

The Gentian

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The Promise of the New Year

A HAPPY New Year to all! The old year died amid dark and sad shadows of war and desolation. One would suppose that the accumulated gains of centuries of civilization have been thrown away in an unaccountable and unnecessary relapse into barbarism. In no other way can we view the war which is devastating Europe and bringing misery and suffering into homes which were as happy and light-hearted a year ago, as our own. God pity the warring nations and bring about peace!

But there are other matters that assert their right to recognition in these opening days of 1915. The essential things of life remain unchanged, however much the boundary lines of nations may have been altered. We, the privileged citizens of the United States, have still to think, to feel, to work, and make people good and happy in this life, whilst preparing for that which is to come. And as Europe is being torn to pieces by hatred and self-seeking, we shall strive to make our own dear land a happier home for all with whom we come in contact, by gentle kindness and self-forgetfulness.

I read the other day of a noisy young brother who kept his elder sister in a state of nervous irritation. Whistling and singing all over the house, rushing wildly up the stairway three steps at a time to beg her to join in this or that bit of fun, talking nonsense by the yard when she was engrossed in the latest novel; the lad had grown used to the only response he ever received—a snub, or a taunting word. One day as she sat in her sanctum, other feet came up that same staircase, slowly, sadly, and oh! so carefully, for they bore a burden that was silent and still. It was the boy brought back dead to the home of which he had been the sunshine, though his sister had not recognized the fact. All her bitter tears and heartfelt remorse were unavailing now, to bring back life and energy into the strangely still form and features she knew so well; and through all the long years that followed, she never forgot that her last words to him, before he left home that fatal morning, had been *unkind ones*.

Oh children! do not wait to show love and kindness until it is too



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Action

SOMETIMES we get the idea that great men and women are born such, and that they had not the same difficulties to overcome as the rest of mankind. But this is a mistaken idea. All of us start out from more or less the same point, and if we would be successful—in temporal as in spiritual matters—our Lord's words hold good: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent only bear it away." We may not follow the line of least resistance. We are bound to take part in the battle, nor may we leave to others all the bruises and wounds incident to warfare.

To some of us this seems a hard law. We hate struggle and pain and contradiction, and would fain have peace at any cost. We see how those, who dare to call their souls their own, are made to suffer; and we look for easier paths. To worthy enterprises that only beckon, it is so much easier to say "Nay", than to say it to the selfishness and sensuality that bind us, as with iron fetters. There are always reasons for inaction if one cares to search for them; and a plea for postponing disagreeable duties indefinitely can always be found by those who shirk all that is unpleasant. The energy of others gets on one's nerves, and so, instead of helping a noble unselfish laborer, we speak of him or her as tiresome and officious. But is this generous? There are many reasons which influence such an opinion, but very often it is cowardice. Some people have a most unreasonable dread of censure. What "they say", or even what "they think" operates as a powerful deterrent to good as well as to evil. We often fear to step out boldly into the open and march under the flag we most approve. We are sure that many will disapprove and condemn our determination; that some will ridicule and criticize it; and which of us does not wince under ridicule? But if we would make our lives worthy of the high calling of the children of God we must stand under our colors no matter what betide.

Labor, pain, and difficulty are really the forerunners of success.