How They Meet the Bright New Year

Various Customs in Other Lands on the Festival of Birth of Another Year

JOY THE RULE

France meets the new years with a flowing cup; to Scotland it brings in the famous hagassis to a bagpipe tune; in Persia it signifies the rebirth of all life; China's new year sends an old household god to the land of spirits while it establishes another deity on the family hearth. In Canada, accompanied by merrymaking or solemnity, as the temper of the company demands, another leaf in the book of life turns over. Varying calandars announce the new year at different times of the year in different parts of the world but everywhere as the day rolls around it is greeted with an outburst of celebration.

St. Sylvestre's Day is a saint's day no one ignores in France. Saints come and go throughout the year, observed with more or less devotion by pious people of the nation, but when St. Sylvestre's Eve comes on the last day of the old year, families rich and poor are prepared for its ritual. The stores teem with lovely things and toy shops are crowded to the doors with dolls and drums, for St. Sylvestre's Day, rather than Christmas is the season of giving in France.

Eight o'clock on St. Sylvestse's eve takes the people to mass for the solemn dedicatory service for the coming year. When the mass is over gay crowds press homeward for the feast of the evening.

A tremendous dinner is spread and around it gather the head of the family, his wife, their children, their children's children and all the uncles, aunts and cousins—the honor of entertaining falling upon the oldest of the family line. Mouton gigot is the main dish of the dinner (since turkey and chicken are little favored in France), accompanied by glorified string beans and truffle sauces, and a finale of pataisseries and wine.

On the stroke of midnight, which approaches near the end of the dinner, the city bursts forth with all the din that whistles, drums, horns and shouts can arouse, and everybody greets the new year with a draught of champagne. Wine may flow early in the evening, but this king of beverages is reserved until the new year actually shows his face. Upon the streets hilarity reaches its height with the midnight bell, for then the ancient order of kissing comes into its own.

As on old Russian Easter, nobody stands on ceremony, for tradition gives gives him sanction to kiss the prettiest girl in sight, whether he has ever seen her before in his life—and right heartily he does it. Dignity unbends and beauty lays to its majesty for a few rollicking moments.

Youngsters, long since in bed, have left their shoes, big and little, upon the hearth, waiting for the giftgivers, and before parents and relatives betake themselves to a late bed they fill the shoes with the year's offerings of toys, candies and fruits.

GERMANY OF YORE.

Germany, whose St. Nicholas is loved even more than our Santa Claus makes no great stir over New Year's now, but there are many tales of seasonal functions in the old days under the monarchy.

There was a custom in the cities during the youth of the former Kaiser that a man appeared on the streets in a tall silk hat on New Year's Eve at his own peril. The idea probably grew out of the hostility of the lower classes to the bourgeoisie, the silk hat being a symbol of prosperity Should a provincial, ignorant of the custom, have the ill fortune to stroll forth in fine feathers on that evening in Berlin he was almost at once greeted by the command to take off his hat. He, not believing the summons for him, walked on with unruffled composure. Shouting mobs were around him in no time, and he, too late, saw that he was really meant to doff his hat. With rough blows the beautiful hat was smashed over its owner's ears and entirely demolished.

A story, which may be three parts fiction, say that William II. used to love to dress as a member of the working class and mingle with the crowd incognito and join in the rough sport. On one occasion he had the misfortune to belabor an old man who was more than prepared for the onslaught. The old gentleman had been attacked in former times, and on this particular year he had equipped himself with a leather skull cap which he wore under his hat. Set thickly in the leather were sharp upstanding nails. When the Emperor's fist came down on that fellow's hat, it encountered more than a bewildered head, and the royal hand was so severely injured as to require a surgeon's attention.

In Frankfort-on-the-Main the whole city salutes itself at the moment of midnight. Families and groups of friends together watch the old year out and when the clock begins to strike twelve, every window in the city flies open and the streets resound with "Prosit Nuejahr"—Happy New Year! Toasts are drunk and good wishes exchanged.

THE SCOTCH WAY.

Time was in Scotland when New Year's far outstrone Christmas in importance, and though the order is now reversed, many of the old superstitions survive to make New Year one of the sweet times sober Scotland knows. It is a busy season for the bakers who are making their hard loaves of rye bread and their fancy tarts and short breads. Their windows are festive with little ornamented cakes bearing iced sugar mottos wishing "A Happy New Year" and "A Merrie Auld Yule." A famous Scotch bun made entirely of egg and chopped fruit enclosed in a crust appears bountifully during New Year week. First footing has come from the nineteenth century with scarce abated vigor. This is the custom of visiting friends immediately after midnight. Prudent people usually take care that the first foot set inside their doors belongs to a person of fair countenance since the fair face brings good luck for the entire year. A dark face brings bad luck. One might expect all brunettes to remain at home under the circumstances if another bait did not draw them out. The first footer is allowed to kiss the person who answers his knock, and many a swain makes his visit hoping the favored daughter of the house will open the door.

Healths are drunk with regular Scotch whiskey, and when the party is asembled, a piper in highland plaids enters playing the hagassis tune on his bagpipes. Immediately after him comes the cook bearing the hagassis, a huge boiled pudding of well established reputation. It is to Scotland what the plum pudding is to England, and it is loudly welcomed. On that night no fire on the hearth goes out since gray ashes on the grate on New Year borning are a bad sign.

On New Year's Eve and late into the night the children of the city and the country go from door to door singing begging songs. Carrying enormous turnips made into jack-o-lanterns, and muffled in sheets and masks, just as Canadian children are on Hallowe'en, the little beggars shout their ditty until they are rewarded with cheese and bread and with the little New Year pitcaithy bannocks which have made the bake shop windows alluring for a week.

IN PERSIA TOO.

Nowhere in the world, with the possible exception of China, does the New Year bring such feasting as it does in Persia. There the day and the customs are those which survive from the old Zoroastrian worship and traditions. Mahommetanism has long held nominal sway in Persia, and its calendar is used to a great extent but the folk customs of the older religion survive and occupy an incomparably dear place in the life of the people. That is why the New Year celebration surrounds March 21 rather than follows the day around the Mohammetan lunar calendar which makes the first of the year fall at different times of the sun calendar.

Because it is spring, and all plant and animal life is springing anew, March seems an especially appropriate time for New Year. On the clay roofs a riot of color announces the blooming of myriads of wild flowers whose seeds of the year before have blown about on the wind and found lodging in the straw and loose soil of the housetops. No child dares pick these New Year flowers, just as he dares not kill a bird or an animal, since according to Zoroastrianism life is sacred, and should any life be voilently taken the spirit of it is doomed to wander homeless forever.

In the houses all is hubbub, for spring cleaning, the like of which no western house has yet endured, is on foot. The gorgeous rugs and mats are packed on the backs of the beasts of burden and taken miles to the streams to be washed in running water; pots and pans are cleaned and scoured; the cooking quarters are humming with activity. The lady of an establishment has her hands more than full at Persia's New Year, because every member of her household, lowest servant to favorite wife, must have new clothing from the most insignificant piece of underwear to the fine gauzy silks Persian women wear as outer wraps. Peddlers of baubles and jewelry, merchants of brocades, shawls and chintzes, call upon the great of the land and sell enormous quantities of their wares. Dressmakers follow them and throw the household into such an uproar that the men and boys might leave home if any house in Persia offered a retreat.

Meanwhile culinary preparations go on briskly. Both men and women are making the famous Persian sweetmeats which belong almost exclusively to the New Year. Adjil a mixture of twenty kinds of nuts, the seeds of watermelons and pumpkins, tiny peas, quince seeds, salt and the juice of limes has a delicate greenish color and is the greatest favorite of all the delicacies prepared. Rice flour is made into fine little cakes and a rich dainty which employs pounded walnuts in place of flour is one of the richest of the New Year cakes. Nuts, too, salted and sweetened, are prepared in huge quantities.

Two thousand years ago the lovely practice of planting wheat in bowls had its origin. Today it still flourishes, and by the dawn of No-Ruz (New Year's Day) the plants, which were put into the bowls not quite a month before, are several inches high, so that the bowl makes a lovely delicate green centrepiece for the great festal board.

MOTHER'S DAY.

New Year's Day is above all others dedicated to the mother of the household. She is the queen of the day, and before the people sit down around the long white linen cloth which is spread on the floor and covered with the cookery of many preceding days, they must receive the blessing of the mother. She then invites them to sit down.

In houses where European guests of some importance have been asked to dine, soup may precede the main course but in most Persian menus this westernism has not found its way. Pilau, which is to say, rice is piled upon tremendous trays not less than two feet in diameter and served with a savory sauce. Turkey, with its sauces, follows, and finally another pilau, which is sweet. Almonds, pistachios, fings, raisins and walnuts make the sweet pilau one of the finest things in all Persian cookery.

On that day the visiting starts. No polite Persian nor foreign visiter cares omit the courtesy of the visits, though if his time is very precious he may call and merely leave his card. Twenty and thirty visits a day must be crowded into the schedule of people of some public prominence. The streets are a carnival of color; smart French gowns are veiled with the tulle scarfs of the women, but the colors of the dresses are only enhanced by the fluttering outer garment. Out of the windows, over balconies, hang the rugs which have made Persia famous—gorgeous banners of the day's importance. Tea drinking and sherbet and sweetmeats arranged in exact designs on trays in the gardens of friends and acquaintances are the order of the season.

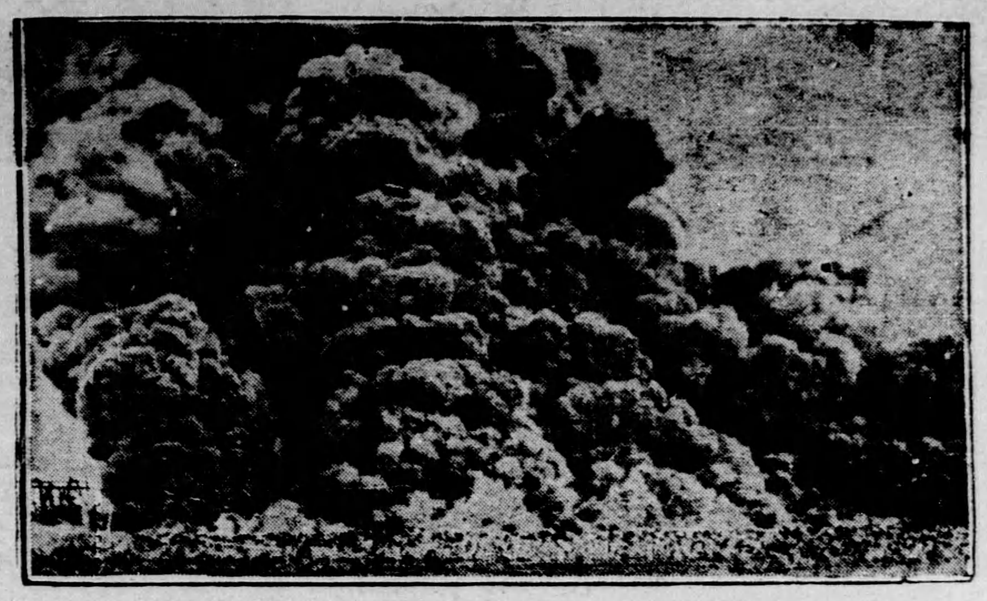
THE GIFT SEASON.

For twelve days the visting goes on and gifts are given among families and friends; not gifts in our sense of the word, but bright silver and gold coins; and in some cases fine old coins whose value is far greater than their face denomination which are kept years afterward for their beauty and rarity.

Seezdeh-debar (the thirteenth day to the door of year) arrives on the thirteenth day of the year and with it the greatest celebration of all. Out of the twelve gates of Teheran goes the population of the city—past the mote that surrounds the ancient citadel and over the artificial hill that hems it in. Beside running streams shaded by willows and poplars they spread the picnic dinner. Such a dinner as it is. There is barbecued lamb, and rice and tea from precious old samovars, and an incredible amount of shirinee—the sweets which have been made with so much labor. All day long the picnic lasts, with the people playing games or sitting talking on the rugs they have brought out for the day. Seezdeh-bedar over, the New Year celebration is closed for the year.

Speeding around corners is a straight road to the hospital.

What An Oil Fire Looks Like



FIRE WORKS DISPLAY A SEVEN-DAYS' WONDER

Billowing clouds of black smoke coming from an oil fire in Beaumont, Texas, which burned for seven days before it was extinguished, at the cost of $100,000.

The Yellow River

By Thomas Steep

The Hwang-ho, or Yellow River, to which also is given the name "China's Sorrow," is of all rivers the wickedest. It inundates homes by the thousands and drowns people by the millions. It assumes in the Chinese imagination the character of a ruthlessly destructive dragon, whose tail is in the mountains of Tibet, whose body stretches 2,600 miles across Northern China, and whose head is in the Gulf of Pechili. It is held accountable for the death by drowning in the last three centuries of 10,000,000 people. It swamps areas thirty miles wide, and in one instance in a single night destroyed 1,500 villages. It churns up millions of tons of loose chalky earth, buries farmlands under mud up to the eaves of the farmers' huts and yearly carries out to sea enough sediment to build up a solid mountain on the floor of the ocean. It shifts its mouth capriciously from the coast of one province to the coast of another province and leaves in its wake famines and pestilences more devastating than war.

Yet its influence on Chinese civilization has been beneficient; its picturesque gorges and torrents in the Tibetan highlands have for ages been the theme of Chinese poetry, its shallow lower reaches bear a considerable commerce, and its whole length marks the pathway by which the pioneering forebears of the yellow race migrated from the sterile uplands of Central Asia to the fertile lowlands.

Rising in the high Kobo-nor plateau, in Tibet, among a group of small lakes called "the starry seas," the Hwang-ho tumbles through the rocky mountain gorges in fresh, cool cascades, which the Chinese poets compare to the falling of liquid jade. The falls at Lungmen (Dragon-gate), with its overhanging crags and its surrounding forests, vales, peaked pagodas and huge buddhas carved in the mountain sides, is held to be a glimpse of paradise. Beyond the foothills the river for 400 miles passes the base of the Great Wall like a wide moat, loops a thousand miles into Mongolia and enters Honan Province, where it washes up the loose yellow earth in vast quanties and carries it swiftly seaward. On the lower plains, where it widens and meets a more gradual decline, the river slackens its speed and permits the silt and coarser detritus to sink, causing the river bed to rise continuously.

For forty centuries the Chinese, to prevent the river from becoming an inland sea, have struggled to confine it within embankments of earth, only to see the embankments washed away when the river bed, raised by the accumulated silt, lifts the waters over them. "What," asks Dr. F. H. King in his "Farmers of Forty Centuries," "must be said of the mental status of a people who for forty centuries have measured their strength against such a Titan racing past their homes above the level of their fields confined only between walls of their own construction?" Obviously, the patience of the Chinese is comparable to that of ants which, finding their ramparts of sand destroyed, laboriously build them up again. The amount of mud the river disperses is prodigious. It has been estimated that the Hwang-ho together with the Yangtse in 360 centuries will fill up with solid land the whole of the Yellow Sea.

As a bearer of freight the Hwang-ho is incorribly bad; it not only because of its shallowness refuses to carry any but rafts and flatboats, but it strands them on its treacherous sandbars. The craft, whose cargoes are chiefly lacquer juice, millet, rice, tobacco, gums and oils, are built in the highlands, where timber is plentiful, and dismantled and sold for lumber in the lowlands, where wood is scarce. So it may be said of the Hwang-ho, as of no other river, that the ships sail down it never sail up again.

The last time I crossed the Hwang-ho I was a passenger on the Peking-Hankow express. It was past midnight and the train moved over the desolate plains of interior China with a monotonous clickety-click. Inside the coach the passengers, Europeans and Chinese, slept soundly in grotesque attitudes; outside in the moonlight the landscape swept by ghostly; a solitary farmhouse, a clump of gnarled and ancient trees, a ruined temple inclosed within a ruined wall. Tired old China slumbered, oblivious to the passing train.

Book-Salesman (to gentleman who has purchased several new books)—"There's nothing like buying one's Christmas presents quite early, sir, and thus avoiding the crowds." Thrifty Gentleman—"It isn't so much that, mon, as that when ye leave books until the last minute there's no time to read them before ye have to send them off!"

"My dear," remarked Jones, who had just finished reading a book on "The Wonders of Nature." "Nature is marvellous! When I read a book like this it makes me think how puerile, how insignificant is man." "Huh!" said his wife. "A woman doesn't have to wade through 400 pages to discover that."

Young British Cripples See Princess

ENGLAND'S MUCH LOVED PRINCESS VISITS SICK

Princess Mary of England visiting the young patients in the Mansfield Orthopedic hospital. She left the bedside of her father, King George, to perform a number of official acts.

League of Nations, Calendar Reform

Canadian Society Gave Early Support to this Vital Reform Movement, Now Assembly May Be Called

Ottawa.—An international conference on calendar reform may materialize as a result of action being taken before the House of Representatives of the United States in Washington, the League of Nations Society in Canada, which has its headquarters at Ottawa, has been advised. At the instigation of Mr. George Eastman, the well-known American financier, the committee on foreign affairs at Washington has under its consideration a proposal that the President of the States be officially requested to call an international meeting to look into the question of calendar simplification.

Various federal officials at Washington have been outspoken in their support of the movement and at present there seems every likelihood that calendar reform, which is sponsored by the League of Nations, will be thoroughly investigated. Opinion both in Canada and the United States is unanimous as to the need of this although until suggestions have been thoroughly threshed out there is and will continue to be disagreement as to the nature of the remedy.

Students of calendar reform point out many discrepancies in the present system,—inequality in the length of the months, the varying number of weeks in the months, the lack of fixity of the calendar, and so on—and state that a readjustment would be beneficial to every class of the community. The thirteen twenty-eight day month plan designed by Moses B. Cotsworth is cited as a convenient solution to the problem as there would always be four weeks in each month, and each week day would fall upon the same date each month, and crop statistics, records of all sorts, and accounting would benefit greatly. Mr. Cotsworth did much of his early work in Canada and many years ago read a paper before the Royal Society of Canada and received the unqualified support of that distinguished body.

As the Lilies Of the Field

Lady Astor, Gorgeously Clad, Moves House To Enthusiasm

2 London—Lady Astor has started another movement, this time a "brighter clothes" campaign for women.

Lady Astor appeared in the House of Commons clad in a gorgeous cerise gown instead of the usual somber blues and blacks worn by women in Parliament. The fact that she had come direct from a tea party was not mentioned in the enthusiastic comment and cheers that greeted her appearance caused other women parliamentarians immediately to start wondering if they had fallen behind.

"Of course, we do not want women to make a fashion parade of the House of Commons, said Miss Ellen Wilkinson, one of the eight women in the House, "but it strikes me that it is high time the House got over its supposed prejudice against women members wearing bright colors."

Miss Susan Lawrence, another member, supported Miss Wilkinson's attitude. "Quite right," she said. "It is my view that what clothes a parliamentarian wears is entirely her own affair."

Youth's Opportunity

"A symposium on the subject of success in business has been compiled by Mr. R. B. Dunwoody, Secretary of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, and published under the title of Youth's Opportunity.

Hre are a few sayings of some of the contributors:—

"Learn to say 'No' to yourself in matters of pleasure.

"Start early at the bottom of the ladder.

"The men who 'live well,' but 'not too well,' get on best all over the world.

"The future may see lads going into a factory for two years, then to a university.

"Grumbling should be kept to oneself.

"If a young man can manage to take as much interest in the business he has entered as he does in, say, football, cricket or motor-cars, there is not much fear of his troubling about whether the dole wil be increased or diminished.

"No man will be a success in a calling he dislikes.

"The next crop of millionaires are licking our stamps now."

QUITE TRUE

Carrot: You needn't be so haughty—we're both alike.

Diamond Ring: How so?

Carrot: Why we're both one carrot!