

# Strange New Years by Strange Peoples



IN MOQUI LAND

**N**EW YEAR'S DAY—or at least the coming of the New Year—is greeted by all the world. In this very much civilized Twentieth century most of us celebrate the New Year by the almanac. We have forgotten—or do not take time to remember—the original significance of the day, but when the world was younger and its people were closer to nature it was a day of significance well worth celebrating.

Among primitive peoples the year is marked off in seasons, usually the planting, the growing, the harvesting and the season of rest, or it even may be by moons and suns. But let the division be what it will, it is based on those marked physical changes which appeal to the senses as light and darkness, heat and cold, the lengthening and shortening of the day.

Think how deeply must the shortening of the days, as fall comes on apace, affect the imagination of the primitive. The sun, their all powerful deity who gives them warmth and growth, and life, wanes and grows sluggish and sick until daylight becomes so short that the terror-stricken primitive hearts pray and plead and invoke the malign and baneful gods to remove their pernicious influence from their dearly beloved sun-god. How great is the joy and feasting on the first day, the New Year, when he starts slowly back to them, to gain day by day a greater vigor and beauty, until in June he reaches the culmination of his power.

So it is seen that the shortest day in the year, December 21, in our calendar, is quite properly the last day in the year. And it is equally fitting that the succeeding day, when the sun commences his return march, should be hailed by glad and happy hearts.

The Moqui Indians, the communal pueblo people of the American Southwest, watch the shortening days with dread and celebrate with elaborate ceremony the turning point in the sun's course. The Moqui New Year's celebration, called So-yal-u-na, is largely a presentation of a singular and elaborate mythic drama, divided into two parts, in which offerings are made to effigies of the Great Plume Headed Serpent, the enemy of the sun, followed by a sun dance, in which the conflict between the sun and the inferior hostile gods is admirably portrayed by Moqui men personifying the various deities.

It is hoped that the sun's worst enemy—the snake demon—will be simply placated; so rich will be the tribute that for one entire year the sun shall be free from his persecutions, and the clouds which the snake wickedly swallows, shall gather and their moisture freely descend upon the parched and blighted land until it is once more clothed in verdure.

In a dimly-lighted underground room there is erected, at its west end, a screen profusely decorated with corn husks, cut cleverly in imitation of flowers. Near the middle of the screen there is an opening and behind it stands a man who manipulates the effigy snake. By his side stands a companion who has a large conch shell. In front of the screen sit three or four solemn priests and the audience, consisting of members of all the clans and their families, and behind them is a row of men who act as chorus.

When the rites begin the chorus commences to sing, at first a low, weird chant, then gradually rises to piercing intensity. Then the man behind the screen takes up the effigy of the great snake and thrusts it rapidly through the opening a number of



CENOTE PYRAMID IN YUCATAN



ADULT OF TODAY

times, accompanied by the unearthly and discordant wailing of the conch shell. The priest directly in front of the screen takes a little sacred meal in his hand, holds it to his mouth, uttering a deeply significant invocation to the serpent, and then casts the meal on the head of the effigy.

One by one all the members present make their prayers to the hostile serpent god. So ends the first half of the drama, and on the morrow, or the New Year, begins the great sun dance. On opposite sides of the chamber there stand rows of men, bearing shields with elaborate symbolic designs. At the end of the room, all alone and unsupported, stands the sunbearer, awaiting the onslaught of his horde of enemies. A signal and the song begins, and the lines of warriors on each side of the room surge against the sunbearer in attack. Eventually he scuttles and vanquishes his many foes. New Year's day finishes with feasting and jollification.

The Aztecs of Mexico and Central America had a bloody and complicated ritual for their celebration of the return of their masterful war-god, the sun. We find scattered through the tangled jungles of Yucatan many huge ruins of the wonderful pyramid ceremonial edifices upon which horrible sacrificial atrocities were practiced in heralding the New Year. The Aztec has vanished from the face of the earth. The jungle has swallowed up the sun-god's altars.

The ceremonies occupied a period of several days. The initiatory rites began before daylight of the first morning, when the chief high priest and his sub-dignitaries wended their way in solemn procession to the top of their pyramidal sanctuary. Here the high priest retired alone to a small temple, whose doorway opened toward the east, and as the rising sun crimsoned the sky he knelt and sprinkled thickly upon the marble floor the sacred meal.

As the first rays of the sun strike slantingly across the floor of the tiny temple, the banded priest beholds a miracle. Faintly, at first, then stronger and stronger, grows an imprint in the meal of the naked foot of their war-god. Upon this miraculous manifestation the high priest announces to the assembled courtiers that their god had returned to them, and that the grand festive occasion is inaugurated.

The first feast rites were of a gruesome and horrible nature, consisting mainly of sacrificing youths to the gods. It is said that they were feast-

ed for days previous to the ceremony, that they might be in a pleasing condition upon their last and the war god's first great day. In other ceremonies human beings were killed and flayed, and the participants in the sacrifice enveloped themselves in the bloody skins of the victims, while they took part in a frenzied dance.

Across the Pacific ocean, the Ainu of Japan, are celebrating an exceedingly curious New Year's custom. For a thousand known years the Ainu have stood still in their civilization, following all their primitive customs and ceremonies generation after generation and century after century, practically without change. New Year with them is the day of their greatest feasting and merry-making, consisting largely of an extravagant use of sake, or rice beer.

The principal ceremony is the great bear feast, called Omsia, in which a huge bear is slain and sacrificed as a special offering to the god Kamul, who is the guardian and protector of their homes throughout the year. It is necessary to conciliate this god by the special donation of bear's meat that their lives may be free from the persecution of the unseen, intangible spirit demons who seek to do them harm.

It is said that the bear for this feast is raised from a cub, suckled by an Ainu woman. As the end of the year draws nigh they fatten the bear for the coming celebration with carefully prepared foods. The killing of the bear is done in a curious way. Two fair-sized logs are lashed, one above another, to a standing tree, and extend horizontally resting upon the ground. The entire clan takes part in the killing, which is accomplished by putting the head of the animal between the logs and squeezing out its life.

#### New Year Period in Peking.

The New Year period in Peking reminds one of the three Sundays that came together in a week, for it has three celebrations of the new year in little less time than a month. First comes that one with which all Americans, the people of England and those on the continent are familiar. It is ushered in in much the same way as in any other part of the world, perhaps, but there is the oriental setting to the scene, which is so picturesque that having gazed upon it you close your eyes, thinking thus to forever keep the vision.

#### Daily Thought.

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

#### Observance in Scotland.

In Scotland the New Year celebration is similar to that in France, inasmuch as it takes the place of Christmas. To the inhabitants of the highlands and the lowlands this is the greatest day of the year. The Bible is always read before breakfast. It is yet early when the young children go about tapping at doors and singing:  
Rise up, guide wife, and shake your feathers,  
Dinna think that we are beggars;  
We are bairns come to play,  
And to seek our bairnmae.

## "THE LAST LOVE COUNTS"

Bestowal of First Affections Nothing but Effervescence, According to an Accepted English Theory.

"No love like the first love," runs the old adage. Is that true? The suggestion, of course, is that the first time a man or maid loves they are experiencing something which they will never experience again. First love is supposed to hold some quality which is absent from other loves. It is the substance; other, and later, loves are but pale shadows.

In a sense, it is true that first love holds something which is absent from other loves.

But, after all, none would contend that we can love but once. We can love half a dozen times, and be in earnest each time. Maturity, too, is essential to the thorough enjoyment of love. Our feelings, our capacity to give and receive, deepen and expand with the years.

At six seventeen, a maid may love, but her personality, temperament and character are undeveloped. She cannot love in full measure; nor be able to absorb a full measure of love. Seven years later she could love again, and a torrent would come instead of a stream.

Put shortly, personal maturity is essential to perfect, full-measure love. First, second or third loves are often but surface loves. They don't come from the deeps.

It would be admitted that all our other feelings widen and deepen as a result of years and experience, or of experience only. It is the same with love.

Hence, the later the love, the better and more lasting it is. It is full-bodied, and strong. In ninety cases out of a hundred this belated "first love" is, despite its felicitousness, not love at all!

Is not time the supreme test of love? And how many boy and girl marriages, based on first love, are happy, or the union permanent? Very few!

On the other hand, late marriages between those who have had other loves are the happiest of all.

It's the last love that counts!

Those "first loves" are but effervescences, and have nothing behind them. Love, real love, lasting love, strong love, must have character entwined in it. And whose character, at twenty, is fully formed?

So, then, hanker not to be a first love. Be glad to give, and take, the later and better stuff. It wears.—From Answers, London.

#### Loon Killed an Indian.

In Hertfordshire, England, the other day, a boy who foolishly went to look at a swan's nest was tackled by the cock bird and had an arm broken. The swan fights with its wings, and can deal a most tremendous blow. The gander will put up a good fight, if cornered, but he is more of a bluffer than the swan. He delights in chasing anyone who will run away from him, but turn on him with a stick, and it is he who does the running. The crane tries to use their long and powerful beaks as daggers, and are really dangerous, if wounded. They invariably strike at the eye of their opponent. A few years ago, an Indian who shot a loon on the Great Slave lake, and went to pick it up, was killed outright by the bird, which drove its spear-shaped beak right into his brain. Owls will sometimes attack human beings, but it seems probable that this is not intentional. It is rather that they mistake people's heads or hats for rats or other prey. There is an amusing account of some lumber men who dared not venture out at night on account of some unseen enemy robbing them of their fur caps. They thought it was the Evil One and were mightily relieved to find that the robber was merely a large brown owl.

#### Stanford White's Home a Clubhouse.

The former New York home of Stanford White, noted during the architect's life as a treasure house of rare paintings and other "objets d'art," is now the clubhouse for the daughters of the countries from which those treasures came. It was recently opened by the International Institute of the New York City Y. W. C. A. as a social and educational center for foreign-born women and girls. Girls of so many nationalities meet there for English classes, dramatics, gym work, domestic arts and good times in general that neighbors in the vicinity have named it "Our Own Little League of Nations." It is one of the 62 centers for foreign-born girls maintained in various parts of the United States by the Y. W. C. A. and directed by American women and "nationality workers" who speak the European languages.

#### W. L. George in America.

W. L. George, recently arrived, says New York is a terrible town, according to "Round London Town" in Harper's Bazar.

It gives the innocent Englishman the feeling that he has been posted like a letter, for he finds himself violently sorted under his initial by the steamer officials, stamped by the customs, bagged into a taxi by the porter, re-bagged, re-stamped by a reception clerk, re-tagged by the liftman, and when he at last gasps upon a bed which the elevated causes to vibrate, the New York press opens him for interviews, as a pearl-fisher searches the reluctant oyster for gems of possibly lesser price. Then the stranger broods on London town, where everything jogs along so nicely in an Eighteenth century way.

#### No More Lifts.

A young married man lives in the same apartment building as myself. He has an automobile, and as we both leave the building about the same time in the morning he frequently gives me a lift.

One morning I missed him and upon meeting him in the evening he said: "Why, I looked for you this morning to take you downtown. Where were you?"

Whereupon his little daughter, who was with him, piped in: "Why, daddy, didn't mamma tell you never to take that girl downtown again?"—Chicago Tribune.



## TO SANTA CLAUS

By James Whitcomb Riley

Most tangible of all the gods that be,  
O Santa Claus — our own since infancy! —  
As first we scampers to thee — now, as then,  
Take us as children to thy heart again.

Be wholly good to us, just as of old;  
As a pleased father, let thine arms enfold  
Us, homed within the haven of thy love,  
And all the cheer and wholesomeness thereof.

Thou lone reality, when O, so long  
Life's unrealities have wrought us wrong;  
Ambition hath allured us, fame likewise,  
And all that promised honor in men's eyes.

Throughout the world's evasions, wiles and shifts,  
Thou only bidest stable as thy gifts: —  
A grateful king re-ruleth from thy lap,  
Crowned with a little soldier-cap:

A mighty general — a nation's pride —  
Thou givest agrin a rocking-horse to ride,  
And wildly glad he gloweth as the grim  
Old jarist with the drum thou givest him:

The sculptor's chisel, at thy mirth's command,  
Is as a whistle in his boyish hand;  
The painter's model fadeth utterly,  
And there thou standest, and he painteth thee: —

Most like a winter pippin, sound and fine  
And tingling-red that ripe old face of thine,  
Set in thy frosty beard of cheek and chin  
As midst the snows the thaws of spring set in.

Ho! Santa Claus — our own since infancy —  
Most tangible of all the gods that be! —  
As first we scampers to thee — now, as then,  
Take us as children to thy heart again.

— Copyright by James Whitcomb Riley

#### NEW YEAR'S WITH THE INDIANS.

In some of our Indian reservations where the "original Americans" the Indians, still adhere to many of their tribal customs, New Year's day depends entirely upon weather conditions. When the last snows have gone and the first green shoots of grass appear the Indians hail the time as the beginning of another year. In the old days it was with them a season of dancing and feasting. It marked the time when the danger of famine

was past, for game would no longer be snowbound and soon there would be scores of roots, bulbs and green things for food, while rivers, ponds and lakes would be free of their ice fetters and their fish traps could once more be set.

#### Mohammedans' New Year.

In Turkey the Mohammedans lift their hands to Allah and beseech a year of blessings on the 28th of January, for that is their New Year. In Persia, as in some few parts of Egypt,

New Years" exchanged. On every worship in the imperial navy there hangs in the wardrobe portraits of the emperor and empress, and on New Year's day, wherever the ship chances to be, the officers assemble in the ward room and, as a curtain is drawn aside uncovering the imperial features, the officers salute the portraits and wish the emperor and empress a happy and prosperous New Year.

Here's hoping the dead year left you a comfortable legacy.

#### OBSERVANCES IN JAPAN.

In 1872 the Japanese officially discarded not only their picturesque and ancient costume, but their calendar — which was similar to that of the Chinese — as well. The old style was superseded by the Gregorian calendar, and with it the Japanese New Year began to fall on January 1. On that day the emperor holds an official reception, to which the diplomatic corps and certain officials are admitted to the imperial presence and "Happy

## IN POLAND, AUSTRIA, GERMANY

Christmas Observance in These Countries Hinges on Superstitions and Old Custom of Merry-making.

There's a pretty superstition in Poland, and elsewhere, for the people believe that on Christmas night the heavens are opened and the scene of Jacob's ladder is re-enacted. But it is permitted only to the saints to see it. Throughout northern Germany the

tables are spread and lights left burning during the entire night that the angel who passes when everyone sleeps may find something to eat.

In certain parts of Austria they put candles in the windows so that the Christ-child may not stumble in passing through the village. In Germany the homes are prettily decorated the day before Christmas and the trees hung with presents for the children.

Christmas Menu in Spain. In Spain the Christmas menu always includes almond soup and a dish called "besugo," consisting mainly of large goldfish.

Everybody kisses everyone else. There is a late supper and all through the evening the cares of life are forgotten. The German Christmas is over before the day arrives. Christmas day spent in visiting and in the evening there is a dance, with much music and merriment.