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RING OUT THE OLD RING IN THE NEW

The last lingering cadence of the glad Yuletide bells had faded in the silence of the night. Christmas with all its festivities has come and gone, and once more we stand at the door to welcome the coming and speed the parting guest.

With hands outstretched in greeting our eyes yet linger lovingly on the year that is leaving us forever. The Old Year has gone, has passed to his rest, and the passing has brought to our minds thoughts and memories of the days and months during which he gave to each and all of us many things, both of joy and sorrow, of good and ill, of sunshine and of shadow.

What does it matter that the coming months may bring us greater happiness than we have before known?

The pleasures of the future are mere phantoms, but the joys and the friendships of the past no one can take from us.

Those old memories! We all have them. There is no heart, however hardened, or however apparently dead to all sentiment, that is not liable to that throb of regret, of yearning, of tenderness, which old memories arouse. What is it that comes to us to-day as we stand reviewing the past? A trifle, perhaps, brings them back; a trifle that draws the veil from the secret recess wherein they repose in such silence that we think they are dead; merely a trifle that breaks up the calm of years, showing to the most grief-hardened, world-worn among us that we still can suffer.

The spirit that haunted the old year's last hours, though attuned to the Christmas joy-bells, whispered to each listening ear a note of warning, to pause, to think, and to remember; to pause and rest just for a little while beside this fresh milestone on our road of life, and glance for a short time both upon the path that lies before and that which is behind us; to think upon the steps we have taken, the deeds we have done, as also upon those that we hope and mean to take in the future; and to remember the lessons we have learned, the experiences we have gained during the year that has passed.

The Old Year, when he came to us young and lusty, and bright with promise, was welcomed as a friend at whose coming we were glad and rejoiced, and now that he has gone, we can—if we will—see that in all things he has proved himself one, though maybe we have not taken his lessons to heart as we should; therefore, let us stay a moment beside his grave, and lay upon it, in the gracious remembrance of his gifts and teachings, a few flowers of kindly thought ere we turn to greet his successor with outstretched hands of welcome and glad words of hope and happiness.

In the darkness of gloom of winter's midnight the Old Year lays down the burden of his days, which he has borne so bravely from youth to age; and as the last knell of the passing bell strikes upon the listening year, Time, the master, turns another page in the book of our life, lo! another day has dawned, another year has been given to each of us.

Once again the joy-bells ring forth a glad and blithesome peal, as on the Christmas morn which we have just celebrated—

"A welcome and cheer to the merry New Year."

And they who watched beside the death-bed of the Old Year, hearing the jocund sound, turn from darkness and gloom and shadow of the night to watch the dawning of another day to welcome the advent of another year.

Time and its seasons have been given to us for good, and we are right, therefore, to rejoice at the coming of each New Year. With each we are given new gifts, new hopes, new joys, and gladness, new opportunities to do good. In these things the old influences the new, for where we have failed in the former, we can make a fresh attempt in the latter.

Surely it is to all of us a great and blessed thing to have further time lent us for fresh endeavor, and to feel that the past and its teachings have been given to help us make the present and the future better and happier not only for ourselves, but for others. No wonder, when we remember this, that we speak of the New Year with gladness, and whisper a prayer that for those we love the coming months may be filled with happiness and good! Oh! that we could make this New Year that has just dawned a bright and happy one for all people, a season of peace and content, a time of good will and friendly endeavor!

We all wish each other a happy New Year, even as the Christmas bells "answer each other" from hill to hill. Let these hopes and wishes be true and sincere, be spoken not by the lips alone, but from the heart. Would that we could ring out of this coming year the grief that saps the mind, the want, the care, the sin, with a fuller measure of loving thought and kindly deeds. May our hope and prayer be—stronger and greater each succeeding year, the sympathy and kindly love that soothes sorrow lightens care, alleviates suffering, and relieves want—aye, and conquers sin—for love is stronger than death, and goodness than sin!

With such hopes and thoughts and high resolves let us begin this New Year, and as we each clasp the hand of the other, let us express with no mere lip utterance, but in true and earnest hope, the wish that the New Year upon which we have just entered may be one of real happiness. Let our watchwords for the coming months be peace, happiness, and prosperity, a Glad and a Happy, New Year!

A NEW PHASE OF THE WAR

Latest news of the war shows very clearly that the active defeat of the enemy has begun in earnest. Five of the six dangerous German war ships have been put out of business, four of them having been sunk recently by the British fleet, near Cape Horn, at the tip of South America.

On land, the allied forces of France, Belgium and Britain have not merely held the Germans back from the coast and from any approach toward Paris but have now begun the drive which however slowly, till the enemy is fighting on his own soil. Armistices seems certain to continue steadily, a very important railway centre which has given the Germans strong advantages in transportation, is now solidly held by the allies. The threat of a siege of Verdun by the Germans has given place to the danger of a siege of Metz by the French. The Germans are slowly losing their hold on Belgian territory.

Austrian Galicia is held by Russia without hope of recovery, and the Austrians are already defeated, in spirit as well as in battle, and Serbia has again shared the honors of victory.

A Turkish army has surrendered to the Indian forces operating at the head of the Persian Gulf, and there is now no evidence of any danger to be expected from Turkey's entry into the war. Egypt has not revolted. Her native chiefs, like the princes and people of India, have asserted their loyalty to Britain rather than to the Mohammedan pontiff, the Sultan of Turkey.

Only in Russian Poland is there any encouragement for the Germans, and that is doubtful. With supreme courage and dashing generalship they cut their way out of the Russian trap at Lodz in their second advance on Warsaw, and now have progressed still farther eastward, in the desperate aggressive which is Germany's only defence of rich Silesia against Russian envelopment through Galicia and Poland. Russian strategy has been to draw on this kind of aggressive to the Russian defences at the Vistula River, where the Russians will have the advantage. This seems to be the present plan of the Russians who are greatly superior in forces, as well as ability to wage a winter campaign. The Germans have now advanced, retreated and again advanced, and always at enormous loss in men and material.

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