

# "Ring Out the Old, Ring in the New!"



Lauriger Horatius, quem dixisti verum  
Fugit Euro citius tempus edax rerum.

Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illa.  
By JOHN DICKINSON SHERMAN

HE Latin has a terse and forceful way of putting things. Now, the first quotation above has been rendered in free-and-easy style:

Old Man Horace, sprigged with bay  
Truly thou dost say, sir,  
Time speeds faster on its way  
Than the swiftest racer.

Clever, but the Latin says it more forcibly: Crowned-with-laurel Horace, what you say is true: Flies than the southeast wind faster time the devourer of things.

And the second quotation above neatly supplements the first by saying: Times change and we are changed in them.

All of which suggests most forcibly that time has destroyed the old-fashioned method of observing several of our American national holidays; that the times have changed and we in them.

Now, there's the Fourth of July, for example. The old-fashioned Fourth is so entirely gone that we don't quite know what to do with the day. In the old days we used to twist the Lion's tail when we didn't know what else to do, but since we fought side by side with the British in the Great War, that seems as out of place as do fire-crackers and the casualty list of small boys.

And it's just about the same with New Year's Day. About all that's left as is to listen to the whistles blowing at midnight and to make good resolutions. And what changes the day has seen since first Americans began its celebration!

America's celebration of New Year's Day owes nothing to Britain New England. In the North New York, being Dutch, was the center of New Year's gayety. The South, being English, but not Puritan, also celebrated enthusiastically. The custom of making calls probably is as old as civilized man; it is likely that it originated independently in almost every clime. Old-time European chieftains used to set "New Year's" apart as a day on which they would condescend to receive substantial tributes from their underlings. Queen Elizabeth received New Year's calls every year, and there was always much rivalry between her ambitious courtiers as to the quantity and value of the gifts they should bestow upon the virgin sovereign. It was on a New Year's Day that Sir Walter Raleigh gladdened the queen's heart with a memorable pair of silk stockings—the first ever made and worn in England.

In Holland the custom of making New Year's calls had been general long before the settlement of New Amsterdam, and the natives of the Netherlands who came to live in the New World brought the practice with them. And, of course, they had plenty to eat and drink—for who ever heard of Dutchmen who did not take good care of their stomachs?

Up to the beginning of the Nineteenth century the typical New Year's observance was a neighborly custom. Then it became an observance decreed by fashion and was observed in every city of any size in the country.

The younger women of such households as had daughters were the hostesses, and great was their rivalry, one with another, in respect of richly loaded refreshment tables and elegance of

toilet. The "beaux," and "dandies," and "gallants" attired themselves in their best and started out early in the morning, calling first at the houses where matrons received, and afterward upon the younger ladies. The drinks that were offered at every house of any prominence were ardent and diverse.

It was not until about the middle of the century or thereabouts that the abuse which finally led to the custom's decline began. For years the dandies rivaled one another in the length of their calling lists, and the calls soon came to be nothing more than hasty gorgings of cake and gulping of wine.

Then the ladies—the matrons as well as the young women—began to vie with one another in the number of their callers. This led to the most extraordinary practices. Callers were recruited, drummed up. Cards announcing that Miss This-or-That would be "at home" on January 1 were sent out almost indiscriminately. The Sunday newspapers began to print lists of those who would receive, and the houses of those mentioned in the lists were sure to be besieged by numbers of men whom the ladies had never met or heard of and desired never to meet again.

Men would go calling in couples and parties, and even in droves of 30 or more, remaining as short a time at each stopping place as possible, and announcing everywhere how many calls they had already made, and how many they expected to make before they finished. At every place they drank. The result was a most appalling assortment of "jags" long before sundown, and a crowding of the police stations at night.

This New Year's observance finally became so abused that it was called a "national evil," and was attacked by reformers everywhere and ministers thundered against it from the pulpit. Finally fashion set its face against it and it died a gradual death.

Its place was taken after a while by eating and drinking in the restaurants, and by the street carnivals.

If Croesus himself had come back to earth and had visited New York—or any big city in the country—in 1906, he couldn't have got a seat in any restaurant of note after ten o'clock the night of December 31, for all his fabulous wealth. In fact, he probably couldn't have got inside the door. Every table was engaged—at big prices and long in advance. Diners had to get out at nine o'clock and

guards at the doors saw that none except those with credentials got in. During the last hour of the Old Year the people feasted, and at the first stroke of the New Year everybody in every restaurant arose, wine-glass in hand, and drank a health to the New Year.

It was comparatively quiet indoors, but the people in the streets made noise enough to scare young 1906. Every sort of noise-making implement known to man except cannon and dynamite bombs was in active use.

"Get your horns and wickers!" was the prayer roared by thousands of fakers all evening. Trucks and wagons were halted at the curb, loaded with tin horns and thin sticks with a bunch of hackle-feathers at the tip.

If you were a real devilish New Year's humorist you proceeded like this: First, tickle some stranger under the chin with the feathers; then, as he turned to protest, you blew the horn in his face.

A universal custom of New Year's of those days was the carrier's New Year's address. This was often in rhyme if the carrier or any of his friends could string the jangling lines together or find an old carrier's address to copy. Such verses as these were popular:

This day devoted now to mirth,  
To open house and social hearth,  
New friendship mounts on airy wings  
And gives her tuneful harp new strings.  
While plenty spreads a festive board,  
Of wine and food and ample hoard,  
In idleness and laughter gay,  
To spend the hours this happy day,  
All save the carrier, whose snowy feet  
Still must pace up the snowy street,  
So give to him a moment's heed,  
Since he alone this comfort needs,  
And to your ample, jovial store  
Let him not find a closed door, etc., etc.

By 1914 there were strong indications of a saner celebration of New Year's. The feasting in restaurants New Year's Eve was still in full blast, with singing and dancing added. But most of the large cities had ordered the police to enforce a "sane" celebration on the streets. In consequence there was less noise and rowdiness out of doors. Chicago, for instance, forbade horns, confetti and ticklers.

Cleveland probably had the "sanest" New Year's Eve in 1914. That city gave the New Year a "community greeting," in keeping with the spirit of community Christmas celebrated a week before. Twelve bands, with 280 musicians, were massed in the public square. To an audience of thousands they played hymns and patriotic airs. Announcement by the police that the midnight closing law would be enforced rigidly cut hotel and restaurant festivities down markedly. In Cincinnati the police had the promise of every hotel, cafe and saloon keeper to close promptly at midnight. Similar conditions prevailed in Detroit and Indianapolis.

Then came the Great War. And then prohibition.

So at present the celebration of New Year's Eve and New Year's Day is betwixt and between.

What will it be ten years from now? And what a century hence?



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### A Boy and His Goat.

Ed and his brother Harry were the proud possessors of a goat. One day their mamma said: "Eddie, I saw Nanny standing with her fore feet on the fence."

"Oh, no, mamma," came the reply. Nanny had only two feet on the fence."

And some men are just prominent enough to attract people who have good bricks to dispose of.

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