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THE NEW YEAR OPENS

To a perplexed world came a New Year. In London, 5,000 revellers greeted 1948 at the Chelsea Arts Ball.

Scots pipers herald the new year's first hour.

From the roof thousands of balloons shower down as the peak of the night's celebrations is reached.

Everybody seemed to be there - Spanish ladies, cossacks, cowboys, noblemen and spivs - all to welcome 1948. Theme of the ball was baroque, but there were few signs of even a mild orgy this year.

Twenty five bars open from 10 till 5, sold 10,000 bottles of beer at 2 shillings a time. With spirits at 5 bob a nip, supplies never ran out. But the merry-makers - who paid three guineas and upward for their tickets, thought it all well worth while.

The new look seems to have come to the Arts Ball, too. For the first time ever, the accent was on more clothes rather than less.

To the music of three bands, the 5,000 danced on and on. A few dozen policemen - in fancy Cossack costumes - saw to it that things didn't get out of hand.

Dancing went on till nearly 5 o'clock. The New Year, whatever it held in store for Britain, at least had had a joyous birth.

New Year's Eve 1947 saw Britain deep in snow. This year, it was New York's turn. Sweeping in from the Atlantic without warning, a blinding blizzard catches the city unprepared.

Starting early in the morning, the storm whips up to a fall of three inches an hour by mid-afternoon. Thousands of New Yorkers are snowbound in the fiercest blizzard for 60 years. Traffic skids to a halt on frozen roads.

Sixteen hours brought 25 inches of snow. Fifteen thousand men and two thousand pieces of equipment dig the city out of a storm even New Yorkers won't forget for a long time.

The old year's closing days brought tragedy to New Zealand. All Christchurch mourns the death of 41 citizens, burned alive in a city store fire. Thirteen large lories carry wreaths sent from all over the Dominion and overseas.