOMS.

BY CLINTON MONTAGUE.

"Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light;
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

"Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow;
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true."

The ringing of bells from the church steeples, in England, is about the only formal demonstration they show for the anniversary at the present time, though years ago it was as much of a gala day as Christmas. They used to give presents on this day, and have great feasts, and there was a good deal of revelry and drunkenness. On the whole, I think the new is quite as good as the old way.

In Denmark, the cannon booms, as a sound of joy to welcome in the new year. Every morning of the first of January, Copenhagen is shaken by this peaceful cannonading. The people in the rural districts sometimes go to the farm houses, and fire their muskets under the windows of the sleeping inmates, to inform them that a new year is at hand.

The Scandinavians, that is, the people of Norway and Sweden, have a pleasant, hospitable way of settling out their tables with good cheer, and inviting every one to sit down and eat who looks in to wish the compliments of the season. In Stockholm they give a grand banquet in

the Exchange to the king and royal family, and the sovereign and court officials use this opportunity to lay by their dignity.

When the Dutch settled in New York they introduced the custom of exchanging presents and other complimentary tokens on that day. To the Dutch we also owe our Christmas visit of Santa Claus, coloured eggs at Easter, doughnuts, crullers, and New Year's cookies.

Off in Thibet, in Central Asia, everybody sits up on the mysterious night which is to bring forth the New Year. At midnight they go out into the streets, where they make as much noise as their lungs and the drums, tambourines, bells, and cymbals will enable them; and in order to renew their energies they consume unlimited quantities of balls of flour and honey, boiled, which are picked out of the water with a silver skower. The next day, visits are made to the houses of friends, the penates, or family gods, are supplicated and fumigated, and then the inevitable "tsamba"—coarse sweetmeats and buttered tea are freely indulged in. After this they sing and



INSIDE THE ICE PALACE.

dance, and children are sent about from house to house to perform. Tumblers, acrobats, and actors perform in the streets, and altogether the Thibetans have a merry season.

The Hindus celebrate the anniversary annually, by a festival called Hooly, in honour of Krishna, one of their many false gods. It is a season of general rejoicing, when everybody is on an equality, and the distinctions of "caste" are forgotten for the once. It might be called a "red day," for all the people who can afford it dress in red clothes, and they go about throwing a red-coloured powder at one another, or squirting it, with water from a syringe, at the passers-by. During the three or four days this red-letter feast lasts, everybody appears to have been dipped in a tub of "ak beer," red powder, the pet monkeys even not escaping. All this is taken in as good part as snow-balling is with us.

The Chinese celebrate their greatest festival of the year on New Year's Day. In the morning they go to the temples, and carry offerings to the gods, of rice, tea, oranges, incense, candles, and paper money, which are burned. All business is relinquished, and everybody dresses in their holiday clothes. Images of the gods are carried in procession to the beating of the deafening gong. The mandarins and high officers go in state to offer congratulations and addresses to the emperor. They are, of course, gorgeously apparelled. The theatres are in full career in the afternoon and evening. The children fire crackers and fly kites, and the older people make visits and send eatables to the poor, everything being wrapped in red paper.

If you were in Japan on the first day of the year, you would see everybody dressed in a regulation costume of light blue cotton. In the grand processions, all the various trades are represented, and drums and stringed instruments are played by numerous bands. In the evening, they have a grand display of fireworks, and in their favourite tea gardens, the stylish ladies, dressed in their light, airy robes, high-heeled boots, and with long pins in their hair, delight themselves with a game they call the butterfly dance. The polite people give presents to each other of cooked rice, roasted peas, figs, and oranges, and just before dark, you will see every house-owner scattering peas around the corner of their dwellings to frighten away the evil spirits.

JUNIOR EPWORTH LEAGUE.

PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God."—Mark 10. 14.

JANUARY 3, 1897.

The Babe whom the Wise Men visited.—Matt. 2. 1-16.

This lesson is full of interesting incidents. The place where he was born—Bethlehem, which means the house of bread. Jesus Christ says respecting himself, "I am the bread of life." Bread is the most valuable article of food, without which our bodies could not be so well sustained; so without Christ, our spiritual interests cannot be promoted.

HEROD.

This was the king, or the Roman Proconsul, or Governor of Judea. He was a base, bad man, who was afraid that Jesus, who was now born in Bethlehem, should become a king, and so overturn his kingdom, and though he pretended that he wanted to worship the young child, he was bent upon his death, and caused all the children in Bethlehem, who were of two years and under, to be murdered, so as to prevent, as he supposed, Jesus becoming king. He perpetrated several other cruel murders, and at last came to a miserable end.

HIS STAR.

This was a star of great brilliance which the wise men observed, and when they saw its appearance over the place where the babe was, they went immediately to worship him. How nobly these men acted. They adored the Son of God, and thus gave evidence of their wisdom by so doing. Here we may learn an important lesson. Whatever attainments we may make in literature and science, never forget that Jesus Christ is worthy of all the gifts which men can bestow.

THE MAGI.

We do not know for certain who these men were. They came from the East, probably from Chaldea. The science of astronomy was well understood in that country. Some have thought that the Magi as devout students discovered the star which for the first time was seen in connection with the Saviour's nativity.

WONDERFULLY GUIDED.

When they had seen the young child Jesus, they returned home, rejoicing exceedingly because of what they had seen. Mark you, nothing else but a sight of Jesus would have satisfied them. Never forget that nothing will give satisfaction to the soul until we receive Jesus as our ruler and guide.

THEIR GIFTS.

Verse 11. These were most valuable and useful. Perhaps all these gifts were used in the near future, when Joseph and Mary took Jesus into Egypt. Mark also how that all that took place had been foretold. All who can do so should study the incidents here narrated in connection with the prophecies relating thereto, and they will see what a wonderful series of events are here blended, illustrative of God's good providence. Do we adore Christ? Should we not above all things praise God for having so wonderfully provided a Saviour for mankind?

EXCURSION TO EUROPE.

Several events of special interest will take place in Great Britain and on the Continent during next summer. One of these is the World's Sunday-school Convention in London in July. The last of these conventions was in 1859, when a large number of delegates from Canada accompanied Dr. Withrow's excursion to London. The completion of the sixtieth year of her Majesty's reign will also be celebrated with very imposing patriotic displays. These will run through several weeks and will be a great attraction to summer tourists to the Old Land. There is also to be held for several months in the city of Brussels, an International Exposition of art and industry which promises to be of great interest. The Rev. Dr. Withrow, who has conducted several excursions to Europe, will be prepared to take charge of a similar excursion during this summer. Any person wishing further information may obtain it by writing to him at the Methodist Publishing House, Toronto.

Grandpa—"Don't get scared, Willie. The tiger is about to be fed. That's what makes him jump and roar so."

Willie (easily)—"Oh, I ain't afraid of him, grandpa. Papa's the same way when his meals ain't ready."