EDITORIAL

THE MEDICAL WORKSHOP

The Medical Workshop at Marblehead, Massachusetts, the home of "Rough Hewn" toys, has now been in existence for nearly two years. It is a friendly institution specializing for the present in wooden toy parts to be assembled, sandpapered, painted and varnished by handicapped workers. The sole purpose of the shop has been to make attractive and ingenious toy models and to turn out in quantity by machinery, and at a low cost, the necessary parts so that under the direction of occupational teachers, the convalescent may produce without prohibitive labor a line of toys acceptable from every point of view.

At first thought, one might question the use of machinery at any stage of manufacture. Why not let the patient do all the work by hand from the very beginning? But it is evident enough really that this would be discouraging. We are beginning to realize that encouragement is the keynote of occupational therapy. Farming is not good occupational therapy because, though the work is healthful enough and frequently available, it takes too long for things to grow, too long for the labor to show results. A well man can wait, but we may hardly ask a sick man to do so. We are under obligation to encourage effort, but if we require too much we shall fail.

There may be those who object to partly made toys, because of the emphasis on the quality of the product of convalescent activity; those who will repeat the truism that it is not the product but the effort which is important. We of the Medical Workshop have always felt that a good, salable product, even though it has been partly made by someone else, is better for the morale of the patient than a clumsy, poorly wrought article. If a patient is encouraged by making a stupid toy, he will be more
encouraged when he has contributed toward the manufacture of a good one. So it has been the constant effort of the Medical Workshop to think for the patient and complete for him all the parts of the work he would not be likely to accomplish as well himself. We also believe that money return, if it is not allowed to become the primary object of invalid occupation, is of the very greatest therapeutic value.

The Medical Workshop cannot succeed as well as it should unless it has the full support of occupational teachers. We want your ideas and suggestions, and we want you who are teaching to come to Marblehead and work in the shop yourselves, giving us the benefit of your experience, bringing us ideas and suggestions, bringing us successful designs for wooden toys. There is much to learn in such a shop. Successful wood finish and painting is not easy. If we at Marblehead have learned short cuts and desirable methods, if we have learned to simplify design so that it is effective and still within the average patient’s possibilities, we want you to profit by this knowledge, we want you to give yourselves and your patients the benefit of our experience.

It is our ambition to develop a sort of postgraduate school of crafts for occupational aides, a place where they may come for a few days, or a few weeks, and study uninterruptedly under experts the crafts which they may not have had time or opportunity to perfect, the crafts which the regular schools can of necessity teach only superficially. With this in mind, we hope in the near future to establish a department of hand weaving to supplement that of toy making. If our plans materialize, we shall be able a little later to provide living quarters so that the expense of postgraduate study can be reduced to the minimum. There are many practical problems which could be quickly worked out in this way through cooperative endeavor, problems which might otherwise wait years for solution.

It must be understood that the Medical Workshop is conducted under the advice and with the sanction of the Committee on Research and Efficiency of the American Occupational Therapy Association, that it is not run for profit, that earnings over expenses for salaries and materials are being turned back
into the business. Manifestly then, there is no reason why you should not use this institution freely, and give it your full moral and material support. Miss Anne Hampton Barnes of Marblehead, who is responsible for the enterprise, and who is giving her whole time to the work will be glad to correspond with O.T. aides, and to furnish tried and tested toy models and "rough hewn" parts to any hospital or individual worker. The catalogue will be sent on application. It is better, unless you have the completed models, to order these as well as the parts, since some of the toys are quite elaborate and their construction might be puzzling to aide and patient alike without something tangible to go by.

HERBERT J. HALL.