

An Insight

THE engineer had just completed the sign. The parson had hung it up. And there now it was in gaudy red letters over the ranch-house door. They lived on a spur of Cheyenne mountain—they and the Sick Man and the Kid—and they looked across the Colorado desert a hundred uninterrupted miles, as they sat and “took the cure.” They were brothers of the order of T. B., and the sign they had just put up blazed out to all the world the deepest feeling of their souls. It read, “No one can truthfully say any good of tuberculosis.”

The midday sun beat down upon the plains. Seventy-five miles away a huge ledge of white sandstone, one hundred or more feet high, made a line like a board fence painted white. An insect whirred up in the stillness with the noise of a rattlesnake. A jay bird jeered from the top of a near-by pine tree. The four men lay dozing in their chairs. One of them had a dream: he had a vision of the burden of the world.

Across a vast, wide plain a mighty army toiled: the strangest army man had ever seen since that great host marched round the eastern desert seeking for the Promised Land. There were women no less than men; little children and old folks bent with years; stalwart youths right ready for all venture and all strife, and they whose faces bore the horrid marks of wasted powers and of challenges ignored. As they went some were far ahead and blazed the course that should be followed; some prepared the road and built the bridges, cleft the rocks and filled the gaps; some scoured all the land and sought for food, and warned of danger or of storm; while others sang, playing on musical instruments and cheered the march along; and others still bore heavy burdens on their backs, which seemed to be the baggage of the host.

And as the sleeper watched, these last claimed his attention. They held a place unique among the rest. For as he looked he saw that they it were who set the pace for that strange march. Progress could not be swifter than their feet. By reason of the loads they bore, the others walked all free and unencumbered, and yet these could not go more fast than they, than they who staggered and oft stumbled in their steps—for heavy were the weights upon their backs.

As they who carry its great load advance—not they who blaze its path or make its road or cheer its way along—the human race advances, quick or slow.

The sleeper saw, and as he saw he sought to know the nature of these loads, the contents of these packs. He went more close, and on each load he found a word was writ. On one was written “Injustice,” on another “Bad Inheritance,” on another “Vicarious Sufferings,” on another “Grief,” on another “Disease.”

The dreamer slept and when he woke he thought upon his dream and what its meaning was, if meaning aught it had. And as he pondered it, he heard; he heard from out the old rebellion and long seeking of his soul for explanation of that fate which had been his—his broken hopes and good ambitions killed, his stricken life, his manhood sheathed in idleness and weakness—a voice:

“You sought to be a leader of the host; you chose to be a maker of the road; you would have been a helper or a singer in the throng. It could not be. Your task was nobler yet. You are a burden bearer of mankind. There is the burden of the race, the burden of its folly and its wrong, its ignorance, its stupid prejudice, its sin, its wilful violation of the law, its innocent transgression of the rule. Some one must carry that—must carry that great sadness and great pain, that weakness, that ineptitude, that care—must carry it that others should go free, that mankind should go forward and go up.”

He heard, and as he heard he reached up and took the new-made sign from out its place and brake it in small pieces. His face showed a great content.

Oh, fellow-bearers of the load we did not choose, the load we fain would have some other carry if we could, remember this—the burden bearers help the world along.

I know not how it is. I know not all the law. I am only sure of this—the fight that each man fights behind his chamber door for courage and for patience and for faith he fights not for himself alone, he fights for all mankind; he fights as one who is a helper of his kind, as a blood brother of that One, Who in little Galilee, obscure, almost alone, was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, and Who upon the cross became the Burden Bearer of the human race.—*Journal of the Out-Door Life.*