

The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

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1915.

Farewell, Old Year, thou can'st no longer stay,
With silent tread we see thee haste away;
But as thou departest our song shall be:
Father, Mother, Brother, Sister, A
Happy New Year to thee.

The year 1915 opened in darkness and gloom. Over the whole of our vast Empire the dark black clouds of war hung so low that all the brightness of the sunlight seemed blotted out. Nor can we say that its close is much brighter; yet even where the clouds lower so darkly over Europe's blood-drenched plains, even amid the thick gloom that wraps our hearts around as we think of our loved and lost; even here may gleam of red and gold be seen, like the bright golden-red rays that a setting sun shoots across the dark storm clouds of the West.

First let us take a backward look. The British Empire, and ourselves as part of it, have been engaged in a fearful contest for our very existence. Month by month we are sending away our bravest and our best. All the pick of our young manhood going away to risk life itself in defence of home and dear ones. At home, mothers and sisters, sweethearts and wives, with breaking hearts, but smiling faces, are buckling on the armour and cheering the souls of their "boys in khaki." In every train and tram, at concert and meeting alike is heard the click, click of the knitting needle, while "mufflers, socks, and

Balaclava caps" are growing under skilled fingers. In city hall and in county chamber can be heard the whirr, whirr of the sewing machine, matron and maid alike straining every nerve to properly equip our soldier boys. School boy and college maiden are giving up their pocket money and denying themselves the prizes they have earned, in order that the money may go to one or other of our many patriotic funds. Under the stern pressure of affliction our vast Empire is being welded into one great whole, till from the monarch upon the throne to the child in the primary school all are animated with one purpose, and move as one harmonious whole.

And in addition to sending off our contingents in high spirits and eager for the fray, we are welcoming back the war-worn soldier. Wounded and sick, weakened by enteric, crippled by shot and shell, they come back to us, having given health and strength and limbs in our defence. And some who left us with brave hearts and high hopes will return to us no more. To the women of the Dominion who have lost loved ones we tender our sincerest sympathy. May the God of all comfort whisper to them that their soldier boys are safe in His keeping. May they hear a voice saying, "He that loses his life shall find it," and may they take comfort in the thought that their boys who have lost life for others may find a fuller life where "day breaketh and earth's shadows flee away." Our nation, with others, has been cast into the melting pot, and we trust to see it emerge with all its dross refined away. The Refiner of silver is watching, and when we, like

the pot of silver, give back the image of the refiner's face, then shall the purifying process be complete. Britain, like the great world-empires of old, was suffering for its national sins. Extreme luxury and dire poverty, with intemperance and impurity, had weakened the physical and moral fibre of the nation, and like these same ancient Empires, she was crippled and ready to fall before younger and more vigorous races. But unlike any empire of ancient or modern times, she had scattered her children throughout the wide expanse of ocean. Bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh, they differed both from Roman Province and Greek Colony. Free, self-governing dominions, they were not servants, but children, and in the hour of England's peril, from Canada's forests and wind-swept plains; from the kopjes and mining camps of South Africa; from the lefty hills and steaming plains of India; from Australia's mighty cities and grassy flats; from the farms and offices of New Zealand's sea-girt isles, have gathered a mighty army to fight in defence of the freedom bequeathed to us from our English forefathers.

One of the bright gleams shot athwart the cloudy sky of last year is that the great national enemy, Strong Drink, has been "pilloried on infamy's high stage." The deadliest foe is ever the foe in the household, and our nation's greatest foe is the trade she has licensed to ruin her people, in order to fill the brewer's pockets. Never in any year have the nations of the world passed so much legislation to limit the liquor trade. Russia has forbidden the sale