

A PRACTICAL HELP FOR CRIPPLES, AN OPEN SUGGESTION TO ALL EMPLOYERS OF LABOR

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In this article I am going to give a little of my experience in hiring handicapped men. I have hired altogether about nineteen or twenty. I have had about seven infantile paralysis cases, I have had about six with one leg off, one without any legs at all and one demented. I also have one partly blind and I have had one paralyzed from the hips down. I could always find work for them and I have found that they are very good workmen. I still have some of them, while some of them have graduated, you might say, and gotten better positions. Some of these that I have employed were twenty-three or twenty-four years old and had never worked before in their lives, were never employed, never had anything and had always been depending on somebody to keep them. Some of them have taken a night course at Peirce's College. One of them I believe today, who has had infantile paralysis, and has one leg eight inches shorter than the other and the left hand a little short, is making five dollars a day in Ford's as a stenographer. He took up that course. Another one has taken a course in bookkeeping. He has a leg off, and I believe he is today with the United States Express Company at 12th and Market Streets.

I have found in my experience that some of them were wicked, and that while you could handle some with gloves others you would have to handle by force. Taking their work for the year round, I would imagine that they do more than a boy or young man with all his faculties, because they come in in the morning fresh; they were not running around the streets and were not out late at night, and so were better able to go to work in the morning. As it is now I have about five or six—I have one colored man there with a leg off and hip out of place. I have another with a leg off—a boy about fifteen years of age. As I said before, I have one partly blind and paralyzed, and another one partly demented. He is a man who could not count, could not tell time, and, in fact, he cannot do anything unless he is told to do it. Nobody would hire him until I

hired him. I have another one paralyzed from the waist down. I understand that happened through his parent's neglect when he was very young. He was kept by the Children's Aid Society up to the time that he came to me and asked me if I could not do something for him. He is making good. Somebody has to supply him with material as he cannot go after it, neither can he lift any heavy pieces; these have to be lifted for him.

I think there are other manufacturers in this country and in this city who could employ more of these cripples if they would give a little bit more time—have somebody to wait on them. I had one occasion where the representative of a big factory in this town came out to see me to ask about my experience with these cripples, how I found them, and what kind of work I gave them to do, week work or piece work. I told him piece work, because then the men got paid for what they did, and I took them up—one of the State Employment Bureau agents being with him—and let them see them at work. The only objection the manufacturer raised was that he was afraid of their coming down-stairs, as there are three or four flights of stairs in his plant, and if these people had to come down all those stairs there might be some accident. I told them, however, that I always allowed them to go ten or fifteen minutes earlier, and by doing this they could get a car to go home without being in the crowds. With reference to accidents, I want to say that I have not had as much as a scratch to one of them. These men are very careful about every step they take, and you do not find them running around or standing talking to the others. I think our traction companies when the soldiers come home could use many of the one-armed and one-legged men as conductors, and I think that every man in the army that comes home with a leg off or an arm off could find employment, between the railroads of the United States and the street cars. In my experience in traveling in business I find that in making out a railroad receipt it is a form that is copied from one to the other, and a man or boy does not have to have brains to do it. All he has to have is good sight and be able to copy the receipt. If you refer back to our last Civil War, you will find that things were different then from what they are now. Our men did not have the education that our boys have over there. I think that every one of them can make good in some kind of office, and work as well, whether he has a leg or arm off.