PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS
THOMAS BESSELL KIDNER

New York

On occasions like this, when the person who has been honored by his fellow members by election to the office of president is expected to give an account of his stewardship, three things may properly be expected from him. First, a brief historical glance; second, a general review of the year's work; and, third, some attempt to look into the future.

Today, at our seventh annual meeting, speaking as one of the little group who met in March, 1917, and founded this Association, it is a pleasure to me to note that all but one of the original group of members are still with us, and active in the cause. One of the group has passed away and, at an appropriate time during our exercises, reference will be made to him and to our late beloved president, Dr. Hall, and to others of our members who have passed into the Great Beyond since last we assembled.

As the years have gone by, minor changes have been made in details of organization, but the original statement of the objects for which we are associated still stands; and is as pertinent today as when it was first written.

The objects of the Association shall be to study and advance curative occupations for invalids and convalescents; to gather news of progress in occupational therapy and to use such knowledge for the common good; to encourage original research, to effect cooperation among occupational therapy societies, and with other agencies of rehabilitation.

That is a comprehensive statement and has enabled the association to meet the changing needs and demands of the past, and will, I am confident, serve equally well for the future.

We began this year with a change in the method of administering the affairs of the Association; or, rather, by reverting to
our former method. It will be remembered that during the
previous year the plan of having a small board of managers
elected by a house of delegates had been tried, but at the annual
meeting in Atlantic City, the members decided to go back to the
plan of having a board of managers elected by the members at
large. It was decided that the board should consist of nine
members and I believe the change has worked well. As in all
associations having a membership distributed all over the con-
tinent, it is practically impossible for all the members to attend
meetings. Realizing this, the board appointed a small executive
committee, each of whose members resided within a radius of one
hundred and fifty miles of New York. In addition, no action on
any important matter was taken without obtaining the opinion
of each member of the board by correspondence; due weight being
given in the meetings to the opinions of members not present,
as expressed in their letters.

Another change made in the constitution, although perhaps a
minor one, has proved its value. I refer to the regulation,
adopted last year, that members more than one year in arrears
in their dues cease automatically to be members, although they
may be reinstated by the board. That regulation has enabled
the secretary-treasurer to compile a real roll of the membership,
by omitting from it the names of those members in arrears, who,
after several letters of reminder, have not signified by the pay-
ment of dues their desire to remain members.

Since my election to this office, I have had additional oppor-
tunities of observing the enormous amount of work which our
secretary-treasurer, Mrs. Eleanor Clarke Slagle, accomplishes
for us, without fee or reward; except, let us hope, in the satisfac-
tion which she must undoubtedly feel at the growth of our
organization, for the success of which she has been very largely
responsible. In addition to the routine activities in connection
with membership problems, which are common to all such asso-
ciations, various other work is carried on by the national office.

Some of these activities are worth special mention. In the
first place, I can speak now from actual experience of the tremen-
dous amount of work involved in arranging for the annual
meeting. While much of this work is done locally, the bulk of the responsibility for the arrangements falls, of course, upon the national office.

Many enquiries are received and answered from hospital authorities and others requiring information on our work, either for the purpose of establishing it in some place, or of developing and broadening it where it has already been established.

A feature of the work which entails a great deal of correspondence is the placement service, whereby the Association helps to bring into contact members who require positions and hospitals and other authorities requiring workers. The secretary-treasurer told us of the large number of persons who have been helped by this service, but I want to add a little to what she said in her report. Lists of places vacant are not sent broadcast to applicants, but careful endeavor is made in each case to nominate for the vacant post some person who, from the record of her qualifications and experience which she has filed in the Association's office, appears likely to suit and be suited in the place.

An activity which has suffered, as much of our work has, from lack of funds is the dissemination of information by means of occasional bulletins and circulars. In this connection, we are greatly indebted to the editor of *The Modern Hospital*, and to Mrs. Davis and her co-editors, for the pages on occupational therapy which appear every month in that journal.

Outside of the work in the office, a great deal is done by the standing committees. The Association is especially indebted to the committee on publicity and publications, under the untiring chairmanship of Dr. Wm. R. Dunton, who has personally worked so hard to make the *Archives* the success it has become today; a success which, I believe, we can fairly say has exceeded our expectations in the scope and usefulness of the material which appears in its pages.

Reference will later be made in a report of the board of managers to a subject which has engaged the attention for two or three years past of the standing committee on teaching methods, under the conscientious leadership of Miss Ruth Wigglesworth; namely, the establishment of minimum standards of training. During
the past year, the various reports upon this subject have been coordinated and, after a great deal of further study by the board of managers, a statement of minimum standards of training is ready for adoption by the association.

The standing committee on installations and advice, under the energetic guidance of Miss Harriet A. Robeson, has done yeoman service during the year, and the committee's report on equipment and materials will, I believe, prove to be one of the most useful things the Association has ever issued.

Other standing committees have been at work and have made some helpful reports. We listened this morning to the report of the finance committee which, under the chairmanship of Dr. Wm. L. Russell, has been giving much study to ways and means by which our income might be increased. If our Association is to attain its full usefulness, more funds must be available. The finance committee reported definitely upon this, but as I intend directly to mention some of the things which are crying out for action by our Association, but which cannot be undertaken unless our income is increased considerably, I deem it well to emphasize here the importance of the committee's remarks on this point.

Later this afternoon we are to have a report from a special committee on forms and records, appointed at the suggestion of some of our members. This committee, under the direction of Dr. H. M. Pollock, one of the best-known statisticians in the hospital field in the country, has been endeavoring to devise some simple forms on which necessary records of our work can be made. It is worthy of note that several hospital superintendents to whom the committee sent sample forms for criticism were so pleased with some of the forms that they straightway adopted them for use in their institutions. I believe that this report will be another distinct contribution to our work.

It is a pleasure to note that the labors of the special committee on insignia have resulted in the production of an artistic and very suitable emblem. Our thanks are again due to Miss Ruth Wigglesworth and her associates on the committee.

While I think every one will agree with me that the Association has accomplished a great deal during its six and one-half years
of existence, much more could have been accomplished had funds been available. At present, the income from dues and occasional small donations from well-wishers is barely sufficient to meet the expenses of office rent, stationery, printing, postage and the annual meeting. The last mentioned item is a considerable one and I feel that a word of thankful appreciation is due from me to the Wisconsin Occupational Therapy Association for their very generous offer to care for the local expenses of this meeting.

Last year, our expenses were heavy in connection with the exhibit, and it was decided to charge a small entrance fee to each hospital sending an exhibit, but there are many other expenses, such as the printing of the program, etc., which our friends of the Wisconsin Association have most generously agreed to defray. There are, in addition, the expenses of reporting the meetings and transcribing the reports which, of course, will naturally fall upon the national office.

What are some of the things that the Association should do if funds were available? In the first place, I am sure that we need a full-time paid assistant secretary, who would carry out and further develop the many tasks and services which are at present performed voluntarily in the spare time of the secretary-treasurer, whose own professional duties are very heavy and are increasing, and by other officers of the Association.

Another thing which, I believe, is urgently needed and can better be undertaken by our Association than by any other body, is the establishment and maintenance of a national roster of qualified occupational therapists; for the protection of hospital authorities and to aid in the future development of occupational therapy on sound and progressive lines.

When the minimum standards of training which will be presented to you in a later session have been adopted, as I am confident they will be, it will become necessary, in my opinion, to organize a system of advisory supervision of training schools, so that only schools which reach the minimum standards can be recognized by our Association. I believe this is of great importance and that all the training schools will welcome such a system of advisory supervision.
Our present advisory service to hospital and other authorities requiring advice on the establishment or further development of occupational therapy, in and outside of institutions, is capable of a very great expansion of its usefulness. In this connection numerous personal visits have been made by officers of the Association at their personal expense, but a wide field of usefulness would be opened if funds were available for paying such expenses. Many officers and members of the Association would gladly undertake journeys for consultation and advice, if their out-of-pocket expenses could be met. It is believed that this is one of the most efficient and least costly methods of rendering service that could be devised.

Another phase of our advisory service deals with individuals desiring personal advice on taking up the work, or of increasing their professional equipment by further studies in it. Requests of this kind are being constantly received and dealt with, to the best of the ability of the secretary-treasurer and other officers in the time they are able to take from their busy professional duties. If a full-time assistant secretary could be employed, this service could be very greatly extended and its value increased manifold.

The placement work is also capable of great development and should, in time, become largely self-supporting, if a small fee were charged to applicants who obtain appointments through the office of the Association.

We have scarcely begun on the wide field of research and experimentation in methods, materials, various occupations and equipment which would be open to us if more funds were available. Side by side with such research and experimentation would go, of course, the frequent publication of results; either by special bulletins of information issued from time to time, or through the Archives, or the pages of The Modern Hospital. In my opinion, there is no more important field open to the Association than the development of research, by which progress may be made, and service to sick and disabled persons by means of occupational therapy be improved and maintained at as high a pitch of efficiency and usefulness as possible.
I have mentioned some of the things that are really crying out for attention on the part of our Association, but others will occur to you, I am sure, and will, doubtless, develop as the years go on. Of one thing I am firmly convinced, however, and that is, that there is more than ever a need for sane, national leadership in this work, and I know of no organization that can supply it but our own American Occupational Therapy Association.

Our work is increasing in importance and is spreading rapidly to all kinds of institutions for the sick and disabled, and in work for the unfortunate members of society who, while not in hospitals or other institutions, are yet handicapped by some physical or other disability.

I have said that sane, national leadership is required more than ever today. May I mention some directions in which I feel such leadership is necessary? There is a strong tendency, for example, in many places to make our work purely commercial. That is to say, instead of the object which the patient produces during his treatment by occupation being regarded as incidental, the production of an object for sale becomes the main aim. What does this mean? It means that inevitably the success of the occupational therapist will be measured by the sales made. In turn, this will react on the work, from the fact that it is almost inevitable that a worker who is to be judged by her success in producing articles for sale, rather than in restoring a patients interest and powers, will devote attention to patients able to produce and will neglect the patient for whom occupational therapy may be of enormous benefit, although the outward and visible signs, i.e., the articles made may, be of poor quality and unfit for sale.

It can not be pointed out too strongly, however, that superintendents and hospital authorities who look to the immediate economic end of the craft work are entirely unmindful of the fact, proved beyond cavil in many places, that the period of hospitalization of many patients may be considerably shortened by the intelligent use of occupational therapy. In that way, the end result is incalculably greater, even from a purely economic standpoint, than when attention is concentrated on the production of salable articles.
We must never forget that it is occupational therapy and not commercial production that we are engaged in. In saying this, I am entirely aware of the therapeutic value to a patient of being able to produce a salable article, for I have known many patients, disheartened and unnerved for the future by a long illness, who have renewed their faith in themselves because of their having produced an article which some person was willing to buy for its intrinsic value, quite apart from any sentiment which might arise from its having been made by a person handicapped by illness or injury.

On the other hand, great possibilities have been opened to occupational therapy by the working of the Industrial Rehabilitation Act. Indeed, I think it is fair to say that many hospitals have had their attention drawn to the value of occupational therapy by the federal and state industrial rehabilitation authorities, who are doing their best to place persons disabled by accident or disease in industry, back again at work in some occupation at which they can be efficient, in spite of the handicap of their disability. But here again we must be on our guard. Undoubtedly in our therapeutic occupation much can be done, and has indeed already been done for years in some places, in pre-industrial and pre-vocational work, but we can not, in the very nature of things, go beyond that and turn our hospital curative workshops into vocational schools. In the first place, if there were no difficulties in the way as to qualified instructors and suitable (and very expensive) equipment, there is the prime objection that, at best, vocational training can only appeal to a limited number of patients. But no one who really understands the very great difficulties of providing vocational training under normal conditions for well people can be under any illusions as the impracticability of doing it to any helpful extent in our hospitals. Were it not really pathetic, it would almost be laughable to hear the claims sometimes made to visitors to hospitals that some simple work carried out by a patient is training him for a gainful occupation after his discharge. Such claims are all too often a measure of the want of real knowledge of industry on the part of those who make them. We have plenty to claim for curative
work without making unwarranted statements as to it being vocational training.

Another field which has as yet been scarcely scratched is in work for handicapped children. In our large cities and towns there are thousands of children who would benefit greatly if occupational therapy could be taken to them in their homes to which they are confined as cripples. In time this would develop in many cases into actual training for some productive work of a simple kind, although the work may have been given at first wholly for its therapeutic value. These remarks apply equally to home-bound adults, and I note with pleasure that we are to have papers at subsequent sessions from leaders in both of these phases of our work.

Even in the special fields of hospital work in which the value of occupational therapy has for years been recognized, namely, in hospitals for mental and nervous cases, an enormous amount of work remains to be done. It seems difficult of belief today, but there are many large hospitals for the insane in this country which are yet without this important form of treatment. Thanks to the splendid coöperative work of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, the Junior League and other national organizations, attention is being drawn all over the country to the need and value of our work in institutions, but I believe we are only at the beginning of things in mental hospitals in general, although in some states the work is excellently organized in the state institutions.

The work is growing in hospitals and sanatoria for the tuberculosis, but there again we are still, so to speak, in the day of small things.

As for work in orthopedic and general hospitals, I do not think it can be gainsaid that it is the exception rather than the rule at present to find a well-organized department of occupational therapy in hospitals of these types. That there is a great field for occupational therapy in general medical and surgical cases, there is no doubt whatever. In the field of industrial accidents, we are to hear, in a later session, of the remarkable work being done by a group of industrial surgeons in Los Angeles, where several thousand patients yearly are treated by occupational therapy, with beneficial results in shortening the period of their
illness and in restoring them to usefulness much sooner than would otherwise have been possible.

An interesting development during the past two or three years has been the increasing use of occupational therapy made by physicians in private practice, especially in cases of nervous breakdown. This is another field which is capable of very large development.

I cannot close this address without bearing testimony to the fine spirit of cooperation and helpfulness displayed throughout by the members of the board of managers, chairmen of committees, our much-loved secretary-treasurer and the members at large.

This is a great country in more ways than one and our members are widely scattered, but in no case, has a member failed us when called upon for service, or advice, or help in any way. But because our territory is so large, and our members so widely scattered, it seems to me to be necessary to point out the value to a worker of associating with others who are engaged in the same line of work. I believe that we should have ten times the number of local associations that we have at present and that wherever a few occupational therapists are in reach of each other, some method of getting together for mutual helpfulness should be devised. Looking ahead a few years, I hope to see, as in some other national associations, a system of joint membership whereby each local association would be regarded as a branch of the parent association, and membership in a local association would automatically carry membership in the national organization, and include the subscription to our official organ, the ARCHIVES OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY.

But I must come to a close. In so doing, may I say that I feel we have reason to be profoundly thankful for the growth and development of our work during the past year, and that we should go forth from this meeting with fresh courage and inspiration in our cause. We should realize that while our work is not a universal panacea for all the ills that flesh is heir to, it has a very distinct place as an adjunct and a help to the physician and nurse in the alleviation of suffering and the rehabilitation of sick and disabled persons. We must realize also the need for continual study, if we are to be able to give effect in our work to the faith that is in us.