

# PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

Vol. XII.]

TORONTO, DECEMBER 31, 1892.

[No. 53.

## OUR PART IN THE NEW YEAR.

BY MARY B. BALDWIN.

There are people who go about the world always carrying with them a sort of measuring line, trying to get at their exact proportion of service, and often giving expression to the idea that they have done their part. They are not inspiring people, are not often even agreeable as friends; indeed they create a kind of disgust and antagonism because one feels that they are constantly setting their achievements and efforts over against those of others.

Such people are not always born with the peculiarity mentioned, but the selfishness that is favourable to its growth is in the heart of every one to a degree, and nothing is easier than to assist in the development by allowing this selfishness to have its way under all conditions.

It is very sad to see young people begin to be careful about spending themselves too much. To hear from sweet lips the words, "I have done my part," is a pang to those who know by experience that nothing great or grand or noble ever comes from a life that refuses to give or to suffer except by measure. The spirit that prompts such an expression, if indulged in long, will harden the heart, blind the eyes, and tie the hands. And, girls, would you believe it: it will change the curves about the rosebud mouth, will fade the beauty from the eyes, will take the attractiveness from the manner, and spoil the young creature entirely who makes up her mind to do only as much of the world's work as she can accomplish without much self-denial.

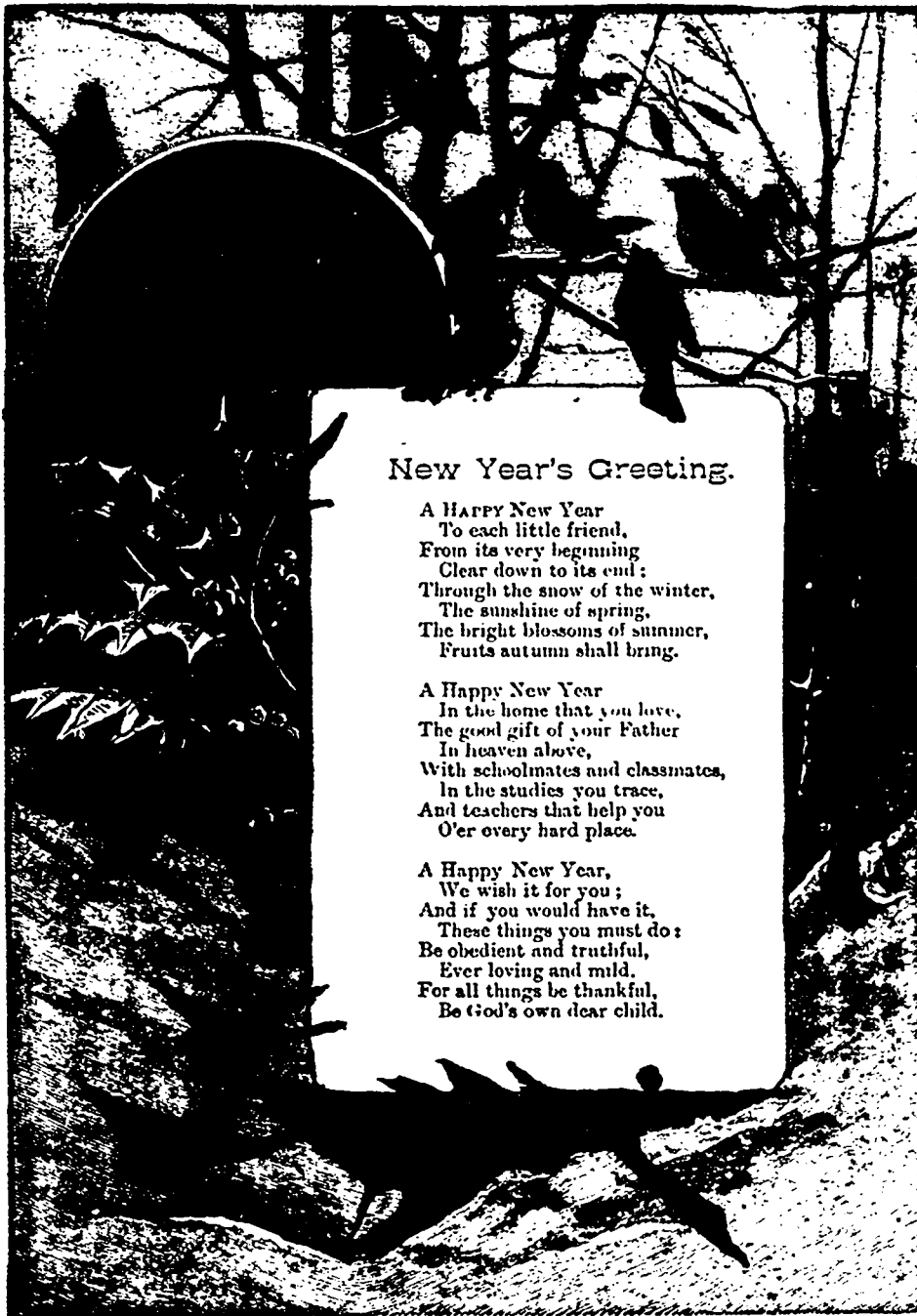
If such ones would only stop to consider the daily and hourly giving that goes to make the home the place of comfort and of delight that it is; if they would for just one week watch the ministrations of a fond and devoted mother, watch so carefully that none of the signs of self-surrender would be lost to them, they would discover in the study that from the whole-hearted giving flowed not only the happiness that they themselves experience in their young lives, but the blessed satisfaction and joy that wells up in the mother's heart, making a spring from which she drew, in those moments when she felt almost spent, her comfort and strength for new service.

The Master never spoke words that touched with a deeper significance the very springs of motive and their outcome also than these: "He that saveth his life shall lose it." Ah, the true mother never saves her life! She gives and gives, and when at last the tired hands must be folded, the great, loving heart still yearns to make another effort for the dear ones, and sometimes breaks with the longing.

Suppose you try this doing a little more than your part in this happy New Year, girls; it will be an experiment that will pay, and if at the end of the time you do not find that you are living in a larger world than before, it will be a strange circum-

stance, and after you have gained the habit of being generous with your effort, you will begin to despise this keeping back of the best part of one's self, and after a while it will be surprising if you do not recognize the fact that your highest joy comes from giving freely.

year old was a very important witness in a certain lawsuit. One of the lawyers, after cross-questioning the lad severely, said: "Your father has been talking to you and telling you how to testify, hasn't he?" "Yes, sir, he has," was the boy's reply. "Now," said the lawyer, "think me."



### New Year's Greeting.

A HAPPY New Year  
To each little friend,  
From its very beginning  
Clear down to its end:  
Through the snow of the winter,  
The sunshine of spring,  
The bright blossoms of summer,  
Fruits autumn shall bring.

A Happy New Year  
In the home that you love,  
The good gift of your Father  
In heaven above,  
With schoolmates and classmates,  
In the studies you trace,  
And teachers that help you  
O'er every hard place.

A Happy New Year,  
We wish it for you;  
And if you would have it,  
These things you must do:  
Be obedient and truthful,  
Ever loving and mild,  
For all things be thankful,  
Be God's own dear child.

### CROSS-QUESTIONING.

It is very careful in courts of law, where witnesses are bound to tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, that they be questioned and cross-questioned, so that all the facts may be brought out. Sometimes lawyers care more for getting their cases than they do for getting at the truth, and then they try to cross-question and confuse the witnesses. A little twelve-

had discovered something, "just tell us how your father told you to testify." "Well," said the boy modestly, "father told me the lawyers would try to tangle me in my testimony, but if I would just be careful and tell the truth, I could tell the same thing every time." Lawyers sometimes find that their cross-questions, call forth unicky answers. This one evidently got more truth than he wished for.

### SOME NEW YEAR'S DAY CUSTOMS.

The old Romans considered it peculiarly lucky to begin any new enterprise or to enter upon any new office upon New Year's day. All the mechanics began something of their art or trade, and men of letters did the same, as to book, poem, etc. And the consuls though chosen before entered upon their duties this day. After the government was in the hands of the emperor, the consuls were chosen on New Year's day to the capital attended by a crowd, when two white bulls never before yoked, were sacrificed to Jupiter Capitolinus. A great deal of incense and other perfumes was spent in the temple. The flames, together with the consuls, during the religious solemnity, offered their vows for the prosperity of the empire, and the emperor having taken an oath of allegiance and confirmed all public acts done by him during the preceding year, festivities took place among all classes, and lasted several days. It was a time of universal rejoicing, when presents were exchanged and difference reconciled. The Druids also sacrificed two white bulls, and at the same time the ceremony of cutting the mistletoe was performed. One of the priests clothed in white mounted the tree and cut of the mistletoe with a knife of gold, which was received by another priest standing on the ground in his white robe. The sacrifice was then performed, and prayers were offered to God to send a blessing upon his own gift. The plant thus gathered was supposed to bestow fertility upon man and beast, and to be a specific against all sorts of poison.

It was considered unlucky, in some parts of Germany, to leave any work unfinished; and it was supposed that Lady Berchta—a mythical spiritual being, who has the oversight of sinners was angered by it. The last day of the year is sacred to her, and, if she finds any flax left on the distaff that day she spoils it. There was a curious Oriental custom peculiar to the day, called by the Arabs and Persians "the game of the beardless river." A deformed man, whose hair has been shaved off and his face, ludicrously painted with variegated colours, rides through the streets on an ass, and behaves in the most whimsical and extravagant manner, to the great delight of the multitude that follow him. In this manner he proceeds from door to door soliciting all possible charity. A similar custom is still found in various parts of Scotland under the name of guizarding. In England, amid the ringing of church bells, ringing out the old year and ushering in the new year, it was customary for the young women of the village to carry from door to door a bowl of spiced ale, an imitation of the "wassail bowl," which they offer to the inhabitants of every house, singing congratulatory verses, generally made by themselves, and suggesting small presents. The young people also exchanged garments, which they called mumming and disguising.—The Churchman.