

A MOUNTAINEER'S PROBLEM.

For The Public.

A young forest ranger was riding through the mountains, looking after cattle. As it chanced, he came across one of the last of the shake-makers, away up among the sugar pines—a fine old pioneer who made a little every summer by riving out some shakes for the farmers in the foothills.

They were old friends, and so they sat down together for the noon hour, built a fire, made coffee, fried bacon, brought out the hard-tack. The shake-maker had a rude lean-to shed against a rock, which he called his cabin. It contained an apology for a stove and another apology for a table, but everything was as neat as a pin and as clean as a wind-swept, snow-polished piece of granite.

"How well you hold out, Ashley," said the ranger. "I've known you ten years, and you are as spry as ever."

"I'm over seventy," the shake-maker answered, "and sure I ain't on the shelf yet. But I find that I have to be careful. Tell you what, young man, we all of us come up against it. I've worked like a nailer all my life and yet I've only saved a few dollars for the funeral expenses. But why is it that everybody can't die young and just leap into the hereafter with a shout, instead of so often waiting till we're rust-eaten, and no more good to anybody—only an everlasting nuisance, in fact?"

The forest ranger hesitated over this; he saw that it was a genuine burst of feeling—that the old shake-maker was lonely, and tired. There might be a lot more behind it. Ashley always meant a great deal more than he ever put into words.

"Well, now, Ashley," he said, at last, "you're all off on that last. The longer that a good man lives the more help he is to others; he couldn't ever be a trouble to anybody. Really, I believe that a fellow's biggest chances for playing the right sort of a game are apt to come at the very last minute."

The old shake-maker leaned across the rough pine table, and looked the forest man in the eyes for almost half a minute. "I believe you mean it," he said, at last, in a slow voice, deeper and quieter than the situation seemed to require. "Now go ahead, and prove it."

"Prove what?" replied the ranger, quite as slowly, feeling tension in the air.

"What you have said—that life is worth living for the old, helpless and poor, or for anyone who is past usefulness."

"That's the real point," the ranger answered—
"none of us ever get past usefulness."

"Prove it, then."

The young ranger was a college man, and widely read. Ashley, the old mountaineer, was also a reading and thinking man. Many a stout argument they had held together, in long evenings by

the winter fire. But the ranger suddenly knew with absolute sureness that this talk went clear down to one of the heart problems of lonely men, and he searched his inmost soul for the right word.

"Ashley, once I was a newspaper reporter in New York. The thing I am going to tell you happened on the Jersey City side. There was an old, feeble man supported by his daughter's family. They put him out on the sidewalk in the sun, and the neighbor children played about him. The old man was over ninety, and crippled, but he had the use of one arm. There came a runaway team, smashing everything, down the street, and it took to the sidewalk, killing the old man, but not before he had thrust two of the youngest of the children out of the way, saving their lives. I wrote an item about it, went over to the funeral, saw the babies and their mothers. He had been a very plain old fellow, but always cheerful, and he would have been missed even if he hadn't saved those children at the very last minute of his life. The biggest chance to do something that perhaps he ever had came when he was very old and absolutely dependent on others."

"One chance in ten millions," Ashley murmured, almost under his breath.

The ranger went on: "That's no argument—only my illustration. But you see, this old man instinctively gave himself for the next generation. That's the point. Now, as long as a man lives, clear to the end, he can be giving thought, love, and the—the glory of a high and pure example of courage to those about him. Therefore he gives himself to the coming generations, even though he cannot lift a hand or speak a word."

"He wears out the lives of others," Ashley answered.

"That need not, must not happen," the ranger said. "He can grow more dear to them every day."

"Did you ever know any such old codger?" Ashley questioned.

"A dozen or more whose last days were their best ones, who ripened and mellowed like winter fruit. Somehow they managed to prove to everyone about them that life was worth while and that there was a hereafter. They didn't grumble or lie down, or row about the rules of the game."

"Example?" said Ashley.

"Well, my grandfather was that sort. Lost his eyesight and most of his hearing, but grew better to look at every day. We children thought him wonderful, and we spent hours with him. He really influenced our lives, and kept us up to the mark, because he expected so much of each one of us."

Silence fell between the two men, and Ashley sat with knitted brows, thinking deeply. At last he spoke.

"Sum it up. Do you believe that one can fight it out?"

"Of course I do," the ranger said. "Youth is one sort of an adventure, and old age is quite another sort, but one is just as good as the other."

Ashley still sat thinking, and slowly his forehead cleared. At last he leaned across the table, shook hands, with a merry twinkle in his eyes, rose to his feet, reached up and took a small package from behind a rafter. He gave it to the ranger.

"You can look at it if you like. Take it along, and toss it into Sand Creek canon. Saddle up and hike, and remember that old Ashley stays in the game forever."

An hour later the calm-eyed ranger, reining his horse on the top of a divide, took out the ounce vial of strychnine which Ashley had given him and tossed it down a thousand-foot precipice. "That's over with for keeps," he thought to himself. "Lucky that I let my plug choose his trails awhile this morning and so he took me up to Ashley's camp. Wife and I will have him to dinner when he comes down from his mountain, and so will the rest of our bunch."

Then he pulled out his note-book, began to estimate the grazing capacities of the ranges, collected grasses for the herbarium, and studied erosive problems for a newspaper article that he had in mind. Meanwhile Ashley, the veteran, was tackling a shake tree with the spirit of a man of thirty.

CHARLES HOWARD SHINN.



ALTHOUGH THE SEASON OF THY LIFE DECLINE.

Edith Anne Stewart in *The (London) Nation*.

Although the season of thy life decline,
 And this thy body show her wintry night,
 These spring-time suns will grant perpetual light,
 Nor ever coldly on the lily shine,
 Nor ever coldly on this flesh of thine:
 Earth's children take no unreturning flight,
 Yearly the primrose hails thy yearning sight,
 Yearly each hedge restores the eglantine.

And though thy brain and body tire and fall,
 And though Death make a harvest of thy dears,
 And hang his sickle near thy door by night,—
 Before thee then new mercies will unveil,
 New hands, full of old kindness, stay thy tears,
 New eyes console thee with the old love-light.



He was a very solemn little boy, and his chin barely reached to the counter of the circulating-room in the public library. He stood there for some moments in silence, and seemed to be taking it all in.

"Well, my little man," said one of the assistants finally, "what book shall it be today?"

"Oh, something about life," returned the little fellow, philosophically.—*Chicago Inter Ocean*.

BOOKS

"A STUDY OF THE PARABLES."

The Carpenter and the Rich Man. By Bouck White. Published by Doubleday, Page & Co. New York. Price, \$1.25 net.

As in "The Call of the Carpenter," Mr. White favors his readers with a new exegesis of the gospels, and one which might be a little surprising to the divinity student who should chance to fall out of the realm of mystical interpretation into the commonplace world of the Carpenter and the rich man. It is an interesting study in dialectics to observe how adroitly the Scriptural stories may be dove-tailed into human theories and made to prove the vital points on which the particular argument hangs.

From Mr. White's viewpoint a clear case is made out against the rich man, not only from the attitude of Jesus, but from that of Moses, who was the great strike leader of the children of Israel—"the Industrial Workers of Israel"—who rose up in rebellion against their task masters in Egypt. The prophets also "fulminated against the waxing power and pomp of the financier classes," and throughout the whole Jewish history the people are shown to be in enmity to the dominion of princes and potentates who oppress and harass the toilers on whose blood and sweat they thrive. From the ranks of the workers rises Jesus—characterized as the Carpenter—fired with love for the masses with whom He established the law of the universal brotherhood.

From parable to parable and from journeyings to Jerusalem and Jericho, our author follows the lesson of his eloquent discourse with a vigor of translation into modern work-a-day language that gives a new aspect to matters heretofore discussed with pulpit solemnity. To be sure, the divinity student may halt a little when he reads, "In an abounding degree Jesus was possessed of horse-sense"—but when he thinks of it he may possibly wonder whether that characterization might not touch some of the hard skeptical hearts that had turned away from his own ideal presentation of a divine being who had simply laid down his life for humanity. Might not the human touch of Jesus be more appealing to certain minds than the theological conception which is accepted without understanding? The grandeur of man no less than the power of God is revealed in Jesus of Nazareth.

In the chapters, "The Mental Universe" and "The Social Faith," Mr. White unfolds the deeper secret of his philosophy and of his splendid democracy built on the invincible foundation of "God, the Reality behind the veil." Frequently he uses terms that offend the trained religious ear, but