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My Life Story

Kittie Smith

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Yours Truly
Katie Smith.

My Sworn Statement South Whitley, Indiana.

Sept 22-1905

To the Public:-



I realize that in order to make my book valuable, those who buy it must feel certain that my story is true in every particular.

Before my Maker and before man I most earnestly and sincerely declare that every statement in my story is true and that every picture in this book is a true and exact copy of work done by me with my feet.

The background around the group pictures were made by me with water colors (every stroke of the brush, pen or pencil was done by me).

I further wish to state that I have never taken a lesson in drawing and that I do not trace my pictures or use a pantagraph of any kind.

I have the originals of my needle work, drawings and furniture to show the public.

Signed, Kittie Smith.

The above was written by me with my feet.

Subscribed by the above named Kittie Smith in my presence this 22d. day of September 1905, and she at the same time made oath that the above statement is true.

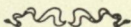
Francis B. Neal

Notary Public

My Commission Expires Sept. 7, 1909



My Life Story



In a very poor and humble home, I was born on the 29th day of October, 1882, in the city of Chicago, Illinois. My father and mother were English people, though my father became a naturalized citizen of the United States in 1882. In the family were two sons, older than I, and a daughter, Emily, who was two years younger.

**Born in Chicago
of Poor Parents**

As far back as I can remember my parents were very poor and during the few years prior to my accident we were often without sufficient food or clothing. It was these conditions that brought us to the notice of the charitable societies of Chicago.

**Family becomes
Object of Charity**

In August of the year 1891, the Chicago Daily News Fresh Air Fund, in sending poor children to the country, sent to Columbia City, Indiana, a car load of little ones for a two weeks' outing. I was included in the number. George and Lizzie Wicks and myself were sent to South Whitley, a little village ten miles from Columbia City, where I spent two of the most pleasant weeks of my life. I was then a strong healthy child, and the beautiful green country with its flowers and birds was very attractive to me.

**First came to
South Whitley
as a Fresh Air Child**

Hearing of my poor and destitute home, the kind people who kept me during my outing, became very much interested in me and opened a correspondence with my father. After a two weeks' stay, I returned home and, in October of the same year, my mother died, leaving me to be the housekeeper at the age of nine years. I did the work as best I knew how, though in the bare place we called "home" there was not much to do or much to do with.

**Mother Dies
When
I am Nine Years Old**



This photograph was taken while we were being entertained as "fresh air children" at South Whitley, in 1891. My picture is the one standing at the right. It is not very good of me for I moved, but it is the only picture I have showing my arms, so I value it very highly. The other two children are George and Lizzie Wicks, of Chicago.

The following November, and on the afternoon of Thanksgiving Day, my father and I were alone in the house, my brothers being at play out-of-doors, and, in going about the house doing my work, I found a bottle filled with what I afterwards knew must have been whiskey. Being but a child, I picked up the bottle and drank freely from it; its effect was almost immediate, and I grew weak and stupified. My father was in an adjoining room and called to me to go and put some wood on the kitchen fire; I told him that I was sick and could not go, but he insisted and I obeyed. I had taken the lids from the stove, when, from the combined effect of the heat and the liquor, my whole being gave way and I sank on to the open stove, unconscious. I must have lain there some time, for the physicians and surgeons said that the bones of my hands and arms were burned until they were curled and twisted, and I was only saved from death by my little brother coming in from play and lifting me from the stove. I was taken to Cook County Hospital, where both my arms were amputated three inches from the shoulders. I was burned on the neck and on the chest but those burns were not serious.

We lived at this time at 548 Park Avenue, and neighbors claimed that my father was also intoxicated, and that he held me on the stove until my arms were burned, and that they heard me screaming. The Humane Society of Illinois took the matter up and had my father placed under arrest. After a trial in a Justice Court, he was held to the grand jury, and, on the final trial in the spring of 1892, he was acquitted for lack of evidence.

In defence of my father, who is now dead, I wish to say that he was always kind and gentle to me, except when under the influence of liquor. I want the public to know that I do not blame him in the least for my

**The Story of
My Accident**

**I Drink of the
Liquor Because
I Know no Better**

**My arms were
Burned Until They
had to be Amputated**

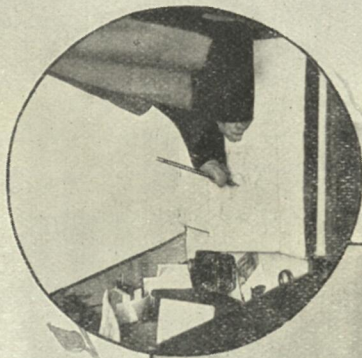
**My Father Arrested
But After-
wards Acquitted**



How I sharpen my lead pencil.



How I use shears in cutting paper and cloth.



The position of my feet when I write.

In these positions, I draw, write, do needle work, and in fact, almost everything that others do with their hands.

My Father
Not to Blame

present condition. If he was weak and did things he should not, it was because reverses came too fast for his noble nature to meet them manfully. I know my father loved me and certainly the least I can do, is to exonerate him from the claims made by the neighbors at the time of my accident. Since sending out the first edition of my book I have received many kind letters. The one I cherish most dearly I received from old friends of my parents and it gives me pleasure to publish it in part:

745 EVANSTON AVE., CHICAGO, ILL.

MY DEAR MISS KITTIE:—

When you learn that we were well acquainted with and were friends of your parents for many years and knew you and your little brothers and sister in your infancy, it will be of personal interest to read this letter.

There may be some facts interesting to you concerning your parents which perhaps you do not know. They were unusually devoted to one another and for about twelve or fifteen years lived in good circumstances and were very happy. Then your brother was born to them and he was the apple of their eyes. * * * Your father was a steady man and kept his work as car driver on Ogden Ave. for years. He may have had a tendency for drink but kept it curbed for the dear mother's sake, who he adored and she in turn did all in her power to help him in this weakness and so for years he was steady, good, kind and loving; a good friend and neighbor. * * * Your mother was taken ill and was sick for a long time. In the worst of her illness your father was discharged from work and then his serious troubles began. About this time they moved away from our neighborhood and we did not hear from them for several years. Your father was then working on the sewer and he told us that things had gone from bad to worse, that his wife was worse and his work hard. * * * After you was hurt and your father imprisoned he sent for my father as a witness. Father said he was as gentle and tender as ever. * * * The only reason we write this is to keep your heart open in love toward your father.

A Kind Letter
From
Kind Friends

Your sincere friends,

MR. AND MRS. SUTTER

It is indeed gratifying and will ever be a great comfort to me to know the above facts concerning the early life of my father and mother.

To return to my story, I was discharged from the hospital in February, 1892 and went from there to spend a few days with friends at South Whitley,

In the meantime, the Children's Home Society of Illinois took control of me, my father waiving all right or claim to me or to any money which I might ever be able



How I comb my hair. In this position I also brush my teeth and wash my face.

to earn. Through the efforts of Dr. Frank M. Gregg, (now deceased), of the Children's Home Society, a "Kittie Smith Fund" was raised, generous people far and near responding to the call. This fund was used to support and educate me.

**"Kittie Smith Fund"
Raised by Child-
ren's Home Society**

On returning to Chicago, I spent the balance of the year 1892 at Englewood Nursery and during the following four years, I was kept at the Home for Destitute Crippled Children on Park Avenue, Chicago. During these five years, kind and generous people at various times took me into their homes for a few weeks' stay, and I made several visits to South Whitley.

**In the Hands of
Charitable
Institutions**

At the Home for Destitute Crippled Children, I learned to write and to sew with my feet, and was given instructions in the common school studies.

**I Learn to Use
My Feet Like Hands**

In 1896, I was sent by the Children's Home Society to Poynette, Wisconsin, where I lived for eight years in a private family, the Society paying my board and expenses out of the "Kittie Smith Fund." In Poynette I went to the Public School, and practically completed the High School Course.

**I Receive a High
School Education**

In August, 1904, the "Fund" having theretofore been exhausted, and having attained the age of twenty-one years, the Society's obligation to me ceased. I was then left on my own resources. As stated before, I have two brothers and one sister, my father having died some time since in the Cook County Hospital. My sister, I have not seen since 1891, as she was taken just before my accident by the Children's Home Society and adopted into the home of well to do people in Chicago, whose identity I never have learned. My brothers are laborers, and the circumstances of neither are such that they can provide for me.

**The Fund Exhausted
and I Become De-
pendent Upon Myself**

In the last few years, I have earned a little money by selling my drawings and embroidery, and writing cards.

**Earn my First
Money by
Selling my Work**



These two views show how I handle a saw. I can saw a board in two almost as rapidly as others can with their hands.

During November 1904 I came to South Whitley to visit my friends and it was during that visit that kind and generous friends having seen my work and desiring to aid me, made it possible for me to publish this little book. In it you will find reproductions of some of my drawings and embroidery, all done with my feet. I never have had a lesson in drawing and sketching, acquiring the little knowledge I have on that subject, by practice. I sharpen my pencils, opening and closing the knife myself, and use the scissors to cut all paper, cloth, or any material with which I am working. I can almost entirely dress myself, wash my face, brush my teeth, take my bath, and comb my hair, when it is not too long. Ah, yes, I am quite a housekeeper too, for I can sweep and dust, mop and scrub, and even blacken stoves. I have made articles of furniture, such as small book cases and writing desks, sawing all of the lumber, driving the nails, putting on the hinges, and even varnishing them. Pictures of two of these articles you will find in the book.

"A Ray of Hope"

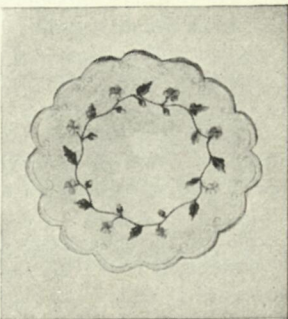
**I Have Learned
"Where There's a
Will There's a Way"**

I know you will wonder how I do these things, but if you will remember that I have been without arms and hands since I was nine years old and much of the time since that I have been compelled to wait upon myself, you will understand that my feet have been in almost constant training. Perseverance and determination have been the two great factors in my accomplishments. I have never found a task too hard to undertake or too tedious to finish. No one appreciates the truthfulness of the old adage, "Where there's a will there's a way," better than I do.

**What Perseverance
and Determination
Can Do**

Being able to do the many things I can do, the sad fact yet remains that I am helpless in some ways far beyond conception, and, more than that, I am homeless. It is to aid myself in securing a modest and humble

**I am Armless,
Helpless
and Homeless**



The above is a reproduction of a few pieces of my fancy work.
This work was all done by me, even to the threading of my needle.

living that I write this little history, commonplace, perhaps, it may seem to you, but fraught with sorrow and pain to me, and I send it forth, trusting its mission will not be in vain.

I am often asked, if I enjoy life? and how I put in my time? If you could follow me for a day you would soon learn that I am very busy and not only busy but happy and contented with my lot. Since I have been selling my book I have been making South Whitley my home and I am kept very busy during the week attending to my mail, answering letters and looking after other matters relative to the sale of my books. My extra time is spent in various ways, such as reading, practicing drawing, etc. Sundays I attend church and Sunday school and very often assist in the singing at Epworth League services. The people are all very kind to me, I have good health and the prospects are that the sale of my little book will provide ample means for my future, so why should I not be happy and contented? In saying I am contented I do not want it understood that I am now willing to "fold my arms," so to speak, and let good enough alone. My ambitions grow with my success and I hope to continue to be successful until I am able not only to provide for myself but to help others who need it more than I.

Toward those who have helped me in the past, my heart is filled with boundless gratitude; and to you who help me by buying this little book, I shall ever be truly grateful. "And the King shall answer and say, 'Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me'."

Sincerely yours,

Kittie Smith.

**I am Happy
and Contented**

**How I Put
in My Time**

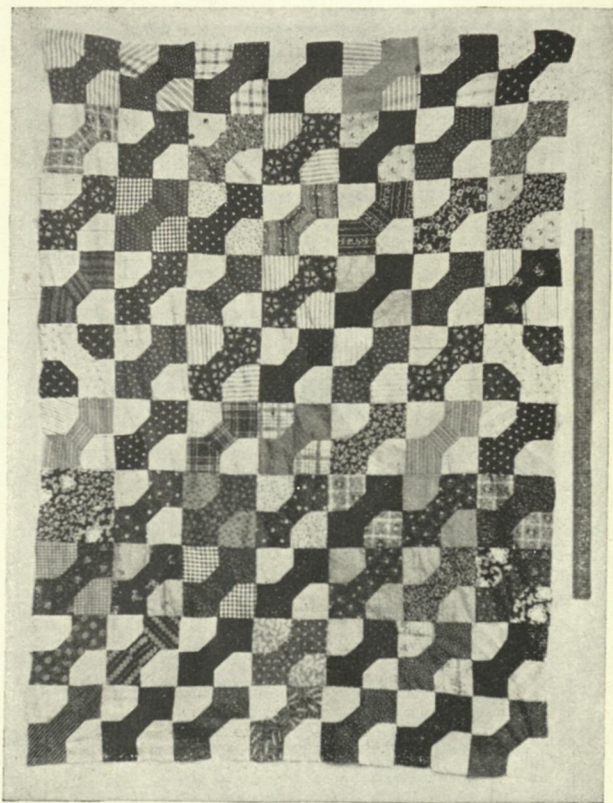
**My Book and my
Everlasting Grati-
tude are all I can
Offer in Return**



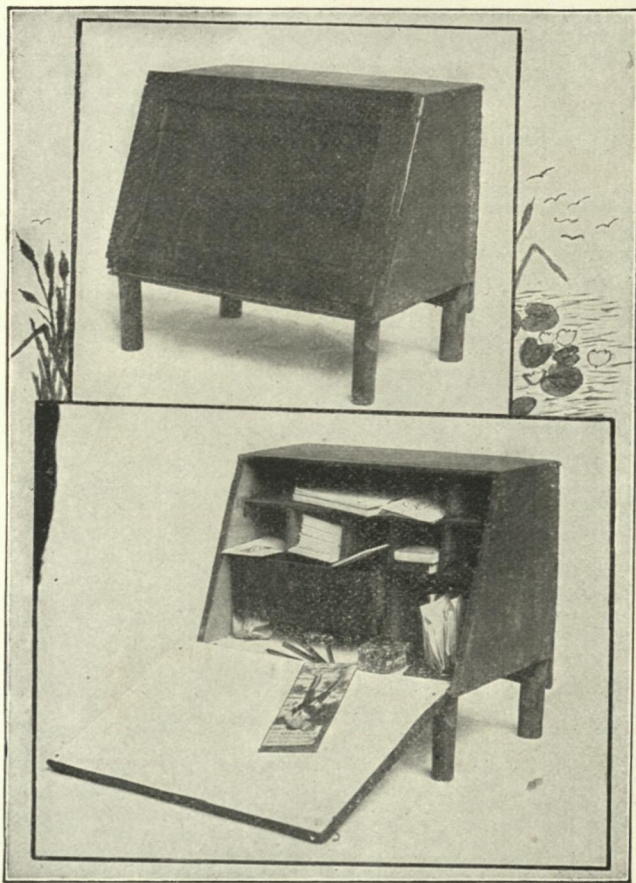
A reproduction of one of my first efforts at drawing. This is a lead pencil sketch and was drawn with my feet.



This is a reproduction of one of my latest efforts at drawing. It is a pen and ink sketch. It required about eighteen hours for me to do this work with my feet.



The above is a picture of a quilt that I made while at Poynette, Wis. I cut most of the pieces myself and sewed all of them together. I think I worked on this quilt about two months. The two-foot rule at the side will give you an idea as to the size. It contains seventy blocks or three hundred and fifty pieces.



The two views above are of a writing desk I made while at Poy-
nette, Wis. I did every bit of the work with my feet. I am using
the desk now in my room.

Words of Commendation

from Responsible People Who Know Me.

South Whitley, Indiana,

To Whom It May Concern:-

We, the undersigned, are personally acquainted with Miss Kittie Smith and know her to be a very worthy young woman. The story of her life as published in this little book is true in every detail. The reproductions are copies of the original work made by her with her feet. Anyone purchasing one of her books not only will obtain a souvenir well worth the price, but will help an unfortunate and deserving person.

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Sup't. of Schools

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Pastor First
Methodist Episcopal Church

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Cash. Whitley County Dk

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TELEPHONE CENTRAL 717

CHICAGO, Feb. 1, 1905.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Miss Kittie Smith was a ward of the Illinois Children's Home and Aid Society from January 11, 1892, until she reached her majority.

The trust fund which was raised for Kittie immediately after her accident was administered by the Northern Trust Company of Chicago, under the advice of this Society. The whole of this fund was expended for her care and education prior to April 1, 1903.

The narrative in her little book is true in every particular and we are glad to know that it is now possible for her to provide for herself, by her own efforts, through this publication.

Hastings H. Hart
Supt. Children's Home and Aid Society.



Subscribed and sworn to before me, a Notary Public in and for the County of Cook, State of Illinois, this first day of February, 1905.

Delphine Knapp
Registered
NOTARY PUBLIC
COOK COUNTY, ILL.

