Many Unique New Year Customs Still Exist in Foreign Countries

Scotland

Young Scotchmen used to wait eagerly for the first stroke of twelve marking the coming of the New Year. As the bell in the church steeple began to toll, he would rush up to the door of his beloved's home, to be the first to cross her threshold. The girl would listen for

"The first foot's entering step.
That sudden on the floor is welcome heard,
Ere blushing maids have braided up their hair;
The laugh, the hearty kiss, the good New Year,
Pronounced with honest warmth."

In Scotland, as in most northern European countries, it is an old belief that spirits, both good and evil, are peculiarly active on New Year's Eve. On the stroke of midnight, according to the ancient superstition, all genii were in motion and could be exorcised by appropriate words. Good genii were called hillmen or "hoghmen" in the dialect of Scotland, and evil spirits called trolls. Mummers used to wander about the

streets, wearing masks and carrying cudgels, reciting this doggerel verse, in an effort to attract the good "hogomanay" and to drive off the evil "trollolay"—

"Hogomanay,
Trollolay,
Gie o' your white bread,
I'll hae nane o' your grey—"

Scotch New Year's Toast

Here's to the year that's awa'!
We'll drink it, in strong and in sma';
And to each bonny lassie that we dearly loo'ed,
In the days o' the year that's awa'!

Here's to the friend we can trust,
When the sorrows of adversity blaw;
Who can join in our song, and be nearest our heart,
Nor depart—like the year that's awa'!

Italy

Celebration of New Year's Day seems to have arisen in Italy in the early Middle Ages. In the year 546 a bishop reproved his people for the drinking, feasting, and general wild time that they were indulging in on a holy day—the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ, eight days after Christmas. He told them to turn their backs on "the old, profane and evil ways of paganism." In the later Middle Ages the observances of the day grew more spiritual, through the efforts of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus and St. Gregory the Great.

Syria

The great day of fun and feasting in Syria is New Years, not Christmas. On New Year's Day they exchange presents, and children go about from door to door giving the greeting of the season, and expecting gifts of candy and money.

Before going to bed on New Year's Eve a Syrian child sets out a bowl of water and a dish of wheat for the refreshment of the camel who is supposed to bring him gifts. According to legend the camel was the youngest of the animals bearing the Wise Men, and it fell down exhausted by the strenuous journey. The Christ Child, seeing this, blessed the animal and conferred immortality upon it. In Lebanon it is a "magic mule" who bears the gifts of the season.

Hungary

One of the quaintest New Year's customs is the visit of the chimney sweeps in Hungarian towns. The sweep knocks at the door with his broom, and the householders snatch a straw or two from it. These are tied with a ribbon and kept as a good luck charm during the year.

To touch a pig on New Year's Eve brings good luck, according to Hungarian tradition. In the principal restaurants and cafes of Budapest they release a pig at midnight, and there is much merriment as the diners try to touch the squealing animal as it races among the tables.

Czechoslovakia

In Czechoslovakia they forecast the future by little "lightboats"—nut shells filled with wax and floating on water, a wick burning in each shell. If the boat floats toward the center, its owner will take a journey during the New Year. If two boats come together, the owners will be married within the year.

Busy Wheeler—Robert McArthur of Brantford has been travelling four months, has worn out three pairs of pants, three pairs of shoes, 19 tires.

Radio Fiction Play

By DANIEL F. LINDAY

KALLY O'NEIL walked slowly up the front steps. Her mother watched her from behind the curtain. Being five years old and having a problem had her near tears. She reached up on tip toes and opened the door.

"Kally, honey. Come in here a minute." Kally pushed the hood of her snow suit back and went into the living room.

"What do you want, Mommie?" She shook her blonde curls free.

"Oh, nothing much," her mother smiled, "I just want to know why my little girl looks so sad?"

"Well, Mommie," she slipped her coat off. "it's that girl down the street."

"Yes, dear, what about her?"

Kally could stand it no longer. She burst into tears and running over laid her head on her mother's lap. "That girl says," she sobbed, "that there isn't any Santa Claus."

"Well, now," her mother leaned down and gently bit the tip of her ear, "who'd ever believe a tale like that?"

"You don't believe her?"

"Of course not" she smiled down into the worried blue eyes. "We know there's a Santa Claus."

B-but she said Daddy was him."

"Oh pooh. Sit down there on the floor and I'll help you get your snow pants off."

"We could ask Daddy," Kally suggested.

"Yes, we could" she had an inspiration. "Better still we can wait until tomorrow night and see for ourselves."

"We can?" she sat up in surprise.

"Sure. You go to bed just like always then when he comes I'll wake you up."

She got up from the floor all excited. "You mean we can peek?"

"That's just what we'll do."

"George," she turned to her husband that evening after Kally had been put to bed, "our daughter has quite a problem."

"Women always have problems." he smiled over his newspaper. "What is it this time?"

"She knows about Santa."

"That,s too bad," he pursed his lips, "but what can we do?"

"Get someone to put her toys under the tree while she watches."

"Sure," he laid the paper down, "why couldn't I do it?"

"She heard that you are Santa."

He chuckled. "She isn't the only woman in the family thinks that."

"How about Bob Perkins?" she ignored his attempt at humor. "He's the right build."

"Okay," he agreed, "I'll arrange it in the morning."

"Kally," her mother shook her gently, "Santa is downstairs."

"He is?" she sat up rubbing her eyes, "HE IS?!"

"Okay," she slipped out of bed and into her slippers. In the early morning light she looked like a tiny blond elf.

"Put on your robe."

She got it and took her mother's hand. They crept down the stairs. Mommie held her back while she made sure Santa wasn't smoking a cigar. He was placing gifts around the tree. She motioned her to look. Kally peeked around the corner with

"Santa was just coming out."

big eyes. Then her head darted back.

"Where's daddy?" she asked in a stage whisper.

They heard footseps on the stairs. Daddy crept down. Kally peeked around the corner again. Santa was just coming out with an army barracks bag over his shoulder. The three of them ran and hid behind the staircase. As soon as the front door slammed. Kally was up the steps like a shot.

"Hey, Sweetheart," Daddy called after her, "he left the toys in the living room." He stopped as he glared at her suspiciously. "Don't she like the trike?"

"I'm afraid, dear, that you'll never understand the feminine mind."

"What do you mean where's she going?"

"To get her coat."

"Her coat . . . why?"

"She's going down the street to tell the little girl that she's all wet. Because she has just seen Santa in her front room."

Good Timber

The tree that never had to fight
For sun and sky and air and light,
That stood out in the open plain
And always got its share of rain,
Never became a forest king
But lived and died a scrubby thing.

The man who never had to toil
By hand or mind 'mid life's turmoil,
Who never had to win his share
Of sun and sky and light and air,
Never became a manly man
But lived and died as he began.

Good timber does not grow in ease:
The stronger wind, the tougher trees.
The farther sky, the greater length,
The rougher storms, the greater strength.
By sun and cold, by rain and snows,
In tree or man good timber grows.

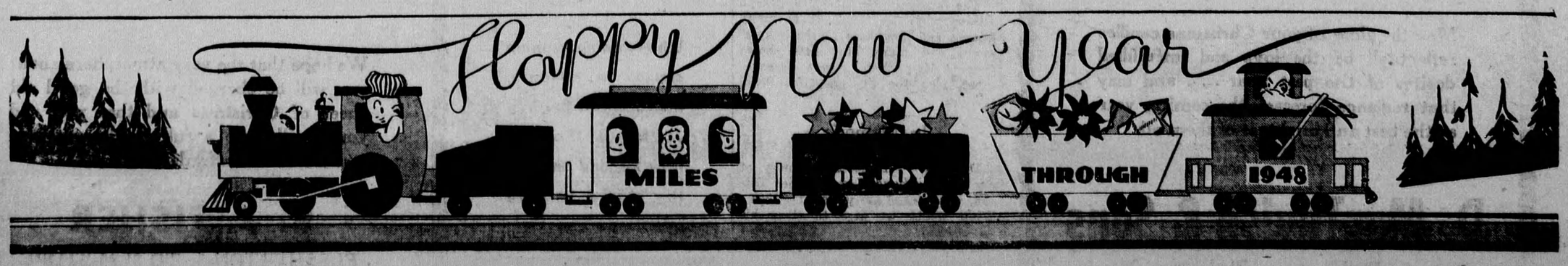
Where thickest stands the forest growth,
We find the patriarchs of both.
And they hold converse with the stars
Whose broken branches show the scars
Of many winds and much of strife—
This is the common law of life.

Let it be Christmas in our hearts

Amid children's bubbling laughter,
lighted trees spread their boughs over many gifts.
Our tables are heavy with good things to eat.
And church bells tell their song of joy in peaceful heavens.
It's a good Christmas, a happy Christmas,
in Canadian homes again this year.

Let it be Christmas in our hearts, too.
Let us be thankful we live in a land of plenty . . .
glad we can share our many blessings with peoples
in countries less fortunate than ours.

Giving, born of the heart, is the true spirit of Christmas.
Giving is the one way to
"Peace on Earth, Good-will to Men".

THE HOUSE OF SEAGRAM

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