

Reclaiming Oregon's Broken Bodies

Comprehensive Work of State Industrial Accident Commission Builds Injured Workmen Anew in Mind and Muscle

By Earl C. Brownlee

WHEN Louis Anderson regained consciousness he discovered himself possessed of limp and useless legs where once were sturdy muscles and solid flesh. Faintly he recalled the day when he fell from a ship's scaffold—a strong, active youth—to the hold's bottom, where fellow workmen found him—a physical wreck.

Followed a year of ceaseless pain, his untrained mind unable to conceive the pursuit of happiness without the bodily energies he had known. From the waist down Louis Anderson is paralyzed. To what goal could a man who knew little but the labor of his hands expect limp legs to carry him? It was then that prayers for surcease from pain beset the boy—he wanted relief and asked that death might be his panacea.

But today Anderson is wonderfully happy and wonderfully able as he pulls himself about in a wheel chair or practices with the crutches that he hopes some day will prove a means of locomotion. He is preparing rapidly, brilliantly, for a new place in the scheme of affairs that meant to him two years ago nothing but hard labor. Before long he will be listed among Oregon's professional men as an architect. He will know the delight of conception and achievement, of planning work for other hands to build as he once built; to bid and see men do his bidding.

It was when despair was deepest that the Oregon state industrial accident commission took in hand the case of Louis Anderson, and it has been under the careful guidance of the commission that the torments of muscle spasms that used to tear his body have been halted and his hands have been directed to obey the will of a mind that is being trained to conceive and to achieve on the conception.

How the commission has served Anderson makes a mighty interesting story when the telling is left to Will T. Kirk, who, as a member of the commission, is in charge of the physical and vocational rehabilitation of workmen injured in Oregon industry.

Briefly, the "system" is this, in the Anderson case:

Anderson was sent to a hospital and there, under care of the best physicians and surgeons available, he was started toward physical rehabilitation. There is little chance for a restoration of the power of his limbs, but a former federal reconstruction aide called into the service of the commission has stopped the pain and made possible the use of a wheel chair and crutches since she took charge on June 1 for a course of physiotherapy.

When the body was sufficiently reclaimed the commission, under the direction of Professor Frank H. Shepherd, head of the department of industrial education at the Oregon Agricultural college and director of vocational rehabilitation for the accident commission, started a mental training.

Consulting with Anderson, Shepherd discovered the young man's desire to become an architect. Competent instructors were available and a training course was mapped out. Shortly Anderson will be released from the hospital after 18 months of confinement, and he will then be nearly ready to assume a position as a draftsman. In the meantime his training will continue and when it is completed he will be a full-fledged architect.

While Anderson has been treated physically and vocationally the commission has paid every cost. It has provided him with a general monthly benefit of \$32.50, and when he started his vocational training \$30 was added each month. Had he a wife his award would be, under ordinary circumstances, \$87.50 and for each child the award would be increased \$5, to a maximum of \$112.50, entirely aside from the medical and surgical costs of the rehabilitation program and in addition to all costs of tuition and training fees in the vocational work.

G. L. Mathews, auto electrician, is the same man who was injured many months ago in a shipyard and who knew no special trade whereby, in his reclaimed state, he could find a livelihood. His training at the hands of the commission is complete without the outlay of one penny of his own funds, and he is actively engaged in his new trade—owns a comfortable little business of his own and is on a higher plane of prosperity than he was before his foot was severed.

Just now the commission has 35

injured workmen in school, a fact made possible by special laws enacted at the January session of the state legislature. The schools injured workmen patronize at the expense of the commission are of their own selection and at present include specialty schools, the state colleges, the state university and the like. Men are being trained for almost every line of work.

Only two great ideas govern the work of the commission, according to Commissioner Kirk. They are, first, to make better men physically, thus reducing the amount of the insurance demanded of the commission and through it from the taxpayers, and, second, to train the man personally, mentally and otherwise, that he may occupy a position in the state's affairs equal to or better than he did before his injury.

The physical rehabilitation is not alone directed in the general hospitals to which injured workmen are taken. The commission has established at Portland and Salem complete physiotherapy hospitals for the after care of injured men. These hospitals are under the supervision of Dr. R. B. Dillehunt, dean of the University of Oregon school of medicine and widely known for his work in the reconstruction hospitals of the war era.

The Portland hospital has been established since April and has treated 176 injured men—men suffering from almost every possible form of injury. A total of 3666 treatments have been made in these 176 cases. An average of 25

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A CORNER IN NEW PORTLAND REHABILITATION HOSPITAL

G. L. MATHEWS IS PROSPERING IN ENTIRELY NEW WORK

men daily are treated at the Portland hospital, which is equipped with every available device for the reclamation of injured muscles and broken bones. Each treatment extends from 30 minutes to two hours. Ninety-five per cent of the cases show a definite improvement under treatment, regardless of the nature of the injury, and thus is minimized the degree of permanent disability—a blessing to the man and the state alike.

Under Dr. Dillehunt is a staff of prominent physicians, surgeons and nurses. The latter group includes young women trained as government reconstruction aides. Among them are Miss Cora Howes, first aide; Miss Anna Orr and Mrs. D. B. Thomas, who, incidentally, has direct charge of the Louis Anderson case.

Practically all the state's hazardous industries come under the industrial accident commission's benefits. The commission is self-supporting to a great extent. It draws its fund from employers and workmen who elect to come under the act, assessing the former on a payroll percentage basis and the latter at the rate of 1 cent daily, regardless of income. Hundreds of farmers, Commissioner Kirk reports, are electing to come under the act, in view of their installation of power machinery.

To spread its rehabilitation work, the commission is occasionally installing in the larger industrial plants of the state small plant hospitals, with competent nurses in charge and with medical attendance available. The commission's plan is to blend the vocational and physical rehabilitation work with the former, paid for largely from a fund of \$100,000 set aside from the legislature. This fund, plus



DR. R. B. DILLEHUNT



MR. WILL T. KIRK

2 1/2 per cent of the commission's monthly income, is devoted to vocational work. There is a present total of \$140,000 in the fund and the state will be asked to place a limit upon the total, because it has been shown that the present appropriation is quite sufficient.

There is a wide and interesting field for psychological study in connection with the work of the commission. There is much that is appealing in the work the commission is called upon to do.

Nothing, though, is more interesting than the effort of injured workmen to fit themselves for new work under the direction and at the expense of the commission, which means, eventually, at the expense of the employers and the workmen themselves.

Schools selected by recipients of the commission's funds and approved by the commission, must pass an exacting test. When such schools hold forth special advantages to pupils supported by the commission that body makes very certain that the advantages are actually available. When an engineering school offers a diploma and degree after three years of work in a course that in most institutions requires from four to six years, there is something wrong and that something is sought by the commission. When a school attempts to charge \$500 for work for a school of equal standing offers for \$150 that \$500 school is required to show wherein its work is worth \$350 more.

Doctors and nurses who have the



RESTORING USEFULNESS TO A FRACTURED LEG

care of injured workmen are subject to similar investigations and they must prove capable before they receive state funds for their work.

Not all men elect to train themselves for new callings. The younger men are anxious to study, to pave the way for future progress, but the older men who suffer injuries are content to accept work for which they are already fitted. Older men injured in Oregon industries usually choose to work as watchmen or at like occupations where their injuries are not handicaps. Many of such men find that there are certain farm occupations they can undertake.

In the latter connection, the commission reports, it is training a number of men as poultry husbandmen. Men who have been unable, while seeking a livelihood, to satisfy a desire to get back to the land—to own a little plot of their own—are taking advantage of the commission's help to equip themselves and already a few have been

taught the details of chicken raising.

That occupation, odd as it may seem, is especially suitable for men blinded at their work. It has been proved not only in theory, but in actual practice, that a blinded man is capable of competing with more fortunate fellows, in the chicken business. They prove as adept at ascertaining the quality of a fowl or its product as men with the full faculty of sight.

The jobs for men with injured or paralyzed legs are limitless. Anderson will be an architect, others may become watchmakers, bookkeepers, teachers and the like. All injured workmen do not seek vocational aid. In fact, few of them do. One man, recently called into consultation with the commission, which desired to outline a course of study for him, declined politely to receive the benefits to which he was entitled. He was a railroad superintendent when he was inca-

pacitated. When his physical rehabilitation was complete his bones knitted and his muscles again strong, he found that he could resume a like work and he found employment at \$5000 a year. The startled commission could not insist upon aiding him.

That mass of wonderful knowledge acquired by American doctors in the war period, when a humane policy of rehabilitation became almost as important as warfare itself, is available to the professional staff of the accident commission and, with the help of some of those same doctors, the commission's program of physical and vocational reconstruction is said to be of wider scope, perhaps, than any other present similar civilian activity.

The members of the commission, aside from Will T. Kirk, whose branch of official activity is here explained, are W. A. Marshall, chairman, and J. W. Ferguson.