1866-1867.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

Its Celebration in Ancient and Modern Times.

How it was Observed by the **Ancient Saxons and** Romans,

manager and property to the continues of

How it is Observed in England, Scotland, France, and the United States.

New-Year's Gifts - The Wassail-Bowl - Hogmanay - The Guisers - New-Year's Calls.

Ringing Out the Old Year, and Ringing in the New.

Etc., Etc., Etc., Etc., Etc., Etc.

The month of January was, by the ancient Saxons, sometimes termed Wolf-monat, or "Wolf Month," because at this season of the year the wolves were impelled by hunger to leave their haunts in the wilderness, and prey upon man himself, and the animals which he had domesticated for his own use. It was likewise styled by them "After Fule," or "After-Christmas," the derivation of which term is very obvious. But by the Romans it was denominated Januarius, which name it still retains throughout the civilized world. This word, according to some philologists, is derived from janua, a door, January being the door or gateway of the year: while by others its derivation is traced to Janus, the god of the year, who was sometimes represented with four heads, typical of the four arm." seasons, and placed in a temple of four sides, on each of which there were a door and three windows, the latter representing the twelve months, over which it was his particular business to preside. By Numa Pompilius, whose reign as the second King of Rome terminated in 672 B. C., two months were added to the ten into which the year had previously been divided, and the first of January was made

The First Day of the New Year.

According to the present method of computing time, this system still prevails. But in the old calendars of the Jews, Egyptians, and Greeks, such was not the case. The Jewish year began on the 25th of March, a custom which was re-tained for many centuries, in all matters of a legal character, by most of the Christian nations. Popularly, however, the year was held to commence with the first of January, long before it received the sanction of law. It was for this reason that the dates between the 1st of January and the 24th of March were formerly written as if belonging indefinitely to two succeeding years. Thus, February 12, 1671-2, signified the twelfth day of February, in the legal year 1671, or the popular year 1672. In 1600, by decree of King James VI, of Scotland, the legal year was made to coincide with the popular year. A similar change was effected in the French calendar, as early as 1564; and in that of Russia, Holland, and Protestant Germany in 1700. It was not until 1752 that the change, so very desirable, was made in England, and in the following year Sweden followed the example.

In the calendar of the Roman Catholic Church the first day of January is celebrated as the least of the

"Circumcisio Domini," or the Circumcision of our Lord; which, according to the customs of the Jews, must have taken place on the eighth day after His birth. This festival is said to have been instituted about the year 487. The Church of England has retained it, first giving it place in the Laturgy in the

New Year's Day Among the Romans

was an occasion of considerable rejoicing, which was manifested in the congratulations, visits and presents which were then made. The origin of these customs is ascribed to Romulus and Tatius; but it would seem that the former could not have had much to do with it, as during his time the year did not begin with the first of January. The presents were usually figs and dates, covered with gold leaf. They passed generally from clients or retainers to their patrons, and were accompanied by a piece of money, which was to be expended in purchasing statues of the gods, Specimens of Roman patterns are still in existence, bearing inscriptions, such as the following:- 'A happy New Year to you," "A happy New Year to myself and son." On an old Roman medallion there is a representation of Janus standing in a temple, with an inscription wishing a "Happy New Year" to the Emperor.

Such was the undoubted origin of the present custom of making presents to one's relatives and friends on the first day of the New Year. It was very popular among the ancient Romans. and was even encouraged by some of the early Christian Emperors. The practice was finally prohibited by Claudius, and strongly condemned by the councils of the Church, on account of the heathenish ceremonies attending it. But despite the flat of Emperor and Church, the custom was so popular that it was never wholly abandoned.

New Year's Day in England is not at present honored with much special observation. The hearty demonstrations of joy which there mark the Christmas season appear to exhaust the time and resources of a majority of the people, who by this day have betaken themselves to their customary avocations. This idea is quaintly expressed in the following Scottish stanza, which belongs to a period anterior to the Reformation, when Christman was

the great heliday of Scotland as well as of Esgland:-

'Yule's come and Yule's gane,

And we have feasted weel; Sac Jock mann to his flatl again, And Jenny to her wheel." sim, as the festivities of the Christmas season do not properly terminate until "Twelfth-day," or the 6th of January, the first day of the year is not wholly neglected. In the northern counties, especially, this is the case; and there both New Year's-eve and New Year's-day are enlivened by a great deal of merry-making. In London there is at present no general public festivity, the enjoyment of the occasion being restricted

New Year's day Among the Ancient of the northern section of the country, however, was the occasion of more than ordinary follicy and feasting. The Roman practice of making presents on that day, in particular, was kept up with much vigor all through the middle ages.

to dinner-parties among friends, or at some

New Year's Gifts in Olden Times. The giving and receiving of these little mementoes of friendship were accompanied by hearty expressions of good-will, generally couched in the stilli-popular form of wishing "a happy New Year." The custom is thus touched upon in the old Latin poem entitled "The Popish Kingdome," which was written by Thomas Macgeorgas in

1553, and translated by Barnabe Googe:-The next to this is Newe yeares day Whereon to every freude, They costly presents in do bring. And Newe yeares gittes do sende These giftes the husband gives his wife, And father eke the child, And maister on his men bestowes The like, with favour milde."

It was sometimes the custom to pay these compliments at the door of the recipient, in the form of the song. But it was more usual for the house to be entered early in the morning by the younger of the neighbors, bearing the spiced-bowl, and addressing their hosts with the salutations of the season.

The gifts were not neessarily of much intrinsic value. In the sixteenth century, it seems that the New Year's gift of a tenant to his landlord was usually in the shape of a capon. Another common present in these days was that of an orange stuck fall of cloves. This, when suspended in a vessel of wine, but without touching the liquor, was supposed to improve its flavor, and likewise to be a sure preventive of mold. Old Ben Jonson, in his Masque of Christmas, among other characters, introduces "New Year's Gift in a blue coat, sewing-man tike, with an orange, and a sprig of rosemary on his head, his hat full of brooches, with a collar of gingerbread, his torchbearer carrying a marchpane, with a bottle of wine on either

One of the most valuable presents made in those days was in the form of gloves, which were then much more costly than at present. Sometimes money, where with to purchase the article, was given in its stead, and this was called glove-money. Occasionally the money and the glove were both sent. A lady, in whose favor Sir Thomas More had decided a vexatious suit, thought to gratify him by presenting him on the ensuing New-Year's Day with a pair of gloves, containing forty golden coins termed "angels." The "angels" Sir Thomas returned, with the following note:- "Mistress, since it were against good manners to refuse your New-Year's gift, I am content to take your gloves, as for the fining. I utterly refuse it.

In the beginning of the sixteenth century, metallic pins were first brought into general use; and so novel and convenient were they, that they soon came to be in great demand as New Year's gifts for ladies. Sometimes money for their purchase was presented instead of the pins. This was called "pin-money," a term which has since been applied to the amount settled upon a wife at the time of her marriage, to be devoted to her own exclusive and unques-

In Scotland, it was the custom in old times for persons to send presents to their friends on New Year's Eve; but on the following day, when the donors called upon the recipients to wish them "A happy New Year," they would ask for gifts in return.

New Year's Gifts to the English Kings and Queens.

In the way of receiving gifts at New Year's, the English sovereigns appear to have been particularly fortunate. The custom can be traced back to the reign of Henry VI, and Matthew Paris has even accused Henry III of extorting them openly from his subjects.

There is still preserved a manuscript roll, which shows that, in the reign of Philip and Mary, Cardinal Pole presented his sovereigns with a "saulte," having a cover of silver and gilt, and a representation, in enamel, of the story of Job. In return for this, the Cardinal received two pots of silver and gilt, weighing 1432 ounces. The present made by the Lady Etizabeth, sub-equently queen, was the fore part of a kyrtell, with sleeves of silver cloth, richly embroidered.

It has been said that the magnificent wardrobe of Queen Elizabeth was kept up by these New Year's contributions from her subjects. It is certain that during her reign the practice was carried to its greatest height. The presents received every year by the Queen were inscribed on a roll, which was signed by herself, and duly attested by the proper officers. The list of donors embraces men and women of every rank, from the great officers of state down to her Majesty's dustman. Among the presents were sums of money, ornaments for the person and apartments of the Queen-some of them being of great value--embroidered gowns and mantles, smocks, petticoats, silk stockings, caskets glaring with precious gems, necklaces, bracelets, fans, and looking-glasses. In the year 1561-2, the money gifts alone amounted to £1262 11s. 8d. In all cases the Queen presented her generous subjects with a certain amount of plate in return, proportional in weight to the value of the gifts received by her. The exact weight of the plate received by each person was entered on the roll-that of the year 1577-8 showing a total of 5582 ounces. But, as might have been supposed, her Majesty always took good care that there should be something in her own favor when the balance between the value of the gifts received and presented came to be

James I, like his predecessor, received many gifts of money of considerable amount, but there was a great falling off in the number and value of the ornamental articles. One year King James received from the dignitaries of the Church and State the total of £1293 13s. 4d. in gold coin. No records of the gilts received and presented by Charles I have been preserved, love of its wembers; the day being would up

ceased entirely until during the Commonwealth. It was one of the customs that was not revived on the restoration of the Stuarts.

The Wassail-Bowl in Olden Times. Among the ancient popular customs of the New Year season was the assembling of the family around a bowl of spiced ale, which was termed "lamb's wool." From this the master of the house would drink the healths of the others, and then pass it to them in turn. The expression "Wass haer"-which signifies, "To your health"-was uttered at each potation; and the liquor came to be known as the Wassail, or Wassel Bowl. The poor, to enable themselves to enjoy this sort of merry-making, were accustomed to go the rounds of the neighborhood, carrying a bowl decorated with ribbons, and

begging something wherewith to fill it. The following stanza will serve as a specimen of the songs which were sung over the Wassall-Bowl:-

"Wassail! wassail! over the town, Our teast it is white, our ale it is brown; Our bowl it is made of the maplin tree, We be good fellows all; I drink to thee,"

It is not surprising that the jolly monks opened the doors of their monasteries to the Wassail-Bowl, which, in their language, was styled Poculum Caritatis The abbot placed himself at the head of the table, and drank from the mighty bowl to the health of all present, and each of them, in turn, then drank to the health of the others.

"Hogmanay," or New Year's Eve in Scotland.

Although the old-fashioned Wassail-Bowl has long been a stranger to England, it was still in vogue in Scotland to within a recent period. Just as the clock announced the departure of the old year, the members of the family would each take a sip from the mixture or hot ale, spiced and sweetened, wishing the rest "A good health and a happy New Year, and many of them !" Then there was a general hand-shaking, and sometimes a dance around the table, the party meanwhile singing:-

"Weel may we a' be.
Ill may we never see,
Here's to the king And the gude companie."

After this ceremony was concluded, the elder members of the family would sally forth, armed with a kettle of hot ale and an assortment of buns and cheese, making exchanges with similar parties whom they encountered, and rushing into the houses of their friends with loud and hearty wishes for future happiness. The party that arrived first at each house obtained what was called the "first-footing," and the good luck which betided the family in consequence was duly proportioned to the amount of buns and cheese which the visitors still retained.

New Year's Eve in Scotland is known as Hogmanay, a term which has puzzled antiquarians and philologists not a little. It is still the custom in the country districts, and in the more retired towns, for the children of the poor to have themselves arrayed in a monstrous sheet, arranged in front in the form of a deep pocket. Thus attired, they go forth on the morning of Hogmanay to gather up the cakes which, as they well know, the housewives have been preparing for several days, in expectation of their coming, Arriving at the door, they cry out "Hogmanay," or sometimes a sort of doggerel thyme, of which there are many versions, the following being the

most popular:— dy leet s van..., and let me ria."

By the time the children have made the rounds, they are usually weighed down with such a burden of oaten delicacies for their New Year's feast that they can scarcely waddle on

The "Guisers," or Mumming in Scot-

The favorite night for the operations of the guisers or guizards, as the "mummers" are called in Scotland, is New Year's Eve. The boys who take part in the ceremony array themselves in the old shirts of their fathers, and in fanciful head-rigs of brown paper. To these last is attached a sheet of paper, which falls down over the face and serves to conceal the features. Perforations are made at the proper places, to permit the eyes, nose, and mouth to perform their functions. Each guiser is attended by a squire, in the dress of a girl, with an old woman's cap upon his head and a broomstick in his hand. The squire is always known as "Bessie." His functions-or her's, if you like, as the doubtful gender troubles us not a little-are to walk before his principal for the purpose of opening such doors and gates as may stand in his way. During the singing, the squire is busy with sweeping the floor, and playing such other antics as are calculated to amuse the spectators. Singing is the principal occupation of these strolling masqueraders; but in some places they are of a theatrical turn of mind, and put themselves through all the agony of a long-winded and high-strung tragedy, In which dragons and other mysterious personages take a prominent part.

Leaving the British Isles, we will now cross the Channel, and take a glance at

New-Year's Gifts in France. The passage of New-Year's gifts between relutives and triends has fallen into decline in England; but in France the practice is still kept up. In Paris, especially, it is held in such high favor that the day has acquired the title of "Le Jour d'Etrennes." Parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, are then accustomed to dispose of the question of settlements in a very satisfactory manner. An immense business is done by the confectioners: the Rue des Lombards, in which they are principally located, being fairly blockaded for the last few days of the year by the wagons which are to bear the sweet things off to the provinces. Jewelry and fancy articles of all kinds are likewise in great demand, both for the home and foreign consumption.

During the Bourbon days of the present century, it was customary for every member of the reval family to make a present to the king, and sometimes the offerings received at the Tulleries could be measured by the cart load.

The people in these times would start forth early in the morning to pay their New Year's calls, visiting their relatives in the order of their relationship, and after them their acquaintances, according to the strength of their friendship, and interchanging with all their bonbons and other sweetmeats. The great point made was to anticipate each other's calls. In this employment passed the morning followed by a dinner given to the entire family by some

although it is not probable that the custom | with dancing, cards, and games of various

New Year's Day in the United States. A glance at the New Year customs of our own country will show them to be greatly diversified, according to locality; and even entirely lacking in many sections of the country. As a general thing Christmas-Day is celebrated so zealously, that for the first day of the New Year there is but little left in the way of especial social enjoyments. In the New England States, where the old Puritantcal prejudices against Christmas still linger, the pent-up joy of the year finds a from this circumstance the vessel containing free and full expression on Thanksgiving-Day, so that Christmas and New Year's Day fare about the same, neither of them taking a very high rank as holidays in the estimation of the people.

Yet the day is a legal holiday in most of the States; and in all of them, we believe, it is customary for the family to observe the occasion, if in no other way, at least by sitting down to a dinner prepared with more than the usual care and at more than the usual expense. In the Southern States, during the dominion of the pro-slavery oligarchy, the Christmas holiday season never ended, in the estimation of the pleasure-loving negroes, until the day after New Year's; but in this week of jubitee, no one particular day was esteemed much above another.

New Year's Calls in the United States. In those localities in which the first day of the New Year is considered worthy of a special observance, the favorite method of complying with the demands of the occasion is by a series of New Year's calls. Judging from the little favor with which this custom has been received by the good people of our own city, we should infer that they consider it about the most ridiculous and distressing custom that was ever invented for the amusement of mortal men and women-and we think they are about right.

But such is not the opinion of the worthy metropolitans who draw their fashionable inspirations from Fifth Avenue and Madison Square. With them the ceremony of making New Year's calls is a veritable mania, and on New Year's Day they themselves are monomaniacs-something more, perhaps; but, of a surety, nothing less. The person who never beheld a young gentleman of New York City or Brooklyn, when duly fitted out for his New Year's calle, has missed seeing something well worth the trouble of taking a look at-provided, always, however, that the atoresaid young gentleman is fashionable enough to be tolerated in the fashionable circles. Under these circumstances, he is an exquisite, an immensity. And when he has fairly entered upon the round of his calls, he becomes a martyr. It he can boast of the acquaintance of one hundred ladies whose figures-financial, as well as physical-are of an interesting type, he makes precisely one hundred calls. If the interesting creatures number five hundred, the calls number tive hundred. But If the legion appreximates a thousand, the poor fellow goes as far as he can; but before he reaches the end of his list darkness overtakes him, and this calamity, added to a certain confusion of the head, resulting from his imprudence in sending a beavy wine down the road a moment before travelled by a light wine, obliges him reluctantly to omit a bundred or two of his projected adventures.

Although the science of making New Year's calls has been elaborated to the greatest possible extent in New York, it is highly favored in own sensible city, the thing is considered a nuisance, and very generally treated as such." Watch-Meetings in the United States.

The denomination of Methodists in this coun try have long been accustomed to gather together for conference and prayer, just as the old year is waning. These meetings are termed 'watch-meetings," and the purposes for which they are held are certainly most appropriate to the occasion. The other Christian sects are beginning to appreciate this fact, and to follow the example; and we trust that the time is not far distant when the whole Christian world will watch the Old Year out and the New Year in, on bended knees, humbly and earnestiv returning thanks to God for the mercles of the past, and imploring their continuance throughout the future.

Ringing Out the Old Year and Ringing In the New. But in the estimation of the world at large the New Year is most appropriately ushered in by a carnival of noise. It is almost as great a

nuisance as the distracting uproar of tin horns on Christmas Eve; but there is some sense and great appropriateness in it, nevertheless. The monitor of the town clocks has scarcely tolled out the last stroke of "twelve," when the refrain is taken up by every bell within reach of your two ears, and ringle-jingle-rattle-de-dingding-dong they go along, in the most melodious discord and the most exuberant joy.

This is all well enough, as nearly every one is still up and dressed, to pay his or her respects in becoming manner to the youngest-born of Time. But to the uproar of the bells is added the clatter of pistols and muskets, and the booming of great guns; and taking them altogether, a man with a sensitive ear might reasonably be excused for wishing himself, for the time being, an attendant upon Calypso and her silent nymphs.

The spirit which underlies this ceremony of ringing in the New Year has been beautifully expressed by Tennyson, in the following lines. with which we bring our New Year's Greeting to a close:-

Ring out, wild bel's, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light;
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild belis, and let him die. "Ring out the old, ring in the new, Ring, happy bells, across the snow; The year is going, let him go; Ring out the false, ring in the true.

"Ring out the grief that sape the mind, For those that here we see no more: Ring out the feud of rich and poor, Ring in redress to ail mankind. "Ring out a slowly dying cause, And ancient forms of party strife; Ring in the nobler modes of life, With sweeter manners, purer laws. "Ring out the want the care, the sin,

The faithless coldness of the times; Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes, But ring the fuller minstrel in. Ring out false pride in place and blood, The civic slander and the spite: Ring in the love of truth and right, Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,
Ring out the narrowing just of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

"Eing in the vallant man and free, The larger heart, the kindler inno; Ring out the darkness of the land, Ring in the Christ that is to be,"

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