

## Curious New Year Customs

### FIRST FOOTING AND ITS SUPERSTITIONS.

Waiting for the old year to die and the new one to come to take its place is an old and world-wide custom; but nowhere is it more popular and strictly observed than in Scotland. It will, doubtless, therefore, be all the greater surprise to many of those who keep up the universal custom to learn that less than a hundred years ago everybody, in the country districts of Scotland at least, was in bed before twelve o'clock, as it was deemed unlucky not to be in bed when the new year came in.

The old folks sat up till half-past eleven, when the fire was covered, and every particle of ash swept up and carried out of the house. A watchful eye was kept on the fire, however, lest it should go out, for such an event was regarded as very unlucky.

On Hogmanay night the bairns were all washed before going to bed. An oat bannock was baked for each. It was nipped round the edge, had a hole in the centre, and was flavored with caraway seeds. Great care had to be observed that none of these bannocks should break in the firing, as such an occurrence was held to be most unlucky, and the bairn whose bannock was thus damaged would be regarded as "for." That is, it would not live to see another year.

Many old and interesting customs, not to mention strange superstitions, are associated with Hogmanay and New Year, and easily first amongst these in point of general practice stands "first-footing." If this old-fashioned expression of goodwill and good luck has not just the same vogue to-day that it had in our grandfathers' time, it is still a hardly annual, beloved of those who believe in upholding ancient customs and traditions. Not only so, but while the custom in Scottish towns has more or less come to be looked upon as an occasion for merry-making and daffing (especially with the younger generation), in many parts of the country some real meaning attaches to it.

#### Good And Bad Luck.

In outlying districts, "far from the

madding crowd," and in many Highland clachans and villages, "first-footing" is quite a serious ceremony, good luck or evil being supposed to accrue the following year, according to the "first-footer." A person with flat feet is considered an unlucky "first-footer," so is a deformed man, a person whose eyebrows meet, or an individual with red hair (the blacker his hair the better), people who spread out their feet. A sweetheart, a kind man, friends, and well-wishers are all accorded a warm welcome—they assure a prosperous year.

No "first-foot" worthy of the name would, of course, ever dream of setting out on such a journey, and, in fact, nobody, in fact, would allow him to cross the threshold in such a barren manner. It would be the unluckiest thing that could happen that family for such an individual to be allowed to enter the house; even if he had merely an orange or a bit of cake in his hand, it kept intact the luck of the household.

Trust an old-time Scot, however, for that; he was too well grounded in traditional superstition and sentiment to forget himself so far as to omit to make the necessary preparations; even his modern prototype with "White Horse" at twelve-and-six a bottle! would never go a first-footing without at least a "hauf-peck" in his pocket.

A very important point with many superstitious dames of long ago used to be that nothing should ever be taken out of the house on New Year's Day until something had been brought in. Hence in some country districts it was customary for someone to go out and bring into the dwelling some grass and water and peats, thus ensuring food for man and beast, and a warm hearth throughout the year. Sometimes a grass sod was taken in and laid on the hearthstone, with a like significance. Then, again, if any goodwife had borrowed an article for a neighbour, care was taken to send it back to its owner before the year was out. Some people will doubtless think it a pity that this custom is not so well observed as it should be!

In Devonshire, and many another older-producing county of England, every New Year's Eve witnesses a very quiet old-world custom known as "wassailing the orchard," which is said to have a highly stimulating effect on the next year's harvest of fruit.

The wassallers begin by serenading the farmer, with a song of portentous length, beginning thus:—

Wassail! wassail! all over the town;  
Our toast it is white, our ale it is brown.  
Our tree it is made of the map in  
We be good fellows all; I drink to thee.

And, when the good farmer has rewarded their vocal efforts with liberal liquid refreshments, an adjournment is made to the orchard. The wassallers form a ring round certain chosen trees, in order, and to a perfect pandemonium of pokers, tongs, old kettles, and pans, a branch of each tree is baptized by dipping in a jar of cider, the trunk is christened with salt and bread crumbs, while the tree is adjured:—

"To bear and to blow, apples snow—  
Hattful, capful, and three-cornered  
Some Quail Observances.

In some parts of England, the New Year's Eve party is identified with sundry games which evolved from ancient superstitions, such as the one of climbing the stair backwards to the twelve strokes of the midnight hour. The members of the party station themselves at the foot of the stairs just before the striking of the hour, and at each stroke of the clock they must mount one step backwards. Each step successfully mounted is supposed to mean a happy month in the oncoming year, but every stumble or fall entails a reverse of fortune or happiness.

Other lands have their strange New Year's Day customs and superstitions. In the United States, for instance, if an American hears a dog bark on the first day of the new year he reads into the occurrence a forecast of good luck; if, however, the dog howls, it predicts disaster. In Kentucky, to see a pig is to be blessed, with the possibility of reaping a good harvest, farmers believe; while to see a drove of hogs means empty corn-cribs. The sight of a bird means good luck, and a horse, good health; but a cat, snake, or toad is supposed to presage a year of trouble and tribulation.

In France, "bringing in" the new year takes the form of ceremonious visits, of boxes of chocolates, bouquets of flowers, champagne, and kisses, when every actress ensures good luck for the year by saluting the theatre freeman with her pretty lips, and each Frenchman is very careful to give his new year's kiss to one of the opposite sex. On New Year's Day, too, the good Parisian must tip everyone, from his washerwoman and barber to his concubine, who gives him "Bonne Annee!" and the streets are flooded with thousands of beggars, who reap rich harvests from their appeals.

In far-off Japan New Year's Day is feted and made the occasion of holiday-making by the highest and the lowest. Dwarf pines are exchanged amongst the people, these being supposed to act as a charm against misfortune. If a recipient gives his pine away disaster is certain to overtake him, the Japanese have it. Every

## The Loss of the Schooner "Eliza"

THAT LEFT ST. JOHN'S FOR ST. MARY'S, RIVERHEAD, OCTOBER 18th, 1925, MANNED BY CAPTAIN JAMES AHEARN, AGED 25 YEARS; PETER BONIA, AGED 24 YEARS; AND JACK AHEARN, AGED 17 YEARS.

I mind as 'twas but yesterday,  
Beneath the town, beneath the hill,  
The sails of my son's barque did fill,  
My Jacob, who was cast away. —BRET HARTE.

The brave Eliza spread her sails  
At morning in the bay,  
And soon, before a freshening breeze  
Was speeding on her way.

Fort Amherst heard her youthful crew  
Sing cheerily as they passed;  
But, ah! Fort Amherst little knew  
That sailing was their last!

Only the sea birds overhead  
Enchircling in the blue,  
Screamed down the wind in fear, as if  
They some strange terror knew.

Far in the offing fog-drifts sweep  
Like spectral fleets, whose aim  
Is to ensnare some passing ship  
Another prize to gain.

Yet cheerily Eliza's crew  
Intone their sailing song;  
And merrily their good ship bounds  
The sunlit waves along.

The bright spray sparkling round her prow  
Gave promise fair that day—  
How false that promise know we now  
In and St. Mary's Bay.

Swift sped the gallant schooner  
Eliza up the shore,  
Close to the wind she's hauling  
As many a time before.

Her captain James Ahearn  
To keep her tiller true;  
His brother and young Bonia,  
All sturdy sailors, too.

Have battled many a tempest  
Thro' nights of stress and dread  
To reach their destination  
Fair St. Mary's, Riverhead.

But many a hardy sailor has  
Sailed far, far seas, to come  
To grief, when near some beacon clear  
That lights the way to home!

And storms oft come to Newfoundland  
By stealth and treachery—  
The foul nor'easter's chilly hand  
Is black with tragedy.

So the brave schooner Eliza  
On this October day,  
Must match her all unequal strength  
With perils that cross her way.

Torrential rain strikes on the main  
Like to a hand of hate,  
The waters near grow white with fear  
At what may be in wait.

Then burst the gale on spar and sail,  
The schooner Eliza reeled  
And shuddered like a thing of life  
That sees its doom revealed.

With riven sail before the gale  
The staunch Eliza flew,  
With sturdy heart was done the part  
Of her courageous crew.

As fiercely raged the storm-swept waves  
And darker grew the skies,  
But none may tell what woes befell  
That crew of gallant boys.

Right valiantly they fought, we know  
For they were heroes, bred  
Where sea-bred fisher-folks reside,  
St. Mary's, Riverhead.

Dark night and storm enwraps her form,  
The warring billows roar,  
The hurricane her timbers strain,  
She'll sail in pride no more.

Death's Angel sweeps along the deep,  
The strength of man is vain—  
"God's will be done—my son, my son,  
I'll never see again!"

When it was learned in Riverhead  
The schooner had set sail,  
All deeply laden fore and aft  
And ran into the gale.

Dark hours of deep anxiety  
Were by a maiden spent,  
Whose fingers trembled on the key  
At every message sent.

Asking for tidings, her beloved,  
With her two brothers, share  
The dangers of this midnight sea,  
This night that breeds despair.

Deep shadows now o'ershade her brow,  
Cape Race's dark hills tell  
"A ship dismantled drifts to sea  
Before tempestuous winds!"

Then round about her office lone—  
Even at its very door—  
The shrieking winds cried thro' the night:  
"You'll see them nevermore!"

And sad to say 'tis told to-day  
Throughout our little town,  
That not a word was ever heard  
Where this good ship went down.

Their lights seen on the darkening main,  
By Captain Walsh and crew,  
From off the Thrasher's storm-swept decks,  
Is all we ever knew.

Gay Captain Jim, we'll think of him  
Oft when the neighbours meet,  
And tales of bravery are told  
Of many a fishing fleet.

But one shall grieve with aching heart—  
His promised bride to be—  
"Oh jealous deep, why will you keep  
My love, my love, from me!"

Our Peter sang as sings the breeze  
Along the sunny strand,  
When south winds waft sweet soothing airs  
To bless our Newfoundland.

But we shall hear his voice no more  
Nor know his welcome tread  
At homes that loved his presence, in  
St. Mary's, Riverhead.

The glad-eyed boy, young Jack Ahearn,  
'Twas his first summer's cruise,  
We did entreat to keep him home,  
Words proved of little use.

Our sons, by ocean's mighty song  
Are lulled to infant sleep;  
Its mysteries as the years go by  
Into their spirits creep.

'Till like the sea-shell's wizard voice,  
That to our childhood mind,  
Seemed something strangely hid within  
That we must break to find.

The call rings in their hearts, and oh,  
How many a mother's tears  
Fall on this cross, so fraught with loss,  
In sorrow thro' the years!

This trio brave, the cruel wave  
Snatched from our hearts away,  
Their darling names our memory flames  
To fervour, when we pray.

God help the grief-wrung mother's soul,  
The sweetheart's mute despair—  
The fathers plunged in silent woe—  
The sisters bent in prayer.

God help the waiting, ones at home  
Who mourn their sailor dead;  
God's balm come down upon your town,  
St. Mary's, Riverhead.

St. John's, Dec. 29th, 1925.

—NELL.

## To Our Customers

Among our assets we like to count  
the only one that money cannot buy,  
your good will. And so at this  
Holiday Season we extend to you, not  
as customers alone, but as friends  
the Best of Wishes for the coming  
year.

## PARKER & MONROE, Limited THE SHOE MEN.

dec31,jan3

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## CHRISTMAS CAKE!

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'Phone H177

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dec14,15,16

## To Our Friends and Customers

without whom our business would have been far less pleasant and prosperous, we wish a Happy New Year and the best of Good Luck for 1926.

## W. P. SHORTALL

THE AMERICAN TAILOR

300 Water Street

St. John's.



REOPENING JAN. 6th, IN VICTORIA HALL (DAY AND NIGHT) STENOGRAPHY, ARITHMETIC, ACCOUNTING AND ENGLISH.

The Victoria Business College  
St. John's, Newfoundland  
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Slippery Roads. A fall. Result: A Nasty Accident.  
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Our Accident and Sickness Covers are what you need just now. Why not see us?

## BOWRING BROTHERS, LIMITED

AGENTS FOR NEWFOUNDLAND.

Jan15,2m,ood

Advertise in The Evening Telegram.



florist shop in the land does a roaring trade in dwarf pines on the first day of the New Year.

House cleaning on an extraordinary scale is indulged in in Japan as in Scotland, the aim of every Japanese householder being to clear the house of lurking evil spirits, and to bar the way against all unclean things there is stretched across every doorway a skillfully pleated thick grass rope, this being the legendary barrier against the entry of evil spirits.

## Hamilton Children Are Left Fortune

Hamilton, Ont., Dec. 23.—(C.P.)—A fortune of \$75,000 each is left to Miss Grace Forsyth and her brother William Forsyth both of whom reside with their grandmother here, by the terms of the will of their grandfather, Capt. David A. Shaw, steel magnate and noted horseman, who died on November 14.

Miss Forsyth is employed by the Bank of Montreal, and her brother attends school here. The parents of the couple, Mr. and Mrs. F. Forsyth reside in Chicago.

One paragraph of the will, which disposes of an estate of \$800,000, sets forth that should any of the beneficiaries bring disgrace on the family and memory of Capt. Shaw, they are to be paid only \$300 a month.

CALENDAR.—We acknowledge receipt of a calendar for 1926 from the Colonial Cordage Co. Ltd.

## The Maritime Dental Parlors.

THE HOME OF GOOD DENTISTRY.  
Professional Service means Popular Prices, Experience, Painless Dentistry, Quality of Work, Impressionless, for Platework taken in the morning, and your plates finished the same day. Plates repaired in three hours. Crown and Bridge Work and Fillings at reasonable prices.  
Full Upper or Lower Sets . . . \$12.00 and up  
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176 Water Street.  
'Phone 62. P.O. Box E5139.

## M. S. POWER, D.D.S.

(Graduate of Philadelphia Dental College, Garretts Hospital of Oral Surgery, and Philadelphia General Hospital.)  
oct1,oct11

Oliver oil which may not be good for table use, if mixed with an equal portion of turpentine makes a good furniture polish.

## BIRDS!

REGULATIONS UNDER PROVISIONS OF "THE GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES BOARD ACT."

No person shall hunt, kill, sell, purchase or have in possession any Ptarmigan or Willow Grouse, commonly called Partridge, nor any Curlew, Plover, Snipe or other wild or migratory birds (except Wild Geese and Crows), or the eggs of any such birds within this Colony, between the first day of January and the twentieth day of September, in any year, under a penalty not exceeding one hundred dollars (\$100.00) or imprisonment not exceeding three months.

Provided it shall not be held unlawful to have in possession any of such birds when the party shall prove that the said birds were killed between the twentieth day of September and the first day of January following; and provided that any person who shall actually have in possession upon the first day of January any Ptarmigan or Willow Grouse, shall be allowed to offer for sale such Ptarmigan or Willow Grouse until the fifth day of the same month of January.

dec29,31,ood

## Senate Pages Vote

TO REPEAL DRY LAW.

Washington, Dec. 23.—(U.P.)—Repeal of the Prohibition Act was voted in the Senate by the yeas, 13 to 7. The 19 boys who trot up and down in the Senate, took over the

hall as Senators returned to their homes for Christmas, debated and voted to repeal the 18th amendment. Then they returned to the Senate restaurant, where they were guests of Vice-President Dawes at luncheon.

The super Bacon—Wilson's certified—dec21,1,ood