

JANUARY

SUN.	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THU.	FRI.	SAT.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

NEW YEAR CUSTOMS

Old-Time Rites and the Origin of Some That Are Still Practiced.

New Year's Day has been a day of ceremony and rejoicing for a great many centuries in the world's history. Its origin is traced back to the Roman festival of Janus, after the establishment of the empire. The old Romans divided the year into ten months only. Numa Pompilius added January and February, and dedicated the former to Janus, 713 B. C.

"'Tis he! The two-faced Janus comes in view;
Wild hyacinths his robe adorn,
And sundrops, rivals of the morn,
He spurns the goal aside,
But smiles upon the new-emerging year
With pride,
And now unlocks, with agate key,
The ruby gates of orient day."

On this day the Roman consuls, followed by the court, went to the capital, all gorgeously appareled, where they sacrificed two white bulls, never yoked, to Jupiter Capitolinus.

The Druids observed New Year with great pomp and ceremony. One feature of their ceremonies was the distribution of the mistletoe among the people on New Year's eve. The priests went in annual procession, on the sixth day of the moon nearest the New Year, wearing white robes and bearing a golden sickle with which to detach the sacred parasite from the tree. So much did they esteem it that it was carried in a white cloth. It must be cut from the divine oak, in the forest dedicated to the gods. The apple tree mistletoe, used in England, is a different thing altogether. We all remember the mythological story of Eneas, who, when descending to Avernus, was compelled to take with him a branch of this plant to prosper

Among the Saxons the New Year was ushered in by friendly gifts. Later, this custom of making gifts was carried to a ruinous excess. Henry III. of England extorted costly gifts from his court. Queen Bess carried it to such an extreme, says Dr. Drake, that her costly wardrobe and jewelry was supplied in this way.

When Henry VIII. was receiving costly presents from his courtiers, we read that honest old Latimer handed him a Bible, with some pertinent chapters marked, much to the burly king's disgust.

Dr. Drake tells us that, in the sixteenth century, prince and peasant alike celebrated the New Year with regularity and parade.

Much was made of the wassail bowl at this season. It was carried from door to door with loud singing and merriment. The word is derived from was halle, the Saxon for "Here's to you!" an expression still in use by men in pledging each other at suppers. The present loving cup takes the place of the ancient wassail bowl.

In some of the country districts of England old customs are still observed. On New Year's eve, at midnight, the last of the Christmas carols is sung, outside of the house, by the young people, then there is a rush for the nearest spring, and the first one who fills his or her glass gets what they call the "cream of the well," and will be the most fortunate during the coming year.

In the early hours of the morning, a funeral is held, at some public houses, over "old Tom" (as the old year is called), when the boys parade the

New Year's day was a great day in New York with the early Dutch settlers. It was ushered in by the ringing of bells and firing of guns. Wash ington Irving, in his humorous "Knickerbocker's History of New York," gives a delightfully amusing account of the observance of New Year among these Netherlanders. "The whole community," he tells us, "was deluged with cherry brandy, pure Holland and mulled cider; every house was a temple of the merry god, and many a provident vagabond was intoxicated out of pure economy, drinking liquor enough to serve him the remainder of the year."

Irving dwells especially upon the great ball given at the Governor's, old Peter Stuyvesant, New Year's right, when the good Peter was devoutly observant of the pious rite of kissing all the womenkind for a Happy New Year.

On this day the governor also distributed fiddles to the old negroes, who fiddled all night while the young people danced. Under Peter was instituted "quilting bees," "husking bees," and other rural assemblages, where, under the inspiring influence of the fiddles, toil was enlivened by gaiety and followed by a dance.

The governor did not approve of the "short skirts worn by the ladies and ordered a ruffe put at the bottom of them. He likewise disapproved of some of their steps in dancing, and ordered that no other step should be taken but the "shuffle and turn," and the "double trouble."

The custom of New Year's calling

The Joyous New Year



Who comes dancing over the snow,
His soft little feet all bare and rosy?
Open the door, though the wild winds blow,
Take the child in and make him cozy,
Take him in and hold him dear,
He is the wonderful New Year.

THE NEW YEAR MEDITATIONS

Upon the threshold of this year
Expectantly we stand,
And as old Janus did of yore,
O'erlook the year at hand.
And wonder what its joys will be,
Its sorrows, pain and cure,
That it will bring us pleasures great,
Is o'er our earnest prayer.

Then gazing back o'er vanished years,
To which we say good-bye,
We think of all the joys now flown,
And give a longing sigh,
While wondering if future years
Will bring us many joys,
We will not be so light of heart,
As happy girls and boys.

Although, perchance, some deeper joys
Will come into our hearts;
Perhaps it may be life's sweet charm,
Which ever sweet peace imparts,
It may be, oh, so many things



In which we may rejoice,
And anxiously we pray and wait,
To hear the prophet's voice.

To tell us whether grief or joy,
To us the year shall bring,
And whether we shall weep and sigh
Or thankful praises sing,
Farewell, farewell, oh! fleeting year,
We never will forget
The happy days thou hast bestowed,
And we will love thee yet.

And though reluctantly we part,
As thou must go away,
The memory of thy joyous hours,
Within our minds will stay,
And oh! approaching New Year, please,
Sweet blessings o'er bestow,
And let us, if it be God's will,
No pain or sorrow know.
—Martha Shepard Lippincott.

New Year's Customs in Many Lands

While there is a growing disposition to allow the celebration of New Year's day to fall into disuse, it still retains its rank as the most ancient festival of the world. Even before the Christian era it was observed as a day sacred to the god Janus. The old Romans made it a public holiday and exchanged presents of gilded fruit, while the Greeks inducted their newly elected magistrates into office. The Druids, too, held the first day of the new year in particular honor and veneration, and the survival of many of their pagan rites and superstitions is still to be found in Wales, Brittany and the southwestern portions of England.

Varied as were the ways in which the festival was kept, in this all nations were agreed—that a time of new life had come, that old quarrels must be forgotten, old debts canceled, and everything possible done to create a feeling of "good will toward men."

Nowhere else, unless it be in Germany, is there such a variety of cakes and pastry as may be found in a Scotch bake shop. Besides the Scotch caraway cakes and the Christmas squares there is a shortbread known as Piteathly bannocks, which are highly ornamented with sugar and mottoes, such as "A Happy New Year" or "A Merry Auld Yule." Then there are the rye leaves, popular in the Thrums district, black and rich and filled with fruit and peel, and the Scotch buns, composed entirely of eggs, chopped fruit and peel, incased in a crust which is not to be eaten.

In Scotland as well the old custom prevails of consulting the Bible on New Year's morning to see what fate has in store for the coming year. The sacred book must be laid on the table and the one consulting it must open it at random and place a finger on the chapter to which the book opens. This is then read and accepted as the ultimatum.

In France it is the most important day of the year in the way of friendly meetings and appointments and social and family reunions. The typical Frenchman on this day always dines at home with his parents, if he has any, and no outside attraction is sufficient to lure him away from the performance of this filial duty.

New Year's customs in Russia are specially interesting. In the morning the princes of the imperial family, court functionaries and servants of the palace come in regular order to present their homage to the emperor, who kisses all the members of his family and the highest of the officials three times, according to Russian fashion. In the streets the people kiss each other, whether acquainted or not. This ceremony was suppressed for a time, but was re-established a few years ago under the reign of Alexander II. In the provinces the handsomest horse in the village is gayly decorated with evergreens and berries, and directly after breakfast is conducted to the house of the nobleman, followed by all the boys of the village, who have been up since day-break fustling friends and foes with wheat and dried peas. The motley procession is met at the door by the master, who admits it, horse and all, to the parlor, where all the family are assembled.

Next comes a procession of real animals—the ox, cow, goat and hog—also garlanded with greens and berries and led by the children. These less favored animals are not invited in, but slowly file in front of the house, that the family may view the parade from the windows. At the heels of this cavalcade come the old women of the community, bearing a fluttering contingent of barnyard fowls, also tricked out in greens, which they bestow as presents to the master.

Legend of Chinese New Year's Lilies

Wong Su was no common Chinaman, although he did operate a laundry on a side street.

The laundry, he confided to his little friend, John Lawson, whom he was wont to call Little John, in recollection of a character in the book which the boy had lent to him to read, was merely a stepping stone toward the larger sphere of a Chinese merchant.

Little John had crept into the heart of Wong Su ever since he had prevented some other boys from throwing stones at the laundry windows, and in token of his regard, Wong Su had given the little boy a bowl of lily bulbs which were just sending out tiny spikes of green above their crinkled brown coverings.

Now Little John was returning the bulbs to his friend to be cared for until another season of bloom should arrive.

"Take care of my sacred lilies, please, Wong Su?" he begged.

Wong Su smiled. "These are not sacred lilies, Little John," he said, "the proper name for them is 'angel lilies.' We call them angel lilies in my country. Would you like to know how they came by that name?"

Little John clasped Wong Su's hand in both his own and jumped up and down in delighted assent.

"Ever and ever so long ago," began Wong Su, "in a part of China where much of the land is very low and some of it quite swampy, there lived a rich mandarin who had two sons, Li Foo and Wing Tung.

"Li Foo was a hypocritical young man who was very jealous of the pleasant disposition and popularity of his younger brother, and he managed to influence the mind of his father so that when, full of years, he came to die he left to Li Foo the right to divide his property as he thought best, depending upon Li Foo's wisdom and affection to make a fair division with Wing Tung.

"No sooner had the days of mourning for the old man ended than Li Foo hastened to divide the large estate which the mandarin had left in his care.

"All the land, and all the other property of his father, he seized for himself, except some swampy meadows, and a few unimportant articles, which he gave to Wing Tung.

"The younger brother's heart was very heavy, and his spirit sank within him when he thought of the future.

"Wing Tung realized that his store of money would soon vanish, and he had neither a profession nor an occupation to depend upon for an income. He determined to come to this country of the West, where he might, perhaps learn how to earn a livelihood.

"He became particularly interested in seeing how marsh lands in America were reclaimed and made to produce fine crops of rice.

"I will go back to my own country," he said, "and if my brother has not



"Ever and ever so long ago," said Wong Su.

taken possession of my poor marshes I will drain them and cultivate rice upon them."

"It was nearing the time of our New Year when Wing Tung reached his native province and went to look at his wide stretches of marsh land.

"As he lay, turning the problem over in his mind that night, considering despondently that he could scarcely hope to carry on his work and live until harvest time upon the small sum left to him, an angel appeared to him bearing a packet of seed.

"Take these seeds," said the angel, "and sprinkle them over every part of your marsh. There lies a fortune in that marsh for you. Be not discouraged; you shall reap gold from it."

"Very early in the morning Wing Tung set out to sow the seed before anyone could be up to see what he was about, and laugh to scorn his folly at planting seed in a worthless marsh.

"On the night before the Chinese New Year the angel appeared again to Wing Tung, saying:

"Go, gather your harvest of gold; it is ripe."

"At break of day Wing Tung hastened to his meadows and there, scattered all over the dreary brown of the marsh, were small green points with here and there slender lance-like leaves bearing among them stalks of beautiful lilies. The swamp seemed white and gold with their beauty.

"Every day of the New Year celebration, and for many days thereafter, Wing Tung sold his angel lilies to all who wished to buy, and thus he reaped from the bed of his marsh that harvest of gold which the angel had promised him."

BALANCING

Cast up the sum of good resolves
With which we meet the year;
Upon the lengthy debit side
Let all the faults appear.
Write down the good we did not do—
The goals we have not won—
But write in sturdy characters
The bad we have not done.

Let all the merit we've acquired,
In figures firm and fair,
All luminous and fine to see



We boldly written there;
And put the good we meant to do—
The good that half begun—
And write, high on the credit side,
The bad we have not done.

'Tis hard to live in gentleness;
'Tis hard to make the year
A page—a blotless page of joy,
And honesty and cheer;
'Tis harder yet the evil things
That all beset, to shun—
So write in brave and honest strokes
The bad we have not done.

The good we mean to do—the deeds
So oft misunderstood;



The thwarted good we try to do,
And would do, if we could;
The noble deeds we set upon
And have accomplished none—
Write them—and with them credit all
The bad we have not done.
—W. D. Nesbitt.

The Old Year and the New

The past year has meant many things to many people.

Tragedy and comedy have played hide and seek in the most unexpected places. Joy and sorrow have gone hand in hand in many lives. Wishes have not ended in fulfillment even when most confidently expected; and Fortune, with her usual fickleness, has smiled where her presence was hither to unknown.

The passing year has brought many gifts there was no refusing. On some it showered blessings until all the world was golden to its favorites, and life a happiness so great it crowded out all remembrances of griefs that were old, or yet to be born. To others it has been the graveyard of dead hopes, the burying ground of happiness, the final resting place of energy, ambition and ideals. To all it has brought some experience that forever will stand monument-like in our lives to mark the birth of new capacities within ourselves for good or evil; the awakening of some powerful influence for weal or woe.

Twelve short months, and how much they mean! A few hundred at some odd days, and hundreds of lives are marred forever, or made happy for a time. Lived well and profitably, they have brought contentment and a clear conscience to help us face the coming year and buoy us up in the sturdy faith that the future cannot but be as bright as was the past. Ill-spent, those few short months have banished hope from many a life, and dimmed many an illustrious name. It is the mistake of the moment that makes the misery of a lifetime, nor can repentance brighten it again. Few of us are capable of planning evil, but many of us succumb to the unexpected opportunity. The strong withstand, the weak falter and fall, and yet the world insists that both should be measured by the same stern standard of right and wrong, with no allowance made for weakness. It is so easy to be good when one has all one wants, so simple to resist temptation that has no allurements, so comforting to sit in the conscious rectitude that knows no disposition to evil, and condemn those whose lives are a constant struggle to do the things they ought not to do, and in whom one triumph is a greater moral victory than a lifetime of righteousness on the part of the untempted.

We all have a well defined wish at this season of the year to turn a clean page in the book of life, to improve, if possible, to perform miracles of kindness and goodness.

The universal desire is to be at peace with mankind. To succeed one must temper justice with mercy, until the accepted position is reversed and it is mercy which is tempered with justice. To ourselves we cannot be too severe; to the faults of others, too lenient. By our own mistakes let us measure the misdemeanors of those about us. Let us profit by the temptations we have met, returning thanks for the courage which has helped us to withstand some, from our failures gathering fresh courage for a new attempt. Each heart knows its own bitterness. A deep stratum of sorrow often lies close to the fairest surface. Of the knowledge born of our experience we must be generous, and deal gently with the failings hardest to understand in others. Charity covereth much, but alas, in too many cases it is a garment worn threadbare at the seams, and in holes in many places. To keep it whole and capable of sheltering the needy is a task that would profitably fill the next year for those of us who will undertake it; and there should be many such, if we were only honest enough to some times make the allowances for others we never fail to make for ourselves.

"If there be some weaker one, give me strength to help her on," is a wish that is charitable, practical and kind, and would make a splendid device for 1905.