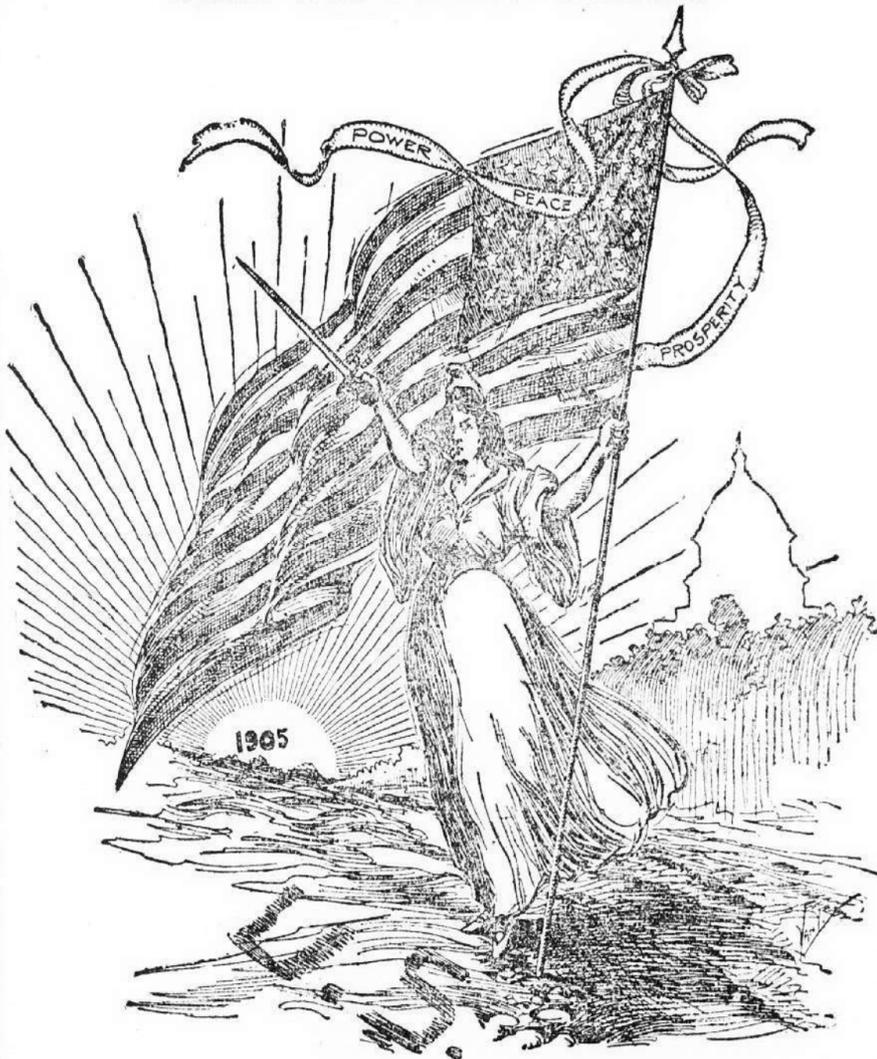


THE DAWNING YEAR.

THE NEW YEAR MEDITATIONS



Upon the threshold of the 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 care,
That it will bring us pleasures great,
Is e'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 so 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 love's sweet charm,
Which e'er sweetest pleasures impart,
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,
Erewell! 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 e'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 Pitcaithly 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 loaves, 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 especially 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.

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Leander Masons Building Hall.
Leander, Texas: The Masonic lodge at this place began Monday the erection of a hall for lodge purposes. It is expected that the building will be completed and ready for occupancy by the twenty-fifth of January.

Divine Healer Arrested.
San Marcos, Texas. John Barnes, a colored "divine healer," is in jail here, charged with inces, his victim being his 13-year-old daughter.

Kirby Deed Filed.
Lake Charles, La.: A deed has been filed for record in Cameron parish, whereby John H. Kirby conveys 840,000 acres of land to the Houston Oil Company. Most of the land is in Texas, but some is in Cameron parish.

Marlin to Remember the Needy.
Marlin, Texas: A committee representing the men's prayer meeting are asking the citizens of Marlin for donations as a Christmas gift for deserving people who are needy.

A grizzled, sun-tanned, hard-featured man, whose face bore the stamp of hardship and adventure, was sitting in the smoking room of a New York hotel. He happened to glance at a calendar and saw that the day was Dec. 31.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "So tomorrow is New Year's day. Unless something happens before then, it will be the quietest New Year I've spent in twenty-three years."

"In all that time I have never been so near my old home in Scotland as I am now. Often I've tried to get home, but somehow or other New Year has always found me in a tight corner in some out-of-the-way part of the world."

This man's experience is typical of that of many of the globe-trotters in this age, when people are so fond of "going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it," like a certain personage in the Book of Job.

New Year's day, 1897, found one Englishman facing death from hunger and thirst on board a life raft 300 miles southeast of Madagascar.

His ship foundered seven days before in a hurricane. The boats were smashed by the fury of the waves and some of the crew washed overboard. The rest made a raft out of planks and spars, but during the night high seas swept over the frail structure and carried away most of the water and food.

"All we had left," said the man who went through this terrible experience, "were a few tins of potted meat, a small barrel of biscuit and the smallest of the water casks. That was all we had to keep life in twenty-five hungry men."

"We made it last as long as we could, but in four days everything was gone. Some of the men fell into despair and talked about throwing themselves overboard. Perhaps they would have done so, but during the night of the fourth day half a dozen big sharks swam around the raft in circles. The sea was phosphorescent and we could see them plainly in the waves of livid fire which they stirred up as they swam around. Even the half-crazed men who had talked about drowning themselves shrank from death in a shark's maw and stayed upon the raft."

"Next morning I saw by a pocket diary which I carried that the day was Dec. 30. To keep up the men's spirits I told them I had dreamed we were going to be rescued on New Year's day. That appealed to the superstition inherent more or less in all sailors, so I kept on telling them a ship would come along and pick us up on that day sure, until I began to believe it myself. We even discussed gravely whether the sail would heave in sight in the morning or the afternoon, and one man who said he guessed it would be toward evening became quite unpopular."

"New Year's morning broke with a dead calm on the oily, blistering sea and a blazing sky that aggravated our thirst tenfold. There was not a ship in sight all morning—nothing except that glassy sheet of water and that cruel, cloudless sky above us. It was the same in the afternoon, and our hopes fell as the sun sank slowly toward the western horizon.

"Just as we were beginning to despair, one of the men screamed hysterically and pointed to a thin trail of

smoke on the sky line. It was a New Zealand liner headed straight for our raft. In a couple of hours her doctor was giving us a hearty dinner and slops and weak brandy and water."

This same man spent another New Year's day off Cape Horn. He sailed from Valparaiso in a British "wind-jammer," expecting to reach his Scottish home in time to spend his first Christmas there for many years. But calms delayed her for weeks in the South Pacific ocean, and when she got off Cape Horn she ran into a tearing gale, which brought her mizzen topmast down on deck and ripped out all her sails. For days she drifted helplessly, exposed to the full fury of the western gale.

The crew labored industriously at rigging up spare and bending new sails. It was a task of tremendous difficulty, for giant combers rolled over the forecastle head continually, filling the vessel amidships with green seas.

Suddenly in the midst of this toil an apprentice piped out:

"I say, fellers, this is New Year's day. Have you all forgotten it?"

"Belay your tongue," retorted the gruff old mate. "There won't be any New Year dinner to-day, except your usual whack of lobsauce."

The skipper was superintending the work from the poop rail and heard the conversation.

"Cook!" he bawled out. "Lay aft here!"

The cook came out of his galley and the captain asked what he could give them for a fancy dinner.

"Nothin' but split peas, sir, an' salt horse and marmalade. There ain't no turkeys in my store-room, sir," he said.

"Let's catch one o' them birds," suggested an old tar, pointing to several albatrosses which were circling about the wake of the ship. "We'll stretch a point this day and be forgiven for it, I guess."

After several attempts an albatross was captured with a big fishhook baited with salt pork and dragged aboard triumphantly. Served up nice and brown and swimming in gravy, it looked so much like a real turkey that it warmed up the men's hearts and made them think of the holidays they had spent at home. But when they tasted it the resemblance ceased. It was fishy and tough. The meat was like knotted rope yarn and the gravy suggested tar. However, it was a New Year dinner all the same, and it was enjoyed as keenly as the finest feast ashore that day.

An American traveler, who is well known commercially in the West Indies, was mixed up in one of the perennial revolutions of Hayti in his hot and foolish youth. Unhappily, he allied himself with the weaker side, and one New Year's eve found himself one of a small band of desperadoes defending the stockaded town of Miragoane against a government army, which outnumbered them by more than 100 to 1.

But they were too weak to stand. All of them were wounded, half-starved and fever-stricken. So the government troops propped them up in chairs and shot them as they lolled there. Only the white man was spared, in order that his case might be inquired into.

When he protested to Gen. Manigat against the cruelty of shooting helpless captives that triumphant warrior merely blew a cloud of cigarette smoke and remarked calmly: "C'est la guerre."

"Late on New Year's eve," said the American, "they tried me by court-martial. When I woke up on New Year's morning I was in the calaboose, sentenced to be shot at sundown. It wasn't very pleasant waiting. I was quite glad when a gold-laced officer entered the cell toward evening, with a paper informing me that 'his excellency, the citizen president,' had been pleased to pardon me, in consideration of the request of the American minister and of the fact that it was New Year's day."

"I believe they had never intended to shoot me, but only to frighten me, for they hardly dared to touch a white man whose country owned a navy that might bombard their ports. Anyhow, I got out of jail in time to eat my dinner with some American and English friends on a coffee plantation near Miragoane."

An American globe trotter tells how he once spent a New Year's day hunting a crocodile in Jamaica, West Indies.

After a long hunt the crocodile was found buried beneath the mud in a shallow bend of a river on the plantation. The hunters only carried small shotguns, which were useless against the beast's tough hide, covered as it was several inches deep in mud.

But the planter was a man of resource. He sent hurriedly for negroes and set them to work to construct two strong walls of bamboo poles across the bed of the stream, thus inclosing the crocodile in a prison from which he could find no escape.

After the walls were built everybody hid quietly in the tall grass on the banks and waited. Hour after hour they laid there. Their luncheon consisted of sandwiches and a flask of rum punch.

It was not until the end of the afternoon that the crocodile, finding it could not break through the bamboo barriers, crept out of the water. Before it could drag the whole of its huge carcass out of the mud it was lassoed and hauled toward the bank by twenty willing hands.

Too surprised to offer resistance, the beast at first suffered itself to be almost dragged on the bank; but it caught on the edge with its forepaws and made a desperate struggle. Twenty yelling negroes hung on to the other end of the rope, but could not drag that crocodile up; they could only prevent it from flopping back into the water, again. Honors were even in that terrific tug-of-war.

At last a yoke of eight oxen had to be brought. They soon dragged the beast to the bank, where it was tied around a tree and dispatched with axes.