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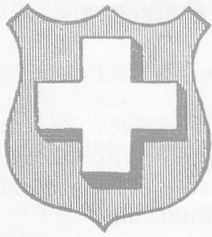
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THE GIFT DEVINE

AS THAT KINDLY, benevolent, but inexorable old gentleman, Father Time, dots the "i's" and crosses the "t's" of each successive year which he bequeaths to us, we find ourself imperceptibly conforming to a new code of behaviour; we view new phases gradually evolving from scenes which hitherto had remained hidden from our inexperienced eyes.

In the evolutionary growth of our span of life, the fairyland of childhood quickly merges into the mysterious, irresponsible and careless phase of adolescence. A combination of events in the years which follow, bring responsibilities of homebuilding, domestic, civic and national affairs which compel an acute realisation of what life really means and gradually, an experienced, sober outlook enforces the dictum that "life is real and earnest." Time is relative, and the eternity of childhood years gradually alter their tempo as time advances with ever quickening footsteps. And when the venerable gentleman with the scythe and hour-glass ushers us into the advanced stages of our journey and invites us to look back across the strange, almost fantastic scenes which are life, what shall we note as being the convincing power which so greatly contributed to all the worthwhile efforts we made during our journey? Would we not have to declare it to be the friendship we received from those good companions who, by encouragement and precept, revived our tiring spirit when the way seemed dark?

The loyalty of friendship is unconsciously desired, indeed craved for, as being one of the highest virtues which form the basis of the good life. A life without friends and companions cannot be contemplated. All social history shows that the most advanced and intellectual communities

have always encouraged the formation of societies for the propagation of friendship in the communal life. To be cast out from the realm of companionship and the bond of friendship is the most devilish torture that can be imposed upon either animal or human.

The bestowal of friendship exhorts the giver, while to the recipient it brings a sense of security, serenity and confidence. What greater gift could we ask for?

Ralph Waldo Emerson, in an essay on friendship, writes: I awoke this morning with devout thanksgiving for my friends, the old and the new. Shall I not call God the Beautiful, who daily showeth himself so to me in his gifts? Who hears me, who understands me, becomes mine—a possession for all time. Nor is nature so poor but she gives me this joy several times, and thus we weave social threads of our own, a new web of relations; and, as many thoughts in succession substantiate themselves, we shall by and by stand in a new world of our own creation, and no longer strangers and pilgrims in a traditionary globe. My friends have come to unsought. The great God gave them to me.

Someone else has written: What can I wish that this day, this new year, may bring to you? Nothing that shall make the world or others poorer, nothing at the expense of other men; but just these few things which in their coming do not stop you, but touch you rather, as they pass and gather strength; a few friends who understand you, and yet remain your friends. Yes indeed, "who understand you and remain your friends."

WALTER RISI,
President.

Christmas, 1961