EDITORIAL

THE NEED FOR RESEARCH

In a paper by Mr. Norman L. Burnette, published in this number of Archives, the following question is asked: "Are we fully equipped in knowledge when we make claims for the therapeutic results of our practice?" Later in the same paper he suggests that we "concentrate our efforts in some quiet, earnest research work."

Mr. Burnette's major interest is psychology from which he was temporarily diverted to occupational therapy during the war. He, therefore, views the subject from a different angle than others and desires that occupational therapy be placed upon a sound scientific basis. That it may become a science rather than an art is the wish of all who consider occupational therapy seriously.

It must be remembered, however, that neither medicine nor psychology have yet become so exact sciences as mathematics or astronomy. Occupational therapy is related to both medicine and psychology and advances in each of these subjects will be productive of an increase in our knowledge of occupational therapy. It has always seemed to the writer that what is most necessary is some method of measuring the emotion of the patient which may be adapted to the use of the occupational therapist. Without this knowledge we cannot satisfactorily measure the effect of occupation upon the patient. At the present time our methods of recording interest, which is a pleasurable emotion, are most inaccurate and depend too much upon the personal bias of the observer. Further, interest is a rather complicated emotion and depends to a considerable degree upon former associations which the individual has stored up. It requires rather long analysis to bring these to consciousness so that they may be recognized by the individual and recorded by the observer.

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So far any psychological tests to measure the emotions have been rather long and too complicated to permit of use by occupational aides. Some time ago the writer suggested grouping occupations according to their interest. More recently Mrs. Atwater suggested a classification of occupations based upon the intelligence required to carry them on.

It is believed that both of these classifications have value but at present they are only suggestive and not even the authors have attempted to make a complete classification of crafts from these two standpoints. It is necessary that others agree upon such classifications and that they be given a trial period before they can be considered as definitely established.

It would seem that groups of occupational therapists might be interested in completing these classifications in order that they might have a practical tryout.

In connection with Mrs. Atwater's suggestion it is of interest to recall a paper by Miss Susan C. Tracy entitled: Twenty-five Suggested Mental Tests derived from Invalid Occupation.

It can easily be understood how occupations of various kinds may be supplementary to mental tests, as for many years it has been recognized that certain tasks were too difficult for some individuals.

The classification used in the Illinois State Hospital service, and formulated by Dr. Singer, has, so far as we know, never been published, but is believed to take cognizance of both interest and intelligence.

Undoubtedly were one or all of these classifications elaborated more exactly, a distinct advance would be made in the science of occupational therapy.

In this connection the words of Dr. Pollock in opening the round table on records are significant and we should all remember that records “constitute the basis of history and science.”

1 Problems in occupational therapy. Maryland Psychiatric Quarterly, October, 1919, ix, 37.
2 Archives of Occupational Therapy, i, 389.
3 Maryland Psychiatric Quarterly, July, 1918, viii, 15.