Ida M. Tarbell
120 East 19th St.
New York City

Don't think that because John and Mary Baxter are both crippled beyond cure and beyond bread earning - all the sails to the windward they had been carefully setting up for sixty years stripped off - don't think therefore they are getting nothing out of life.

As a matter of fact looking over my acquaintances with no crippled joints or broken legs, with budgets that still balance, I find few to whom the adventure of living is more real than to these two.

Romance has something to do with it for it is but six years ago that they were married both being then in their sixties. They had been betrothed in their youth but had found other mates - lost them. Then John Baxter, now a New Yorker, rediscovered Mary still "up State" found her crippled with arthritis, but her eyes were as bright as ever and her hair, strangely enough, without a thread of grey.

Full of spirit, still absorbed in the problems of getting something out of life Mary consented to marry John. He brought her, crippled as she was, to New York where he had a job at $22.00 a week - a job which looked good for life.

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And then they began planning to make life easy and gay - for Mary.

John went early to work, but always before he went away he had not only gotten his own breakfast but hers and carried it to her bed on a tray. "Just like a lady," Mary tells you proudly. At six-thirty he was off for the day and Mary could take her time about getting up, dressing, doing the dishes, brushing up. You can learn to manage when you have the will whatever pains there may be in your bones. Mary does it with the help of her high stool.

It is on that that she leans when she gets out of bed. It is that that she pushes ahead as she goes from room to room. It is on that she sits as she does her household tasks. Very proud of her skill with that stool she is, pushing her way back and forth with unconscious ease. The stool takes on almost a living quality. It is as if it were consciously taking care of her.

When John came home at night they had great talks over the Day, he telling her what had happened to him - curious things come the way of a "handy man" in a great warehouse and John had an eye for them - things to "tell Mary"; she had stories of the housework, what was left over for John to do - always something and always

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what had been happening in the street.

The apartment in which they lived had been chosen for the double purpose of giving Mary "something to look at" and to make it easy for John to get her out in her wheel chair. When your windows open on a crowded street, where men, women and children swarm, where the push carts gather, where there is love making and visiting and fighting, bringing the cops, fires, bringing the engines, and you can sit in the window and watch and when you have an eye for the scene as Mary has, why there is no end to tell at the end of the Day. Mary and John always visited long over their meal at night.

If it happened that the day had yielded little or nothing that was interesting to talk about John always could fall back on the doings of the Noble Order of Red Men. To those who work in small ways and for such small pay, whose social life is limited, to be a member of a Fraternal Order is a great and exciting thing. John never tired of telling Mary of things that had happened in the years he had been a member of the Noble Order of Red Men - of initiations, of kindly deeds and most wonderful of all of the great annual meetings. He has a picture of one on the wall - the members and their wives. Nothing he is prouder of in all their possessions except the certificate

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attesting to the fact of the high position to which he has risen in the Noble Order - the position of Grand Sachem.

Mary may be crippled but she has not been entirely out of the great occasion. One of the great events of their married life came when some years ago the Noble Order of Red Men was to meet in Atlantic City. Little chance of John and Mary going. "But if you are a Fraternal man," said John, "you have friends." A friend came along one day to say, "I am driving to the Atlantic City Conference. You and Mary are to come along as my guests. You don't have to take the wheel chair. There are plenty of chairs in Atlantic City and boys to drive them and we'll see that Mary sees everything." All that happened - never to be forgotten.

But do not think for a moment Mary's life was confined to those four walls. After her stool her most precious possession is an old-fashioned straight back wheel chair - ancient model - not the most confortable chair in the world I should say, remembering how comfortable a wheel chair may be, but for Mary it has meant life outside, for John took her out regularly.

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One gets the feeling,listening to them talk of the journeys in the wheel chair,that few of us possess anything like the ability to enjoy, to get fun and excitement out of daily life that Mary and John possess.

For what happens when you go out in a wheel chair? Why the world makes way for you. When John wheels Mary down the busy street the children stop to look and comment; they stop, come up to talk. She goes marketing in her chair - not inside - too hard for John to get up the steps. But there are so many things outside. Then the boss, himself, comes out sometimes. Of course they can't buy much. "Not meat," say Mary. "A soup bone, scraps - vegetables are cheap, fruit is cheap. You can live the year round on good stews."

But the marketing trip is after all housekeeping. There are other trips that are adventures. The great one for excitement I think is the day when they went to Macy's.

Mary's hands are crippled, but they are never idle. It may sometimes, "almost make her cry to use a needle," but she loves to embroider and does. A pattern had been sent her by a friend up state and she was out of the peculiar kind of cotton needed. She knew John would never match it. She must go herself - go to Macy's. A long controversy raged between them over the possibility of

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such a thing. How was she to get into Macy's? A wheel chair would not go through a revolving door - it could not be done, so said John. But,insisted Mary, there must be a door somewhere that does not revolve. They would find it. Would they allow a wheel chair in their crowded aisles? John said, "No." Mary said, "People always let a cripple through. People are kind, they make way." "But they will not take the chair on the elevator," said John. "We'll try it anyway," said Mary. And try it they did.

It seems to have been from start to finish a triumphal march. For they found the door and just what Mary said would happen did happen. Everybody in the aisle made way and when they came to the elevator - what happened. The great man who shoos people in and out said to the waiting crowd, "Stand back. Let the lady go up." John wheeled Mary in. The elevator shot up to the sixth floor. An elevator all to themselvest And when Mary reached the Department everybody helped to find the exact thing she wanted. And again the elevator was hers - again the aisle was cleared to let her by. Again another door that did not revolve was found for her. They never tire telling of it. Mary boasting over John and John telling how they stepped aside for Mary. "The Queen of Sheba has nothing on Mary," says John.

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Oh, for the ability to make of daily life, a simple hard-pressed, painful, poverty-striken life, an adventure such as this.

Three years ago this brave life was cruelly broken. John fell down stairs and crushed his knee cap. They took him to the hospital and kept him there until he could hobble about. Then they sent him back with many instructions as to how he must take care of the knee - the treatments he must have at the clinic. But there was no weekly wage coming in now. How was it to be managed?

Well, there was a little savings for one thing and there was a daughter, herself a working man's wife. A grand daughter - herself a working man's wife; both of them with cares. They were generous when John and Mary were concerned and they turned in their pittance. The Noble Order of Red Men helped what it could, but it is an order of poor men for the most part; dues are small; reserves are limited. Soon they could do no more for John. Then the grandddaughter died - the daughter's husband fell ill. John and Mary were penniless and then came the verdict that John would never work again. They must turn to the help of those to whom fortune had been kinder.

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Now it was harder to keep up the spirit of adventure, to go on their daily journeys looking at life. It was harder because of anxiety, the failure of all their hopes, harder because it was so difficult for John to handle the chair. Sometimes his leg would give out; he can stand so short a time. And if he falls to the sidewalk that is not safe - the chair may tip - run away. But just as they have always done when confronted by a new difficulty they found a way around. Mary has found a way to stop her chair if John falls and he has found a way to save himself, partially at least, when he feels his leg giving out. So on they go.

How indomitable these Baxters! Crippled hands, crippled legs, old, penniless. They have worked all their life. They have stood up to everything that came, laughing it down, but you cannot laugh down penniless-ness.

And there my friends is where we come in. We with our two good legs, our hands that are not crippled; we who go to bed at night to sleep not to groan with pain; we who still have something whatever the Great Depression may have done to our bank accounts.

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Arthritis cannot kill the spirit of Mary Baxter - a crippled leg cannot break John Baxter. There is but one thing that will break them - break them utterly. To be separated. And to keep them together - is that not our business - yours and mine?

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