

Following the Old Year into the West

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with Shortwave Notes

by F. W. Sellens

TO pursue the fleeting year across land and sea and hear the glad welcoming of the new-born year in cities near and far was my task on New Year's Eve. No agency other than radio could have rendered this achievement possible. And as the hour of midnight drew near I thought of the great minds which had given this gift of the gods to mankind—Faraday, Kertz, Marconi, Fleming and De Forest came foremost to my mind.

In the latitude of Wellington the old year was speeding past on its final course round the world at something like 10 miles a minute. Shakespeare's "inaudible and noiseless foot of time" was winging toward me from out of the darkness of the Pacific, flying on double wings, as Seneca would say. From 2YA, Wellington, the most powerful of all broadcast stations in this quarter of the globe, came the relay of the Watchnight Service from St. Andrew's Church. The well-modulated, resonant voice of the Rev. W. Bullock caught my interest, and his words bore a message which must have gone to many a heart. And I lingered a while, for I thought as Paine did in his day, "These are the times that try men's souls."

But there were other matters afoot, and I tuned my radio to 4YA, Dunedin. A relay from the Exchange Buildings, Dunedin, filled the air with the noisy clamour of the crowd in the street below. Songs, cheers, exclamations all blended uproariously. The speeding New Year was close at hand.

I next picked up 1YA, Auckland, where a familiar voice was describing the scene in the streets as viewed from Ferry Building. The youth of Auckland was enjoying itself to the utmost. As on previous occasions, the crowd was lifting the rear part of passing motor-cars bringing the cars to a standstill as the driving wheels, revolving futilely, were unable to make contact with the ground. The fun was fast and furious. Happy laughter came in whirlwind gusts.

Thence to 3YA, Christchurch, where loud detonations punctuated the running description of the scene in Cathedral Square, being relayed from the United Service Hotel. It is strange how each city adopts some outstanding characteristic in its New Year celebrations. At Christchurch there was an almost continuous discharge of fireworks, bombs or "bangers," as on the occasion of the previous welcome to the New Year. Strains of music, vocal and instrumental, provided a background to the general uproar.

I glanced at my watch—one minute to go. The New Year was only 10 miles to the eastward, and I switched across to 2YA, Wellington.

Here, indeed, was tumultuous enthusiasm. The sound caused through the

beating on empty petrol tins took a prominent place in the continuous din. There was a rapid crescendo of uproar as the deep-throated chimes of the Wellington G.P.O. announced the last few seconds of the expiring 1931. As the crashing tolling of the midnight hour overwhelmed the tumultuous welcoming of 1932, the waterfront provided a new note of exultation. The big ocean liner Cumberland at the King's Wharf roared her greeting to 1932. The American cargo liner Golden Cross, at the Taranaki Street Wharf, added her deep-pitched whistle to the general hubbub. The Government lighthouse steamer Matai, berthed at the Ferry Wharf, then made the welkin ring with her screaming and wailing siren.

CHORUSES were just audible amid the clamour. Then back to the studio went 2YA, and a happy group sang "Auld Lang Syne." The other "YA" stations were re-visited and the noisy celebrations could still be heard. 4YA went back to the studio and provided several enjoyable vocalisations until 12.38 a.m. It was the last of the YA stations to close down.

Away across the Tasman Sea sped the Old Year with the New Year right on its heels. Over the gale-whipped billows they flew, for a strong north-westerly had set in across that waste. Two hours difference in time separated Sydney and Wellington, so to while away the intervening time I turned to each of the Australian stations in turn, to snatch a song here, a dance item there, and perhaps an orchestral selection elsewhere.

And so I went the rounds until the clock indicated the proximity of 2 a.m., New Zealand time, and midnight eastern Australian time. Station 2BL, Sydney, had long since closed down for the night, while its big brother, 2FC, Sydney, was relaying dance items by a band at a cabaret. The happy chatter of the dancers was plainly audible. From 4QG, Bris-

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At Honolulu, 22½ hours behind New Zealand, the last broadcast in 1931 was heard.

The New Year - Bell

*And this be the vocation fit,
For which the founder fashioned it;
High, high above earth's life, earth's labour,
E'en to the heaven's blue vault to soar.
To hover as the thunder's neighbour,
The very firmament explore.*

*To be a voice as from above
Like yonder stars so bright and clear,
That praise their Maker as they move,
And usher in the circling year.*

*Tun'd be its metal mouth alone
To things eternal and sublime.
And as the swift wing'd hours speed on
May it record the flight of time!*

—Schiller.