

Helpless Cripples? Not Much---They Are Busy Workers

Brave Souls that Overcome Physical Misfortunes and Turn to Industry for Relief from Pain



Mrs. Anna Knapp



HANS
ANDERSON
AT WORK



Thomas Pettit



JOHN
GORDON

YOU—man or woman—who may be "down on your luck," and think the world a hard place to live in, what would you do if your neck were broken, or your back, or you were helpless, dead, from the waist down, or were paralyzed in the lower limbs, suffering from curvature of the spine, and had one hand crippled? Could you face the world with a smile and by patient industry earn your own living?

Do any of you folks who are going about, fully possessed of all your faculties, feel you are in hard luck? If you do, read this story of four brave spirits who have defied the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," and with a calm, high philosophy of life have worked "day by day" in face of dreadful afflictions to something that is very much like happiness. One man lives with a broken neck; another with a broken back; a third is dead from his waist down, and the woman is paralyzed, is a victim of spinal trouble and has a crippled hand. But read of what they do and how they do it, and learn a lesson of patience.

Handicapped by a misshapen body, the remnants of an almost mangled frame, handicapped most of all by a broken neck, Hans Anderson, inmate of the Douglas county almshouse, has found work to do, and has made himself a thrifty cabinet-maker, now possessing a neat bank roll of \$185. Hans went to the poor farm with a broken neck in 1883, now almost thirty years ago. Although his chin rests forever on his chest and he is forced to drag his misshapen body about with the aid of crutches, he no sooner landed at the poor house than he sought about him for something to do. There was not much of a man of his physical condition could do, apparently. But Hans was a believer in the philosophy that if the opportunity does not come to the man, the man must stir up his own opportunity. So he began to stir.

Down into the basement of the great building he snatched his way with his crutches. It took him a long time to explore all the recesses of the great brick building with the aid of his slow crutches, but at last he found a little basement room in the southwest corner of the building. Here he was alone and he set to work whittling chairs and other little articles of furniture out of pieces of dry goods boxes that would otherwise have been burned or thrown away.

Soon he was able to sell a few of these. The money he at once invested in such crude tools as he must have to do better work. His outfit now consists of a hammer, a plane, a saw, a square and a pocketknife. The square is a new addition to his outfit. It is bright and shining.

"I just bought that the other day," said Hans. "I gave a fellow 35 cents for it. He wanted a quarter, but I thought it was worth more. He was a crippled fellow, too."

In this little basement room boards and boxes and half-completed pieces of furniture are piled so high on every side that Hans has only a small space in which to stand and work in the middle of the room. Sawdust is four inches deep on the floor of his workshop.

Hans is a real optimist. From morning until night he toils on in his little workshop, and when visitors creep through the low archway into his little corner he laughs and jokes with them, although he cannot raise his head to see them. With chin resting on his chest and looking straight down at

the floor, he stands before his visitors and talks cheerfully of his condition.

"If I make 25 cents a day I am satisfied," he said the other day when visited. "I've got \$185 in the savings bank now. That is enough to bury me when the time comes."

Hans felt in a mood to visit, so he laid down his saw and hobbled to his chair in the corner of the little workshop. Sitting down painfully, he swung back, tipping the chair back at such an angle as to get his head in position to get his eyes on his callers.

"Yes," he said, "I have \$185 that I have saved from selling these things. That's more than I'd have if I'd staid upstairs chewing the rag with the rest of the fellows or playing cards."

"Where did you learn this carpenter work?" he was asked.

"Here in this shop. I had lots of time to learn it," he laughed. "Oh, my uncle was a carpenter in the old country, in Sweden," he continued, "and when I was a kid, and no one caught me, I used to sneak into the shop and tinker around a little. If I made anything worth looking at, all right; if it was a failure, I sneaked out again and no one knew I was ever in there."

Hans complains of the kind of wood the dry goods boxes are made of at the present time. "We used to get mighty good wood in the boxes," he says, "but the material in boxes is getting worse and worse. The only ones that are any good now are the ones that come from California. Yes, sir, timber is getting mighty scarce, and it will be scarcer yet."

Chairs and dressers, sideboards, and cradles, cupboards and dolls' beds, rockers, high chairs and playhouse furniture does this man manufacture with inconceivable patience and tireless energy. In the hall of the basement he stores his supply of the finished product.

Last week Hans sold \$15 worth of furniture. The Christmas season is drawing near. He admits that business is not always as good as that.

Hans had his neck broken in 1876. He was driving a delivery wagon for the U. P. bakery. On a muddy day he slipped on the wheel in trying to get into the wagon at Tenth and Capitol avenue. The horses ran away. His coat was caught on the singletree and he was dragged for blocks, while the horses kicked him repeatedly.

"They picked me up for dead," said Hans. "The doctor told them my neck was broken and if I lived three days there was a little hope for me. He said if I lived nine days there was considerable hope. Well, I lived the nine days," he concluded as he tilted his chair back a little farther to get his face up where he could see his visitors.

Seldom is seen a more persistent and valiant determination in a human being to survive in the struggle for existence in the face of fearsome odds than is to be seen in the case of John Gordon, known as "The Magazine Man," who lingers in his bed at 3423 South Twenty-fourth street, suffering with a broken back, paralysis from the waist down, and never-healing bed sores. Breaking his back twelve years ago in Minnesota, when he was thrown from a moving train and becoming immediately paralyzed, Gordon has never for a single moment unknit his brow of determination to make a living for himself. Once confined to a poor house for a time when he could not avoid being forcibly taken there, his case and his great deter-

mination attracted the attention of a stranger, who helped him provide a little house, where he lived alone on the flat of his back for four years.

Gordon is a man of masterful resources. He has developed the magazine agency to a large system, and his writing of subscriptions to the large magazines of the country on a commission has kept him alive for years. Sometimes he has been alone in his house for days, from morning till night, working with his reports and his magazine orders, taking orders over the telephone, drawing out a board from a bureau standing near him, using it for a table on which to prepare his bread and milk, shivering with the cold at intervals, and when a moment of leisure affords, setting his fertile brain to work on schemes to help other unfortunates besides himself.

He hit upon the plan of winning prizes from prominent publishers for magazine subscriptions and turning the sum over to some charitable institution, the interest of which should accrue to him and thus afford him a steady income. In the name of the charitable institution which was to be benefited he expected to be able to gain subscribers better than by working in his own behalf alone. For two years he toiled on this matter and finally obtained the \$5,000 prize contended for, although to do this he had to print circulars in such numbers that the last several hundred subscribers had to be literally bought. During the two years, strange to say, he did not come in contact with the officials of a single charitable institution that would assume the responsibility as trustee for the money. He then persuaded some of the best people he knew to act as trustees of an organization to be known as the "Invalids' Pension Association." The idea is to conduct a magazine agency in the interest of charity, the profit to be used to pension invalids having partial means of support who are not fully able to support themselves. If he can earn \$2,000 a year for this charity it will pension sixteen invalids at \$10 per month apiece. He still needs some 400 subscriptions to make this invalids' pension scheme a success.

Pale and haggard, he lies in his bed, raises himself up long enough to answer his telephone, which hangs on a hook at the right of his bed to take subscriptions and renewals, pulls his helpless body from right to left to get a pencil and paper from

a drawer here or a pen and ink from another drawer on the other side of the bed. Never discouraged, yet facing odds that would be expected to distress the strongest, he has toiled and fretted until only within the past few weeks he suffered a convulsion in his sleep, during which time he chewed his tongue so that he could not eat for the next few days. He tells of this convulsion with a smile, and the next moment forgets it all as he snatches at the telephone to take an order.

Thomas Pettit

Slowly wheeling himself in a rickety wheel chair that is about to collapse, Thomas Pettit, 918 North Eighth street, daily toils his way to Fourteenth and Douglas streets, where, no matter how cold or stormy the day, he braves the weather and sells papers for the few coppers this business yields him toward his support. Pettit is paralyzed from the waist down as a result of an accidental drop of an elevator at a packing plant in South Omaha four years ago. Pettit was trucking and was on the elevator with a load. He was not paralyzed at once, but his back was so severely wrenched that it grew worse and worse until paralysis resulted.

"I cannot and will not beg," said Pettit the other day when the cold northwest wind was cutting him squarely in the face as he sat in his chair with his lapful of newspapers at the corner of Fourteenth and Douglas. "I used to try to sell lead pencils and shoestrings, but there were so many fellows in that business that I found I could not depend on that for a living, so I took to selling newspapers."

Thomas is a game loser. He knows there is no chance for him to regain his health, so he smiles and makes the best of it all. He set about a few years ago to calculate his resources and decided a wheel chair and a determination to sell papers and pencils must do the business for him.

Recently the chair, which was second-hand when he got it, has become more and more rickety. Other newsboys have taken up the matter of helping him to get a new chair, and Harry Graceman has started a subscription list in the hope of raising a fund to buy the chair.

"We all want to help a fellow that is in his condition and is game enough to try to make his own living," said Graceman, "and although we don't make big money, we believe we can get enough together to get Tom a new chair."

Another personage who, although having lived eight years in a wheel chair, suffering with a severe curvature of the spine and paralysis of the lower limbs, refuses to be mastered by her misfortune, but toils every day at making quilts, is Mrs. Anna Knapp, 4325 Camden avenue.

"I'd go crazy if I'd sit around and think of my pains without keeping busy at something," she says.

With this spirit, backed by a natural instinct to be busy and a clear grit that forces her to toil on, although the lack of vitality in her wasted frame has left her lips blue, this slender woman of sixty-three winters plies her needle from morning till night. Sitting in her wheel chair, she drops her cloth out on the floor and wheels herself backward away from it until she gets it spread out before her. Comforter after comforter she has made in this quiet way without the aid of a rack and without ever resorting to the quilting party method. Her quilting parties are lonesome affairs, as she is the only one participating. They are not accompanied by a sumptuous luncheon and a social chattering of many happy voices. On the other hand, they consist of her wheeling to her work as soon as daylight will permit and working with weary fingers as long as gathering dusk will permit. The product of her labor she sells whenever perchance some neighbor happens in who needs a comforter.

Not only is this brave woman handicapped by her spinal curvature and her paralysis, but the very faculties which she needs in her sewing are deficient. Fifteen years ago a severe felon developed on the thumb of her right hand. Nine times was the hand lanced and ninety-six days was the woman confined to the hospital. When at last the hand healed, a crippled thumb, with the end practically gone with the exception of a gnarled nail and the little finger rendered stiff and doubled over, was left her. When she sews with exceptional zeal for a period of days it is not infrequent that she wears the skin off her gnarled thumb until it bleeds, and only when the inflammation here becomes so intense that she can no longer endure the pain does she rest from her labors for a few days.

Left a widow twenty-six years ago by the death of her husband, she has made her way up to the present time, although now she is living in a little two-room house with her daughter, Mrs. F. G. Bang, 4325 Camden avenue.