

Origin of New Year's

AMUEL JOHNSON in his history of England gives the following data: The Druids began the year on March 10, the Persians and Phoenicians at the autumnal equinox, the ancient Mexicans on February 23. The Egyptians reckoned the beginning of the year from the first of Toth (March April), but since the Egyptian year was 365 days, while the tropical year consists of 365.242 days, the Egyptian year constantly lost, and its seasons shifted so that in about 1,507 tropical years New Year's Day had run through all the days of the true year back to the starting point. Thus in 4 B. C. the first of Toth, or New Year's Day, was on August 20. The Greeks of the time of Solon began the year at the winter solstice, December 21, but in the time of Pericles, in 453 B. C., they changed the date to June 21. The Romans began the year first in March and later on January 1. The Jews began and still begin their civil year with the first of the month of Tishri, which roughly corresponds to our September. The Hindus begin the year with the entrance of the sun into the Hindoo sign Aashwin, now April 12. The Chinese reckon the year from the first moon after the new equinox, which happens not earlier than January 21 and no later than February 19. The present year 1877 of the Mahomedans began on May 22, 1878. In England December 25 was New Year's Day until the time of William the Conqueror. His coronation happened on June 24, 1066, and on that day King Harold gradually fell into disfavor with the rest of Christendom, and began the year with March 25. The Gregorians celebrated the 1581 reformed January 1 as the gateway of the year. Catholic countries accepted the change immediately, but Pro-

the new year was ushered in by friendly gifts. The Mexicans, according to Humboldt, on the first day of the year carefully adorned their temples and houses and employed themselves in various religious ceremonies, one of these consisting in offering up to the gods a human sacrifice. Among the Jews New Year's Day was, and is still, observed with prayers, the distribution of alms among the poor and other acts of charity. On that day all hatred should be blotted out of the heart, all offences forgiven and restitution made to whomsoever any injury was done. Enemies got reconciled, all wishing each other, "May you be written down for a happy New Year!" to which it is replied, "And you, likewise!" This wish or prayer arises from the fact that the Jews believe that the feast of the New Year is the annual day of judgment, on which the deeds of man are weighed, and the destinies of every individual and every nation are fixed for the ensuing year. Hence the name of Day of Judgment given to this day.

It is a remarkable fact that all the ancient astronomers of the different nations have given the figure of an aged man of stern aspect, holding a pair of scales in his right hand, and an open book in his left hand, as the sign of the zodiac of the month, thus expressing the religious idea of the first day of the year Prajapati (the day of the Lord of Creation), and celebrate it with illumination and great rejoicing. Among the Chinese the celebration of the beginning of the new year sometimes lasts for a fortnight. On this occasion all classes, including the Emperor, mingle together in free and unrestrained intercourse. Visits are exchanged, gifts and presents sent, and people meeting in the street salute each other by crying, "Kuang-hi! Kuang-hi!" ("I humbly wish you joy") or "Shi-hi! Shi-hi!" ("May joy be yours.") In Japan there is a holiday during the entire week of the New Year's Day, which is now January 1. The Japanese of the old school avoid pronouncing on this day the syllable "shi," the root of the word of death. This would be a bad omen, and as this syllable enters into an infinite number of words the avoidance involves, of course, interminable periphrases. Inferiors bring little presents to their superiors, consisting chiefly of oranges and eggs, while the masters respond to their presents by pecuniary generosity. Everywhere, indoors and outdoors, reigns an air of festivity and good-humor. In meeting they bow, placing their hands on their knees, and exchange the consecrated word "Omedetto." In Japan as well as in China it is also the universal rule that all debts must be paid and accounts settled with the ending of the old year. As to the European countries, there is none in which New Year's Day is not socially observed. It is in France and the Latin countries what Christmas is in England and America, the day for giving and receiving presents. In some countries, especially in Scotland and Germany, the new year is ushered in at midnight of December 31 amid all kinds of merry-making, but comme chez nous. In closing we avail ourselves of the opportunity to wish our readers a happy New Year in some of the Babel languages spoken in our great country: Prosit Neujahr! (German); Gledlig Nyaar! (Norwegian); Gelukkig Nieuwjaar (Holland); Nuaa Bhalisham Hona Ahutt! (Irish); Heurouse Annee! (French); Felis Anno Nuovo! (Spanish); Felice Anno Nuovo! (Italian); Sas Efk-home Polla To Nao Etos! (Modern Greek); Boldog Ujvevot Kivanek! (Hungarian); Szexszilwy Nowy Rok! (Polish); Stachaslivou Novou! God! (Russian); Omedetto! (Japanese); Kung-hi! (Chinese); Lelabik Mullik Yell! (Volapuk); Godt Nytar! (Swedish), etc.



A New Year's Call.

stant countries were recalcitrant, and it was not until 1752 that England acquiesced the custom of celebrating the first day of the new year is of very ancient origin, and appears to have prevailed generally among the nations of antiquity. Pontius Marcellus refers the origin of New Year's gifts among the Romans to Titus Tatius, King of the Sabines, who, having considered as a good omen a present of some branches cut in a wood consecrated to Stranix, the Goddess of Strength, which he received on the first day of the new year, authorized the custom afterward and gave these gifts the name of Strenae, 747 B. C.

Ellis and other Latin authors tell us that the Romans celebrated New Year's Day with feasting and merrymaking, visiting friends and interchanging presents. When Christianity replaced paganism it prescribed everything that could recall the ancient cultus, and in opposition changed the former day of feasting and rejoicing into one of fasting and mourning. By degrees, however, the Church, in the eighth century, appropriated the fast, and the earlier and more congenial Jewish customs were gradually resumed. Among the other nations of antiquity the social observance of the first day of the year appears to have been in substance the same as among the Romans. The Persians celebrated it by exchanging presents of eggs and sending offenders. The Druids performed on that day the famous ceremony of cutting the mistletoe, branches of which they distributed among the ancient Britons. Among the Saxons of the northern nations

CALL NOT THE OLD YEAR DEAD

Call not the Old Year dead! For his estate Of power and profit, and of work was great. About his bier all reverently tread; "His works do follow him," he is not dead. Call not the Old Year dead! For purposeful His long days were. He breathed the beautiful Of thought and voice where thought and voice were not. And fashioned roses for our common lot. Call not the Old Year dead! No specter he. But with the New is king of destiny. Enaptured, his the earth whereon he trod. He slumbers only in the dawn of God.

GOOD RESOLUTIONS

One of the best of good resolutions is not to make too many of them. It is a common experience to find the best of all to keep—followed by H. Lecky has suggested in prose, "With some, time is mere duration, a blank, featureless thing, gliding swiftly and insensibly by. With others every day, and almost every hour, seems to have its distinctive stamp and character, for good or ill, in work or pleasure." If, then, one is confused by the multitude of possible good resolutions, is it not the part of wisdom to seize upon this one thing for the new year to make the most of every opportunity, to practice what Mr. Lecky calls the art of wisely using the spare five minutes, the casual vacancies or intervals of life? This is a resolution which is not lost in the breaking. It is for daily renewal, with constantly increasing power to turn it into act.

ANOTHER YEAR

God is so good to us! When we have sinned and torn With greedy grasp and blood of human life And blurred and blackened with inhuman strife The pure white Year He gave us yesterday— He is so good to us who would not prove The world's redemption by the strength of Love. He gently lays the Record-Book aside, Closes about and sealed and hallowed with a tear, Yet hath such pity for the souls of men He freely gives another pure white Year. Renews the whole sweet world where mortals hide, And fills our hearts with zeal to try again!



NEW YEAR'S DAY OF MANY DATES

January 1 as the beginning of the new year is a purely arbitrary date, and was fixed in 1582 by Charles IX. who adopted the Julian calendar. In those times and long after many people followed the old Roman custom of beginning the year on March 1. For a long period of time the beginning of the year was fixed at the Annunciation, March 25. The people of Pisa followed this practice as late as 1745. In still another period Christmas was New Year's Day and in another Easter was so regarded. The most scientific date for the beginning of the new year would be one of the equinoxes or one of the solstices. The Roman New Year, falling March 1, explains the names of the months, September, October, November and December, meaning seventh, eighth, ninth and ten months. It was named in honor of Julius Caesar. August was named after the Emperor or Augustus. The year 1909, according to our calendar, will bear the dates 5669 and 5670 of the Jewish era. The latter year commences at sunset on Sept. 4. The Chinese New Year will begin in February, and as the Chinese time their era by the reigns of their Emperors their next year will be called the twenty-fifth of the reign of Kuang Hsu.



WATCHING THE OLD YEAR OUT

A GOOD RIDDANCE. When the New Year in at the front door peeps, And out at the back door the Old Year creeps I hope he will carry away on his back A load as big as a pedler's pack; And we'll stow away in his baggage then Some things that we never shall want again. We will put in the pucker little pout That drives all the that up and down And the creaky scowls merry dimples out. And the little grumbles on rainy days, And the bent-up pins, and the teasing jokes That never seem funny to other folks; And the stones that are tossed—be sure of that— At robin redbreast and pussy cat. And we'll throw in the bag some cross little "don'ts," and most of the "can'ts" and all of the "won'ts," And the grumpy words that should not be said When mamma calls, "It is time for bed." If we get all these in the Old Year's pack, And shot it so tight that they won't come back, To-morrow morning, when we see A Happy New Year

CAKES FOR NEW YEAR'S

Some Good, Old Fashioned Recipes That Will Delight the Housekeeper.

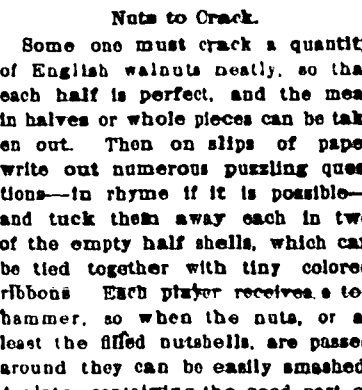
The regular New Year's cookies of Dutch origin which are displayed with caraway combs and candied fruit, have different ingredients from the loaves of cake which every housewife used to make for New Year's Day. It was the custom for a provident housekeeper to prepare fruit-pound, silver of delicate cake, and sometimes a loaf of golden sponge. Every one was rich, requiring an abundance of eggs at a season when eggs were more expensive. The Christmas fruit cake, which was served at New Year's, was always made by the familiar rule given recently in these columns. The cake was usually made at least a month before it was needed, a sufficient supply to last all winter being prepared in the fall. Pound cake is as rich as fruit cake, but, as there is no fruit in it, less butter must be used in proportion to the sugar than in fruit cake. The pound cake of to-day is made differently from the oldtime rule. No one now makes "pound for pound." For a modern pound cake weigh out twelve ounces of butter fourteen ounces of flour dried and sifted before it is weighed, and sixteen ounces of granulated sugar, and take out eight good sized eggs. To this rule add two large pinches of powdered mace or half a grated nutmeg and the grated rind and juice of one Messina lemon. Sometimes in making this cake the flour and butter are beaten together first. Some of the best pound cake makers do not do this now but beat the butter to a cream first and add the sugar, beating the mixture until it is a perfect cream. They then add the yolks of the eggs, straining them in through a gravy strainer, which beats them enough to mix in well. After this the flour is warmed a little, in winter and sifted at least three times, and the mace or nutmeg lemon-peel are added the last time it is sifted. The juice of the lemon is also stirred in after the flour has been thoroughly blended. When the two pans necessary for this rule are buttered the whites of the eggs beaten as stiffly as possible with a whip are folded in quickly so as not to break down the whites. Do this as hastily as possible and then put the cake in the oven at once. The oven must not be heated too hot at first. It is a good plan, if the fire is at all brisk, to open the oven door and cool off the oven a little before putting in the cake. This will allow the proper degree of heat to let the cake rise slowly, so that it will not begin to brown before it is fully risen. This cake should be baked from an hour and a quarter to an hour and a half. Try the loaves by listening to the cake. When it stops "singing" it is done.

NEW YEAR'S GAMES

New Year's Eve is called a night for games. Here is one which will at least keep people wide awake. It is called a New Year's Greeting and is on the plan of the cobweb party. The fun starts in the parlor, where, attached to a convenient chair, are a number of ends of gay colored twine as many as there are people arranged in a festoon. Each end is the beginning of a ball of the same color which is hidden somewhere in the house. Each person sets to a string which he must follow winding up as he goes, to keep free from tangles. If these balls are cleverly put away the whole house may be turned into a hunting ground filled with a jolly throng of hunters, but the guiding cords must be carefully handled or else they will snap and the clue be lost. At the end of the search each person finds the remainder of the ball in some unexpected place wrapped carefully up with a funny bit of advice to the finder. The one who winds his ball most neatly and quickly should have a prize. The bits of advice may be anything such as: Don't look a gift horse in the mouth. Children should be seen and not heard. A stitch in time saves ninety-nine. Never trouble trouble till trouble troubles you. Nuts to Crack. Some one must crack a quantity of English walnuts neatly, so that each half is perfect, and the meat in halves or whole pieces can be taken out. Then on slips of paper write out numerous puzzling questions—in rhyme if it is possible—and tuck them away each in two of the empty half shells, which can be tied together with tiny colored ribbons. Each player receives a toy hammer, so when the nuts, or at least the filled nutshells, are passed around they can be easily smashed. A plate, containing the good part of the nuts all wrapped up as bonbons, is then handed around and each player takes one. An answer to one question is wrapped around each nut, and each player then reads in turn his question and the answer. The answer will probably be most ridiculous when read to the question. A vote should decide the best, and a prize be given to the holder.

First Thing in Order

Castleton—Jim, is this, indeed, you? You have kept, then, to the promise made when we parted ten years ago that we would meet on



STRONG TO COME

Where grim shadows hide, Flash a sun-strong ray. From a dwelling purified Let the Old Year pass away. Let the Old Year pass away. With sad Yesterday, Gloom, and all their kin, Worry, Anger, dull Dismay, Let our braver New Year in! Where grim shadows hide, Flash a sun-strong ray. From a dwelling purified Let the Old Year pass away. Let the Old Year pass away. Plead not for delay; Wake from "What has been," Resolute, and blithe, and gay, Let our braver New Year in! Fling Despair aside; Banish Doubt for aye. With fair memories glorified Let the Old Year pass away. Sorrow for him? Nay! Tournays now begin, Bringing armor for the fray, Let our braver New Year in! ENVOY. Look you forward! Facing Gray, Let the Old Year pass away. Life's ahead—with all to win! Let our braver New Year in!



A Tragic Calendar. Janet was quite ill on day, Febrile troubles came her way. Martyr-like she lay in bed, Aged nurse softly sped. "Maybe," said the leech, judicial, "Junket would be beneficial." Juleps, too, though freely tried, Argured ill, for Janet died. Sepulcher was sadly made, Octaves pealed and prayers were said. Novices with many a tear Decorated Janet's bier. —Carolya Wallis.