PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

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To the members of the American Occupational Therapy Association, assembled literally over or on the Atlantic Ocean, greeting: as your retiring president, freed at last from all real or imagined political entanglements, I ask your indulgence while I speak my mind, as the old phrase goes, "without fear or favor." In the few years of our existence as a national society we have, I believe, made very few laws, constructed few if any formulae, and arrived at few hard and fast conclusions in regard to occupational therapy. At first thought this is a sad reproach but on further consideration the statement may appear as a tribute to our good sense. There are many who hold that no legislation is better than too much. Huxley or some equally wise person is credited with the remark that science commits suicide when it reduces itself to a creed. Occupational therapy, though old in theory, is new in institutional practice. Though we believe fully in the occupational therapy idea, it would have been foolish for us to dictate rules before we were sure of their wisdom, or to insist on wide spread adoption of our ideas before the hospital world was ready for them. Only after many more such meetings as this and after much more experimental and individual work has been done, shall we as an association be in a position to speak and act with final authority. I want to say a warning word against any possible temptation to overorganize, against the use of too much executive machinery, and against the tendency which we see here and there in the world, the tendency to substitute organization for individual responsibility, the substitution of government for personal effectiveness. The credit for the splendid progress which has been made in occupational therapy

1 Read at sixth annual meeting of the American Occupational Therapy Association, held at Atlantic City, September 25 to 29, 1922.
belongs to you individually quite as much as it does to this or any other association.

I want to call your attention to some of the things which this association has done and which I believe it can accomplish even more effectively in the future if it continues to be an advisory body and not a dictatorial one, if it takes care to be widely representative, if it avoids sectional jealousies and coöperates perfectly with the state and other groups of workers. We have held our annual meetings to which have come, often from distant points and at great personal sacrifice, a large number of active workers in the field. From these meetings we have at least gained a sense of solidarity, a feeling of comradeship and common purpose, which would have made the association worth while even if nothing else had been accomplished. We have listened to excellent papers which have been read and we have all been strengthened in our determination to go on with a work which is so reasonable and so necessary. Whether we realize it or not, we have learned something from year to year, something at each meeting which we could use in our work. The exhibitions of handicrafts, collected and displayed with enterprise and taste, have taught us the possibilities of good technique and originality, have kept us in touch with material progress. The reports of the standing committees and of our various officers have shown good work by those entrusted with special missions. At the risk of embarrassing Mrs. Slagle, I am going to say that her service as Secretary-Treasurer this year has been, if possible, more valuable than ever and that is saying a very great deal as you all know. Through the initiative of Dr. Dunton, we have the new Archives, which is already an important part of our association's equipment.

But now for some qualifications and suggestions. Our meetings have been criticised, justly, I think, because we have had too many papers read and because not enough time has been allotted to individual and local society reports. It is from such reports that we can expect real enlightenment. By special reports commented upon in open meeting, we can hope in time to arrive at common understandings of the greatest possible value. Of the excellent addresses that have been given I think it may be said
that they have been, for the most part, too general in their scope, that from now on we should try to make our formal papers cover special phases of our work. In other words, they should be practical rather than theoretical. What of the exhibitions of crafts work? They have shown variety and originality, yet they have been rather too much alike. One lesson I think we may learn from the exhibit at the American Psychiatric Association held in Quebec last June. At that meeting, thanks to the initiative of two of our members, Dr. Henry Klopp and Miss Clara H. Offutt of Allentown, Pennsylvania, a card attached to each item of craftswork gave the diagnosis and the condition of the patient before and after the institution of occupational therapy. No definite claims of specific results were made but the argument was stronger for that. I think it would be well to have each year, as we did in Baltimore, a section showing problems worked out by the aides themselves demonstrating new ideas and new materials in the various crafts. Our standing committees have been somewhat handicapped by failure of cooperation. I have myself sent out, and I know that one of the committees has mailed important questionnaires with only the most meager and unsatisfactory response. It is no doubt a nuisance to be called upon to answer a long string of questions, some of which may require study and reference work. If the method is to be used at all, the form should be simple and brief. There is little excuse, however, for our almost complete failure in this direction. I would like to suggest to the committee chairmen that they make out and bring to the annual meetings such questions as may be answered readily and on the spot. Not all our members can be present at the meetings but we can at least get the opinions of a large number of our most active workers covering any problem that calls for solution. This year we have for the first time established an office for the Secretary-Treasurer in New York. This office contains files of important information readily available for the answering of questions which come pouring in from all parts of the country. The office is also in effect a registry for aides and so may be made very useful to the state societies and to hospital organizations or
individuals. I would like to suggest that the Secretary-Treasurer make for the society a placement fee in every case where aides receive appointment through the central office. Such a fee would be fair and it would help to meet the expense of the service. For the first time this year a part of the travel expense of the Secretary-Treasurer has been borne by the society. We should not only meet such expense but the Secretary-Treasurer should, in my opinion, receive some compensation for the heavy duties which are imposed upon the office. This year for the first time we have paid clerk hire in the central office. Mrs. Slagle has attended many meetings in distant places, demonstrating over and over again the value of a travelling service. The personal contact, the criticisms, encouragements, and suggestions which can be made by the right kind of travelling secretary can do more than any other one thing to maintain even progress everywhere, while it serves to keep up a friendly and helpful interrelation between the local and the national associations. The publication of the Archives was confessedly an experiment. The thanks of the association are due to Dr. Dunton for his enterprise. But if the magazine is to succeed as it ought, he will need your full cooperation not only in subscriptions but in the contribution of original articles. May I suggest that such articles should be in increasing measure specialized, covering original work in all the different departments. We do not need to define occupational therapy any more, we do not need to recount its beginnings with eulogies of this or that person who is supposed to have discovered the idea. We want reports of actual accomplishments and of new undertakings, and above all we need the authentic and substantiated records of success or failure in individual cases or series of cases. I would like to repeat in this connection what I have said several times before, that the mere enthusiastic claim of cure or relief is not enough or rather it is too much. We must give full credit to all other forms of treatment which have been used or are being used, we must have medical corroboration of our claims. Only so will the records be valuable and only so will they be respected by the medical profession. The publicity department of our association
is frequently asked for literature covering the subject of occupational therapy. It should be the duty of that department to collect and print such information so that it may be available in compact form. The general public and even many hospital organizations do not know what we are doing, do not always know the actual nature and value of occupational therapy, what it costs to maintain and where to go for instructors and materials.

I want now to say a few words about the state societies and other groups in their relation to the American Association. During the past two or three years, many local societies have been formed. These associations show a remarkable vitality. They tend to become self-sufficient and independent, each guarding and developing its own activities. They should be encouraged in their independence. Through the effectiveness of the state societies occupational therapy will grow and prosper as it could not possibly do under one central organization. But the local societies should bring their achievements to the American Association for appraisal if they do not wish to become limited and provincial. They will find it greatly to their advantage to make use of the central office and registration, they should ask for guidance and advice if they wish to serve the cause. The American Association cannot long exist or accomplish its great purpose if the local societies stand off and fail to give their financial and moral support, neither can any local society prosper as it should, lacking the help of the American Occupational Therapy Association.

The state as well as the American Association must recruit large membership if occupational therapy is to prosper. I for one am in favor of accepting for associate membership anyone who is in the least interested in what we are doing. Not one of our societies, so far as I know, has a very impressive membership. This Association in particular, while it has grown steadily, has not yet reached a point where it can through its membership fees, support properly a central office and a travelling secretary, to say nothing of a largely effective publicity. In Massachusetts, thanks principally to the vigorous and self-sacrificing work of Dr. John Adams and Miss Harriet Robeson, many public meet-
ings have been held, urging support of the Massachusetts Society. There has been a good response but I believe the result of the effort has been somewhat disappointing. The reason is perhaps not very far to seek. We have in our enthusiasm somewhat out-run the possibilities of public understanding, acceptance, and support. But there is a course which is easily available. Each occupational therapy worker, wherever he or she may be, has a little circle of personal friends who are interested or can be interested in what is going on. Tell those personal friends about your work, interest them in hospital service, ask them to become members of your society, and it will not be long before the necessary enrollment is forthcoming. Can we ask people to support through membership both the local societies and this Association? I believe we can, logically and fairly. Both organizations are necessary for the progress of occupational therapy. The time may come, a little later, when membership in a local society will include membership in the American Occupational Therapy Association, when the state organizations, recognizing their opportunity and obligation will pay into our national treasury some portion of their own membership fees.

You will be asked presently to consider again some questions of change in our constitution. We tried last year to make that document allow a wider representation in the business conduct and policy direction of the association. Theoretically, the changes which were adopted were good and as Dr. Dunton has said in a recent editorial, a year's test is not enough to prove or disprove the wisdom of the plan. Certain practical difficulties have, however, been encountered. Some of our most important constituents were left out and even then the so-called House of Delegates seemed to be too large for effective work. Personally I believe in the House of Delegates idea if the functions of that body are understood to concern only matters which can be dealt with at the annual meeting, but further thought has made me feel that our society is not yet unwieldy enough to need acutely any such arrangement. In societies like the American Medical Association a house of delegates is necessary because the common meetings are too large for careful consideration of
administrative problems and for intelligent and satisfactory voting. I believe it will be best to do away for the present with our House of Delegates and to entrust the business of the Association to a somewhat augmented Board of Managers. In this way we can avoid some of the difficulties of full local representation. I do not hold with Dr. Dunton that it would be foolish to include in a House of Delegates members from the government service and other working groups as well as from the state societies. If we continue our House of Delegates, I think it should include representatives from every locality, from every well-defined association of workers. A Board of Managers with nine members besides the President, such as is now proposed, can include representatives from most of, if not all the different organizations. If any local society or faction is necessarily left out in making up the Board, the omission can be taken care of in subsequent years. As a matter of fact, experience has shown that it is difficult to assemble even a board of three members, such as was provided for at our last meeting. Everything depends really on the President, the Secretary-Treasurer, and the Board of Managers. Theirs is the responsibility, and I am sure we can place full reliance upon these officers. So after all, with a small Board which must help the officers and committee heads to decide upon such important questions as come up during the year, we need feel no apprehension for our welfare and for the good conduct of our business.

I need not urge you as a society to new and progressive action. This association represents a principle to which we can give ourselves heart and soul. The association will grow in influence and in size, it will as the years go by stand higher and higher among those agencies which serve the needs of humanity. Only remember that success and progress depend not only upon the activities of officers and committees, but upon you individually, upon your hard and effective work wherever you may be placed. Coöperation? Yes, we must have that and we shall have it if you will look upon the association as your own and treat its interests as you would your own.
I am sorry to give up an office the duties of which have been wholly congenial, a position which has brought me so many good friends and such loyal support. So long as I live, I shall be deeply and, I hope, actively interested in the affairs of this association and in the progress and welfare of its members.