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A Legend of the Gentian

Unknown writer

Long ago, the poor people of Hungary fell ill with a terrible sickness that would not go away. Thousands were stricken, and many died, for no one could find a cure, or even a way to ease their suffering.

At last the people turned to their good King Ladislav. Messenger after messenger went to beg for his help. But the king had nothing to give them. Again and again he had to send the messengers home with no remedy and no hope.

One day the king sat alone, thinking about his people. "What can I do?" he asked himself, over and over. "I have sent them away with nothing. Only God knows what will help them. Perhaps he will give me a sign. Let my arrow carry the message." And he prayed that heaven would guide an arrow shot into the air.

He loosed the arrow and watched where it fell. And there it stood, pierced through the root of a gentian.

The king sent his servants to gather many roots of the plant and make them into medicine for his suffering people. The cure was so wonderful that from that day to this, the gentian has been called "the Herb of King Ladislav."



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