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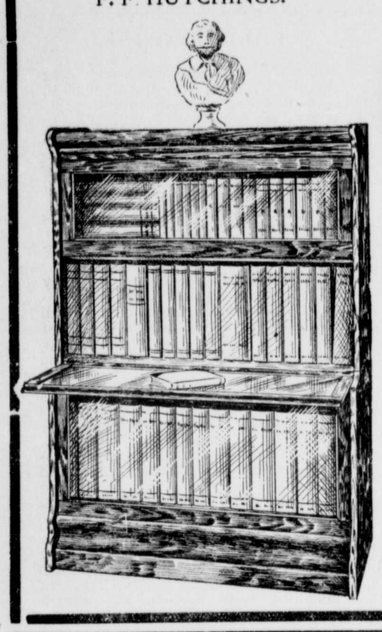

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Don't put off for to-morrow what you might have done day before yesterday. Avoid the influx of Holiday trade. We have been busy and will be more so nearer the holidays. There's a good assortment eft yet in

Men's and Boys' Overcoats and Suits.

But they will soon dwindle, judging from present demands. HATS AND CAPS, GLOVES, NECKWBAR, UNDERWEAR, and all the small wearables complete now. But come early.

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Shooting In the New Year

RACING, whirling, nerve wrecking as has become the recognized spirit of our times, yet in the remote districts lingers a serenity so unshaken we can but marvel over the dual nature of this thing we call American. Customs of the fatherland have become so grafted upon the newer land one feels the richness of the past ever mellowing the crudeness of the present.

One of the most lovable of these old customs, redolent with the air of feudalism, is that of shooting in the new year. We first hear of it among the early German settlers of Pennsylvania, where it has long since become obsolete, but about 1750 there was a general migration from Pennsylvania down to the hill country of the Carolinas. In rumbly old wagons these pioneers journeyed, laden with feather beds and delftware, sprigs of fruit trees and sturdy babies.

As the life history is but a repetition of the race history, there came with their first strange new year a burst of heimweh. Getting themselves together, they celebrated as best they could in memory of older days, and not once through all the years that have followed have these greetings been omitted.

Then tenantry and poorer people of the neighborhood gather at some appointed place about 9 o'clock in the evening, and the march begins. From one "big house" to another they tramp, dolorously intoning their doggerel, firing fierce salutes and feasting at the hands of the gentry.

Though North Carolina could never boast as many stately mansions as could some of her sister states, yet for homely comfort and lavish old time hospitality she has never been surpassed. Each of the dear old places has its own name, still lingering there—Swan Ponds, Pleasant Gardens, Mount Welcome, Ingleside. The sentiment of all was voiced on one stone gatepost, which proudly bore the inscription:

Welcome all
To Buncombe Hall.

Tradition tells us that the owner of this estate, Colonel Buncombe (of course he was a coloneb), lived in the "low" country, and when he was entertaining guests whom he particularly enjoyed he had the bridge, the only means of escape, taken up and hidden in the swamps. Most of these jovial hosts are sleeping now, each in his narrow bed forever laid, but the new year has a way of returning, and the shooters return with it.

On the last night of the year, as you sit over the hickory fire, there comes a

THE NEW YEAR SHOOTERS.

tramping in the front yard, and a deep voice outside begins the so called New Year's sermon with a forcing of the rhyme worthy of Walt Whitman.

A loud report being the thing desired, heavy wads are put on the powder and the gun muzzle held close to the ground. After the shooting comes the hint:

If you are a man of grace,
Come to the door and show your face.

The door is then thrown wide, and the company enter, awkward, grinning and shivering with cold. Some of them have come from a distance of eight or ten miles, as the country is sparsely settled, and must necessarily be tired, but they consider it more deferential to stand, or if one is finally persuaded to take a chair he sits on the edge uneasily.

The ruddy, Santa Claus-like old men exchange laconic remarks on the price of cotton; the youngsters refer to the possum hunt of the previous night. Some one goes to the piano and strums away in a frantic attempt to furnish amusement. They are stolid until she strikes up "Dixie." The effect is magical. The callers mark time with muddy boots and remark slyly:

"That's the stuff!"

Apples and oranges, cakes and coffee, are now brought out. At some places the black bottle is passed around. Then the shooters with a relieved sigh pile out of the door. The society manner is a fearful strain.—New York Post.

SYLVESTER EVENING.

How the Germans Celebrate the Conversion of Constantine.

The evening of Dec. 31 is known in Germany as Sylvester evening. In European calendars, excepting that of England, the days of the year have names, and Dec. 31 bears the name of Sylvester, who was bishop of Rome in the time of the Emperor Constantine and was obliged to hide himself in the mountains to escape persecution. Then it happened that Constantine was smitten with leprosy, for which horrible disease the physicians could propose no other remedy than a bath in the blood of young children. For this purpose 3,000 children were gathered, but Constantine, moved to pity by the despair of the mothers, refused to avail himself of such a sacrifice. In the night he was advised in a dream to recall Sylvester and to accept the Christian religion, which he did.

This evening is everywhere in Germany a time of great rejoicing. Parties and balls are given, and friends gather to spend the last hours of the old year in merriment—games and dancing and, most important of all, auguries and divinations. Though these tricks are as old as the hills, they never lose their charm. Hot lead is poured into cold water contained in a basin, and in solidifying it forms itself into all kinds of shapes and figures, in which many meanings can be read by the initiated.

Empty walnut shells, in each of which burns a tiny wax taper, are put together in a basin of water to swim in opposite directions. If they meet two loving hearts will be united in that year, but if they separate the love affair of those represented by the shells will come to naught. Young girls throw slippers over their heads. If the points of the slippers face the door the owners will be married that year; if the slippers miss the wished for direction the girls have to remain at home. Sealed cards on which words of good omen, of good advice or wishes have been written are passed around, read aloud and considered as indications of the future.—New York Tribune.

NEW YEAR'S BREAKFAST.

In Japan It Is a Religious Rite and a Serious Matter.

To a devout Japanese breakfast on New Year's day is a religious rite rather than a vulgar satisfaction of the appetite. No ordinary dishes are consumed at this meal. The tea must be made with water drawn from the well when the first ray of sun strikes it, a potpourri of materials specified by law forms the staple dish, while at the finish a measure of special sake from a red lacquer cup must be drained by whosoever desires happiness during the coming year.

In the room is placed an "elysian stand," or red lacquer tray, covered with evergreen leaves and bearing a rice dumpling, a lobster, oranges, persimmons, chestnuts, dried sardines and herring roe. All these dishes have a special signification. The names of some are homonymous with words of happy omen; the others have an allegorical meaning. The lobster's curved back and long claws typify life prolonged till the frame is bent and the beard is long; the sardines, which always swim in pairs, express conjugal bliss; the herring is symbolical of a fruitful progeny.

These dishes are not intended for consumption, although in most cases the appetite is fairly keen. The orthodox Japanese not only sees the old year out; he rises at 4 to welcome the newcomer and performs many ceremonies before he breaks his fast.—London Chronicle.

An Improved Diary.

"This," explained the bookseller, "is our latest patent diary. We think it is the cleverest thing in that line ever devised."

The shopper turns the leaves idly.

"But I can't see where it is different from any other," she observes.

"No? Well, if you will look at all the dates after Jan. 23 you will see that in each space has been printed, 'Got up, ate breakfast, lunch and dinner and went to bed.' That insures a complete diary for the year."—Judge.

New Year's In France.

New Year's in France is a greater day for exchanging gifts than Christmas. The custom of New Year's calls, once so popular in this country, but now fallen almost into disuse, is still supreme in Paris. Great family dinners, in which the orange figures most prominently, add to the gayety of the day. So crowded are the pavements on the boulevards that pedestrians sometimes have to take the middle of the street.

New Year's Day In Canada.

With the French-Canadian, New Year's day, or le jour de l'an, as he calls it, is very much like what Thanksgiving day is to his New England brother. It is par excellence the feast of the home, essentially a domestic holiday.

A Song For the New Year.

A song for the new year, its hopes and its fears,
And never a song that is saddened by tears;
A song that shall ring and shall sing to the years—
A song of a brighter tomorrow!

A song for the new year, forgetting the old,
Whose story in sunshine and shadow was told;
A song of the joys that love's dear arms shall hold—
A song of a brighter tomorrow!

A song of a green world and bluest of skies,
A song of a sun that in splendor shall rise;
The joy's in love's heart and the light's in love's eyes,
And the world sees a brighter tomorrow!

—Atlanta Constitution.

A... New Year Proposal

"WHAT resolutions have I vowed to keep
the coming year?
Come, sit beside me, maiden fair,
and straightway you shall hear.
I've pledged myself to choose one girl from
out the throng so gay,
And love her with an honest love forever and
for aye.

"I'VE MADE NO PLEDGE."

"I'LL work for her with brain and brawn,
with all my might and main
Until I've won her everything that honesty can gain.
I'll fill her life with all that's good till life itself is done—
And while we train our minds and hearts we'll
not neglect the fun.

"NOW tell me, won't you, maiden fair,
what you have vowed to do,
for I've laid bare my inmost soul to
no one but to you?"
"I've made no pledges," she replied in so demure a tone,
"But, if you don't object, I'll try to help you
keep your own!"

—Wallace Dunbar Vincent in Leslie's Magazine.

Nothing to Keep Him Happy.

"Wish you a happy new year!" says the visitor, riding up to the home of the Kentucky mountaineer.

"Thanks fo' yo' kind wishes, suh, but hit looks almighty bad fo' me this comin' yeah."

"Now, I'm sorry to hear that. What seems to be the trouble?"

"Well, suh, 'long last spring me an' Lije Bingo happened to have a fallin' out ovah a couple o' hawgs, so we done had a time all sence then, shootin' at each otheh f'um time to time."

"Oh, I shouldn't be cast down over that. Even if you have a feud it can be ended. There's no reason why"—

"That's jest it, podneh; that's jest it. Lije fell offen the side o' the mountain yestiddy, an' now I've got no feud at all."—Judge.

New Year's Calls.

The custom of visiting and sending presents and cards on New Year's day is recorded almost as far back as history goes. The practice of using visiting cards can be traced back for thousands of years by the Chinese. Their New Year's visiting cards are curiosities. Each one sets forth not only the name, but all the titles, of its owner, and, as all Chinamen who have any social position at all have about a dozen, it makes the list quite appalling. These cards are made of silk or else of fine paper backed with silk and are so large that they have to be rolled up to be carried conveniently. They are, indeed, so valuable that they are returned to their owners.

A Polish Kissing Bee.

In Poland New Year's eve is observed in a dance called St. Sylvester's ball. The dancing proceeds decorously until the clock strikes 12. Exactly at that moment the men fall to kissing their own and their neighbor's partners, each taking particular pains to thus salute the one he loves best before the one with whom she chances to be dancing can perform that duty. Those not in the mood for dancing gather in another room or remain at home to entertain one another with stories about the departing year.

New Year's Day In Russia.

At every country house in Russia there are a feast and a procession in honor of New Year's day. Horses, sheep, cows and hogs are dressed with garlands and led to the landlord's house. The idea is that the animals shall be taken into the dining room, but when the landlord has a handsomely furnished apartment and does not care to have it ruined he sets aside some other room and allows the mob to take possession of it.

An Old English Custom.

The old country Englishman never fails to unbar his door at 12 o'clock New Year's eve to let the old year out and the new year in.

New Year's Violets.

I sighed to give you flowers bright,
Though vanished sweet the summer's glow.
The violets heard my longings deep,
Oh, way down 'neath the turf and snow.
They were not due till April fair,
Yet, in December's wilderness,
They felt the warmth of friendship's spring
And robed themselves in royal dress.

—Donahoe's Magazine.

SPARKS & JEFFERSON.

STORE NEWS

FRESH ARRIVALS ALMOST DAILY MAKE IT WORTH WHILE COMING AND LOOKING, EVEN IF NOT DISPOSED TO BUY EVERY TIME.

We always say "WELCOME." You are just as free to ask questions, examine qualities and compare prices at one time as another.

Our all and Winter Stock Now Complete!

DRESS GOODS.

Stacks and heaps of NEW FALL GOODS are waiting you here—variety sufficient to please every taste. Prices to meet the ideas of the most economical.

CLOAKS FOR EVERYBODY.

You'll think so when you see the stock. This is CLOAK week. There's a snap to the air; there's a snap to the business. This department is right on the jump just now and such values as we have will keep it jumping.

FURS.

There are very few jokes older than the one conce rning the fur trade and its being a regular skin business, and yet. is it not a fact in more ways than one? Furs are bought and sold "on honor" by the great public, none but an expert being able to tell much about them. If you buy furs at a reliable store you will get your money's worth. OUR FURS are sold with a guarantee. Your money back if they are not as we recommend.

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Millinery! Millinery!

Our business has steadily increased in this line, until now we are the acknowledged leaders. Our trimming is done by a city expert who is under an agreement to spend a certain time in New York before each season begins, and this is a sufficient guarantee that our styles are right. Our prices are cut as low as possible, and we invite a comparison of same at all times. Your patronage is solicited. Come and see us.

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