OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN CANADA

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In Canada, as in the United States, occupational therapy was a distinct outcome of the war. Of the industrial work carried on chiefly in mental hospitals previous to the war, very little could be classed as real occupational therapy.

The Canadian military course was commenced in February 1918 at the University of Toronto. It started modestly in a corner of the School of Mines under the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering. Miss Winifred Brainerd of the Presbyterian Hospital, Chicago, was called in to advise, and stayed until May putting the course on its feet. Her experiences are described in a paper read before the national association in 1918.

The initial term of six weeks was extended later to three months. The crafts taught were basketry, metal work, toy making, wood carving, beadwork, leather tooling, book-binding, stenciling and block printing, and weaving, with some instruction in design and lectures on theory and application of occupational therapy, and later on, practice in hospitals. It seems a large number of subjects to touch on, but the course was quite concentrated, and covered a surprising amount of ground in the time.

The last session was held in the summer of 1919. Graduate aides were placed in military hospitals all over the Dominion, and later, in many cases, transferred to civilian work. Now the military hospitals have discharged most of their patients and the remaining military aides deal chiefly with chronics and tuberculous cases.

Meantime occupational therapy has found a growing field in sanatoria, general hospitals, institutions for feeble-minded and

1 Read before the Maryland Occupational Therapy Society, December, 1922.
insane, and also with convalescent and chronic patients at home.

One variation in Canada is the convalescent workshops for disabled soldiers which have been established by the government or the Red Cross, the first in Toronto, early in 1920, and one in Vancouver. A similar workshop which has been in operation in Winnipeg was started by the provincial society and supported by them until recently.

The Manitoba Society of Occupational Therapy was organized in June, 1920. Besides its main purpose of getting together, and the organization of the workshop, it has done some investigation of the possibilities of cooperation with the social service commission of the city of Winnipeg.

The Ontario society was organized somewhat later, and has gone in for lectures and post graduate work. Having already a workshop for soldiers, they have directed their activities toward a community workshop for civilians.

A recent Canadian article devoted some space to lamenting the feeble condition of mental occupational therapy in Canada, and thought something ought to be done about it. The conditions described may apply in the East though I know there is a good occupational therapy department at the Ontario mental hospital at Whitby, near Toronto. They look after the repair work of the hospital, have good crafts besides, a training class for nurses, and most important, splendid spirit and coöperation.

There have been reports of good work being done in the mental hospital at North Battleford, Saskatchewan. The occupation is supervised there by the matron in addition to her own work.

An up-to-date mental hospital has just been built at Weyburn, Saskatchewan, and their plans include a good occupation department.

Manitoba was up to recent years very badly situated with regard to the treatment of mental patients. There were two large "asylums" operated under antiquated conditions, and crowded with idle patients. Recently the provincial government invited a mental specialist to look over the situation, adopted his suggestions, and formed plans to carry them out. A psychopathic hospital was built in Winnipeg as a center of the system,
and opened October 22, 1919. A provincial psychiatrist and directors for the existing institutions were appointed, and the whole department reorganized. New hospital buildings were planned and begun. One unit of a school for feeble-minded was completed.

Occupational therapy had an important place in the new program. Work started in the psychiatric hospital in January, 1920. Two aides had been already at work in the military ward of Selkirk Mental Hospital and in 1920 that department was taken over by the government. One of these aides was later transferred (April, 1922) to begin work in the new school for feeble-minded at Portage la Prairie. In May, 1921, work commenced also in Brandon Mental Hospital.

The buildings now under construction at both hospitals will give much better occupation accommodation than is now possible and the staff in both will then be increased.