What marked the end of the writer's New Year resolutions?

The New Year is a time for resolutions.

Mentally, at least, most of us could compile formidable lists of 'dos' and 'don'ts'.

The same old favorites recur year in year out with monotonous regularity.

We resolve to get up earlier each morning, eat less, find more time to play with the children, do a thousand and one jobs about the house, be nice to people we don't like, drive carefully, and take the dog for a walk every day.

Past experience has taught us that certain accomplishments are beyond attainment.

If we remain inveterate smokers, it is only because we have so often experienced the frustration that results from failure.

Most of us fail in our efforts at self-improvement because our schemes are too ambitious and we never have time to carry them out.

We also make the fundamental error of announcing our resolutions to everybody so that we look even more foolish when we slip back into our bad old ways.

Aware of these pitfalls, this year I attempted to keep my resolutions to myself.

I limited myself to two modest ambitions: to do physical exercises every morning and to read more in the evening.

An all-night party on New Year's Eve provided me with a good excuse for not carrying out either of these new resolutions on the first day of the year, but on the second, I applied myself assiduously to the task.

The daily exercises lasted only eleven minutes and I proposed to do them early in the morning before anyone had gotten up.

The self-discipline required to drag myself out of bed eleven minutes earlier than usual was considerable.

Nevertheless, I managed to creep down into the living room for two days before anyone found me out.

After jumping about on the carpet and twisting the human frame into uncomfortable positions, I sat down at the breakfast table in an exhausted condition.

It was this that betrayed me.

The next morning, the whole family trooped in to watch the performance.

That was really unsettling, but I fended off the taunts and jibes of the family good-humoredly and soon everybody got used to the idea.

However, my enthusiasm waned.

The time I spent on exercises gradually diminished.

Little by little, the eleven minutes fell to zero.

By January 10th, I was back to where I had started from.

I argued that if I spent less time exhausting myself at exercises in the morning, I would keep my mind fresh for reading when I got home from work.

Resisting the hypnotizing effect of television, I sat in my room for a few evenings with my eyes glued to a book.

One night, however, feeling cold and lonely, I went downstairs and sat in front of the television pretending to read.

That proved to be my undoing, for I soon got back to my old bad habit of dozing off in front of the screen.

I still haven't given up my resolution to do more reading.

In fact, I have just bought a book entitled How to Read a Thousand Words a Minute.

Perhaps it will solve my problem, but I just haven't had time to read it!

The writer exercised early in the morning for two days before anyone found out.

When he sat at breakfast the second day, his condition betrayed him.

His enthusiasm waned so that by January 10th, things were back to normal.

However, he decided to keep his mind fresh for reading.

He read on his own until one evening he went down and sat in front of the television, but he dozed off.

He has now bought a book on speed reading!

Are New Year resolutions made to be broken?

I think so.

Some people are serious about them, of course, but most know that they won't succeed in keeping them.

That's probably why they make resolutions such as ' I must be polite to Aunt Harriet' when they only see Aunt Harriet twice a year! - or '1 must cut down on my smoking' when they only ever have a cigarette after a family lunch on Sundays!

Such resolutions, then, are not only ridiculous but hardly resolutions at all!

The last time I ever made a list of resolutions was five years ago.

I remember now that I resolved always to do my college work on time, to keep my room tidy, to have nothing to do with the girls in the nearby girls' college, to write home at least once a week, to wash my dirty clothes regularly and to have a haircut once a month.

What was I thinking of?!

For most college students, such resolutions would be impossible, and of course they were for me!

I kept three of the resolutions for a week, and a girlfriend from the nearby girls' college helped me to keep two more (the ones about keeping my room tidy and washing my dirty clothes regularly!) for another week.

After that, I gave up in despair.

Instead, I resolved just to try to be just a little bit more tidy and a little more thoughtful, generally.

I don't bother to make New Year resolutions anymore since I have proved to myself and others that I can't keep them.

There seems to be little point in breaking habits which have taken years to establish.

In making his New Year resolutions, the writer was careful to choose two which he thought were within his scope.

The family realized what one of his resolutions was when they noticed how tired he looked when he came to breakfast.

The writer's efforts to read more have so far failed because he has not been able to resist the hypnotic effects of television.

Past experiences have taught us that we will never attain certain accomplishments.

I jumped about on the carpet and twisted myself into such uncomfortable positions that I sat down exhausted.

This year, I attempted to keep my resolutions private.

The whole family flocked in to watch the performance.

My enthusiasm for my new resolutions soon evaporated.