

New Year's Day of the Japanese

BY CHUZO OGAWA

ANUARY in Japan is the month of rest and festival; rest after hard work and harvest; festival as an auspicious beginning of the year.

Before the end of the old year pine branches are set up by the gateways, shrines of gods, health, well and other places. These pine branches, signifying constancy, are hung with a straw ring made to imitate a jewel, with rays of light radiating from it, and stuck with a dried sardine, a leaf of evergreen, pieces of paper and a bit of edible seaweed. These rings are also put on almost all representative articles of furniture and kitchen implements, and this is said "to let them take one year."

The festival of "going over the year," or "Toshikoshi," is sometimes called "Toshitori," or "taking the year," and is a busy time for the housewife. She has to cook many different dishes, all of which have prosperous significance besides her regular rice and bean soup.

When food is ready gods are served first, but only in miniature. Lights are put before them; sake liquor is offered in a pair of small vases, which, by the way, I have often seen used for flowers in America. Before the gods on the shelf they hang highly colored leaflets, each with a lucky meaning. One is the god of fortune under an



auspicious gem, with a bagful of gold coins, coral and other precious things. Another has a bundle of edible seaweed, which is called "kobu." The phrase "to rejoice" in Japanese is "yorokobu," so seaweed (kobu) means rejoicing. The last has under it a lobster. A person doubled up with age reminds one of a lobster with its doubled up waist. So the lobster quite often is picturesquely representative of "the aged of the sea."

When the family have bowed down before the gods they eat the great meal and a few rounds of sake were ceremoniously served in former days. Once you have eaten this feast you have added one year; and a child born in December is said to be two years old right after this meal. I used to be reminded by older people that I should be a better boy from the first of January, as I had added one year during that one night. They say that one night of the thirty-first of December is worth fifty days of usual days, and those who go to bed early this night will grow old that much in one night.

Early on the first of January New Year's callers begin to pour in. What do they say? With heads bowed down and hands on the sill, they mumble: "Congratulations for the opening of the new year; we received your favor last year, and pray that it will be continued in future." This phrase is so common that both sides speak at the same time, and yet both are well understood. One says, "Won't you come in?" "No," answers the other; "I have more horses to call." "Then come when you are through," and the caller goes. If the caller should come in he is sumptuously feasted with food and drink.

Superstitious people find omens and meanings in dreams, and the Japanese must have good dreams to begin the year. For this purpose they put a piece of paper under the bed. On this paper a Japanese junk is printed, load-



ed with precious goods, her sails outspread, on her decks men busy with rigging and oars. A Japanese poem is also printed on it:

Na ka ki yo no,
To no ne fu ri no,
Mi na me sa me
Na mi no ri fu ne no,
O to no yo ki ka na.

Translated roughly, this means:

After a sound sleep of long night,
Resting awake in bed,
I hear a cheerful sound
Of a sailing vessel
Gliding over the billows.

The poem in translation loses its power of calling up associations. But one can imagine himself living near an inland sea, with its nooks, bays and offings, pine groves and plum blossoms hanging over from the hilly shores, the sun as yet below the horizon, and in the mist he can discern a vessel gliding smoothly, leaving merry songs of sailors behind to be carried away by the spring breeze.

A New Year's Greeting

By Emory J. Haynes

THINK of an Egyptian pyramid—the Sphinx, for instance, that stone forged head of a man. It stolidly stares out of sightless eyes over the wastes of sand. Now think of a big town clock in the forehead of that hard face. The hour hand has been wagging around and yet around for all these centuries. And now it marks the beginning of another New Year. Does the stony face smile? No. Do the granite lips move to bid us, of this age, a Happy New Year? No. If we speak up to the broken ears do they hear? Never.

Such a senseless, heartless thing is time. It knows us not cares for us. It has no eyes to see us, whether we be Greeks, Egyptians or Yankees. As well might be the countless grains of the desert sands, we and the generations gone before us. Our laughter and our tears are alike to time. If we living beings carve a clock on its brows; if we renew its wheels as they wear out; if we wind it day by day and appoint our children to keep it going after us; if we make its iron tongue strike the hours on a bell, it yet is nothing to the sphinx of Old Time. We only are the living ones. Time is not alive. And if there were no living ear of man or beast on the vast Sahara there would be no sound of the striking clock.

We speak in error of the New Year's coming. It is we living souls who come and go. Time never comes, never goes; is not new, not old. Time is a fetish, an imaginary thing. Man is all, in fact, since the soulless beasts take no note of time, and God's measure is Eternity.

What we do on New Year's day is to take note of our existence. Away back of us are multitudes of human lives to whom we realize our relation. We say back of us. Why not say before us? For they are the procession that passed this way. Are we the head of the column, or is it they who have gone before? In either view we are all one. It is Humanity that is passing over the earth. The Sphinx is nothing since it has no soul to see us pass, or to hear us as we pause and toss our caps in the air before him in a New Year's festival.

Instead of the pyramid let us look up to a Father. How different the thought! Eyes has He and He sees us; ears, and He hears our thankful acclamations. Hands has He, which extend themselves to sustain us, to help the toddling children, to uphold the aged. "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is passed, and as a watch in the night."

We think today of brotherhood. We are conscious alike of our mortality and our immortality. Life seems sweet and we are glad to live. Life seems all embracing, all conquering, for we have survived so many trials and yet are living.

In vain does one seek to put it in words, this mighty shout of men into the faces of the aged stars and to the sunrise. "A Happy New Year." It is a day of tinkling bells and music with dancing feet. Yet poor indeed must be the mind that cannot also rise to say: "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou are mindful of him?" And so give thanks.

GREETED WITH COLD WATER

A quaint New Year's custom observed in South Pembroke, the "Little England beyond Wales," is described in a London newspaper. Between six and seven o'clock on New Year's morning the householders are aroused by a succession of smart taps at their doors. On opening them they will be greeted by one or more children, chiefly boys, armed with a little year, I cheerfully resolve to obey all or other evergreen plant. The greeting consists of the words, "Will you take this New Year's water in, please?" No true native of the district would dream of refusing, for this water is supposed to bring good luck for the ensuing year. If the child's request is granted, he sends a spray of icy water into the face of the gentleman or lady of the house, with the words, "I wish you a happy New Year!" Every member of the household must participate in the luck-bringing water, so the child is brought up to the members of the family still abed and the formula is repeated again.

MAKING THE YEAR

A New Year is the starting place, Let's leave it with a smiling face, Let's start with laughter and with song, And when tomorrow comes along, Let's cling to all our happy ways, Until we've built a stack of days, And weeks and months of faith and cheer, And made of it a happy year, And made of it a happy year, —Detroit Free Press.

A Thought for the New Year

By Charlotte Perkins Gilman in the New York Sun

TWO storks were nesting. He was a young stork—and narrow-minded. Before he married he had consorted mainly with stripings of his own kind and had given no thought to the ladies, either maid or matron.

After he married his attention was concentrated upon his All-Satisfying Wife; upon that Triumph of Art, Labor and Love—their Nest, and upon those Special Creations—their Children. Deeply was he moved by the marvelous instincts and processes of motherhood. Love, reverence, intense admiration, rose in his heart for Her of the Well-Built Nest; Her of the Gleaming Treasure of Smooth Eggs; Her of the Patient Brooding Breast, the Warming Wings, the downy wide-mouth Group of Little Ones.

Assiduously he labored to help her build the nest, to help her feed the young. Proud of his impassioned activity in her and her behalf, devoutly he performed his share of the brooding while she hunted in her turn. When he was a-wing he thought continually of Her as one with the Brood—His Brood. When he was on the nest he thought all the more of Her, who sat there so long, so lovingly, to such noble ends.

The happy days flew by, fair Spring—sweet Summer—gentle Autumn. The young ones grew larger and larger; it was more and more work to keep their lengthening, widening beaks shut in contentment. Both parents flew far afield to feed them.

Then the days grew shorter, the sky grayer, the wind colder; there was large hunting and small success. In his dreams he began to see sunshine, broad, burning sunshine day after day; skies of limitless blue; dark, deep, yet full of fire; and stretches of bright water, shallow, warm, fringed with tall reeds and rushes, teeming with fat frogs.

They were in her dreams, too, but he did not know that.

He stretched his wings and flew farther every day; but his wings were not satisfied. In his dreams came a sense of vast heights and boundless spaces of the earth streaming away beneath him; black water and white land, gray water and brown land, blue water and green land, all flowing backward from day to day, while the cold lessened and the warmth grew.

He felt the empty sparkling nights, stars far above, quivering, burning; stars far below, quivering more in the dark water and felt his great wings, wide, strong, all sufficient, carrying him on and on.

This was in her dreams, too, but he did not know that.

"It is time to go!" he cried one day. "Yes, they are coming!" It is upon us! "Yes—I must go! Good-by, my wife! Good-by, my children!" For the Passion of Wings was upon him.

She was stirred to the heart. "Yes, it is time to go!" she cried. "I am ready! Come!"

He was shocked, grieved, astonished. "Why, my dear!" he said. "How preposterous! You cannot go on the Great Flight! Your wings are for brooding tender little ones! Your body is for the Wonder of the Gleaming Treasure!—not for days and nights of ceaseless soaring! You cannot go!"

She did not heed him. She spread her wide wings and swept and circled far and high above—as, in truth, she had been doing for many days, though he had not noticed it.

She dropped to the ridge-pole beside him where he was still muttering objections. "Is it not glorious!" she cried. "Come! They are nearly ready!"

"You Unnatural Mother!" he burst forth. "You have forgotten the Order of Nature! You have forgotten your Children! Your loving, precious, tender, helpless Little Ones!" And he wept—for his highest ideals were shattered.

But the Precious Little Ones stood in a row on the ridge-pole and flapped their strong young wings in high derision. They were as big as he was, nearly; for as a matter of fact he was but a Young Stork himself.

Then the air was beaten white with a thousand wings; it was like snow and silver and sea-foam; there was a flashing, whirlwind, a hurricane of wild joy, and then the Army of the Sky spread wide in due array, and streamed Southward.

Full of remembered joy and more joyous hope, finding the high sunlight better than her dreams, she swept away to the far summer-land; and her children, mad with the happiness of the First Flight, swept beside her. "But you are a Mother!" he panted, as he caught up with them. "Yes!" she cried joyously, "but I was a Stork before I was a Mother—and Afterward—and All the Time!" And the Storks were Flying.

New Year's Ideas

By Mary Graham Bonner

IT HAS been a very joyous day," said the New Year. "It has been my first day here and I must say I have greatly enjoyed it.

"Old Man Winter is not at all the chilling, cold creature I expected him to be. By no means. Of course it is true he is cold, but his spirit is a nice one. He has the kind of coldness about him that I like. It doesn't make people feel unhappy, but it makes them feel like walking and doing things. It makes them feel energetic and glowing.

"It has been such a beautiful day, too. As for the people—they have been fine!

"They have gone about wishing each other a happy New Year and the greetings have been so pleasant and cheerful.

"Now I have a few new ideas. Perhaps they are not really new. But they are new to me. I've heard it said that there is really nothing so very new.

"Anyway, I'm going to tell these ideas of mine.

"Whether they are new or not, I am hoping everyone will like them.

"Now today has been the first day of the year, as everyone knows. Everyone has wished everyone else such delightful wishes. That is no news.

"But my ideas are these:

"Why not keep up this spirit all through the year? Of course I do not mean that everyone should wish everyone else a happy New Year every day of the year.

"That would be very foolish.

"But I would like the same spirit to be about all the time. I would like it if everyone felt that they were wishing the best for everyone else at all times.

"It would be so nice if people could feel happy toward others all the time.

"For example it would be so nice not to have any jealousy about. It would be so nice not to have some envious others.

"It would be wonderful if when one person heard that some friend had had good luck for it to make them happy too.

"That would make the very air full of happiness and cheer. I don't mean that I think everyone should go about with a silly grin. That would be foolish and tiresome.

"My idea is for them to have their hearts smiling so that their words would be cheery and so that they would feel so much goodwill toward each other.

"I had a talk with the Old Year just before he went.

"He told me that the one thing which had made him really sad at times had been the senseless quarrels and ugly words and mean speeches which once in awhile he had heard.

"Such things he said had made him cry. And when a year cries there is sorrow in the air.

"He told me that the reason, or at least one of the reasons, why everyone was so happy at Christmas time was because everyone felt happiness and wished friends happiness and merriment.

"And it is the Christmas spirit and the New Year spirit that I would like to see kept up all the year.

"As I say, these may not be new ideas of mine, but they are ideas I

feel very strongly.

"For example, I would like it if mothers and daddies were just the same all the year as they were at Christmas time, and if children were the same too, wanting to do for each other, saying kindly things.

"I would like it if grownups never hurt children's feelings—those grownups who don't understand children. I wish they would never say things to hurt the feelings of children.

"The New Year is young and knows that one can feel hurt when one is very young.

"And I would like it if children never hurt the feelings of older people and never acted as though they felt they were old or tiresome.

"The Old Year told me something about that and the Old Year told me how the feelings of older people could be hurt.

"Yes, let's wish everyone a happy New Year and happiness all through the year and let's keep wishing it in our hearts all the time. When we think of mean or cross or impatient things to say let us say 'Happy New Year' to ourselves."

PERPETUAL YOUTH

by CHRISTOPHER G. HAZARD
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TIME, to be ever young, is born again
With every year, and thus he flaunts his youth.
Were he incarnate once alone, sure then
He evidently would be old, in truth.

Thus is he envious, yet all his frost
But pales the crimson banner of the rose;
It laughs upon his spiteful labor lost,
Renewed in fragrances when winter goes.

Nor knows the urchin the interior star
That, all untouched by him, will yet attain
Its heaven, and from its glorious heights afar
Will twinkle down and smile at him again!

THETFORD CENTER

Miss Katherine McClarey is visiting her parents, Mr. and Mrs. John McClarey. N. H. Porter is seriously ill and we all hope for his speedy recovery.

Mrs. Lizzie Elliott and grandson of Enfield are guests of her brother, A. E. Nutbrown.

Arlo Hatch and the Misses Helen and Catherine McKelsey are home from U. V. M. for the Christmas vacation.

Mrs. Betty Clifford of Hanover was a week end guest at C. C. Cook's.

The many friends of Richard Welch of Thetford Hill were much saddened to learn of his death at the Hanover hospital last Friday. He was a pleasant, genial man and a great help in every thing that pertained to the welfare and uplift of the community and will be sadly missed.

Mrs. Boomer, who has been working for Mrs. H. W. Hewins was called to Newport last week by the illness of her daughter.

The Sunday School Board held their

meeting at the parsonage Monday evening of last week and the following officers were elected:

Sup't., C. C. Cook; Ass't. Sup't., Mrs. O. P. Sanborn; Secretary, Miss Dorothy McClarey; Treasurer, Mrs. F. E. Hatch. Sup't. of Home Dep't., Mrs. O. P. Sanborn.

In spite of the prevailing epidemic of hard colds, a large number gathered at the Town Hall Saturday evening for the usual Christmas Concert, which proved very pleasing. Two trees were well laden with gifts which were enjoyed by both old and young. The prizes for the contest for good attendance and for learning Scripture-verses were also distributed at this time.

Rev. J. J. Snellgrove preached a very interesting sermon last Sabbath from the text: Isaiah IX, 6. The Christmas solo by Mrs. Snellgrove was much appreciated.

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PAST RECORDS of earnings of The Holbrook Grocery Company show that the business has been unusually profitable. From 1905 to 1919, after deducting all taxes, including income tax, the profits were more than 2½ times the dividend requirements for this issue.

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