

Royal British Nurses' Association.

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OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY.

We recently attended a Conference convened by the National Council for Mental Hygiene to discuss Occupational Therapy. The ground covered by the speakers was wide and gave evidence of very great development, within recent years, of this branch of curative work in the various institutions with which the speakers were connected. But one could not quite smother a feeling that, valuable as the work they described might be up to a point, it was occupation without the therapy. The theories of the speakers at the session we attended appeared to us to be founded, probably unconsciously, on the spirit of a certain old adage—"Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." The artistic aspects of Occupational Therapy were, in our opinion, too much neglected. Clever contrivances as the results of the Occupational Therapy, pursued at one institution, were produced as evidence of what had been accomplished, but cleverness is not art, and these products of industry and occupation did not appear to show evidence that into the making of them these harmonising and healing processes had entered which live in the pursuit of artistic creations however simple.

Recently Miss Macaulay, O.B.E., Matron of the Kent County Mental Hospital, Maidstone, remarked that she regarded Occupational Therapy as the most important curative treatment of the present time. When we went over her wonderful section for this we could not help thinking that "Artistic Therapy" would give a better description of it as the treatment is pursued at the Kent County Hospital, Maidstone. There is no doubt that more and more is this branch of treatment being recognised in physical as well as in mental illnesses and, moreover, we can also see that it is entering into preventive treatment as well, for in centres, both in London and the provinces, the unemployed are being taught branches of "arts and crafts"; this must tend to obviate the moral and physical degeneracy so apt to arise on unemployment.

In such a branch might lie still another avenue to specialisation for nurses who have the inclination to take a course of training in Arts and Crafts, for it should follow as a logical conclusion that, if nurses applied for such posts having the necessary qualifications, they would be appointed in preference to those who have no knowledge of the ailments affecting the people they are to teach. Admittedly there are many who have little inclination or aptitude for artistic work but sometimes apparent lack of artistic gifts is due to lack of opportunity for their cultivation; this is regrettable even from a psychological point of view, for artistic work has a hygienic effect on others besides patients and opens doors of escape from the ordinary routine of life. We have repeatedly noticed that nurses who do beautiful needlework are, as a rule, those most successful with their patients, suggesting that they bring a greater balance and harmony of temperament into the sick room.

Then too the influence of colour enters through most arts and is one that penetrates further than we can understand. There are big problems lying behind the influence of each and every colour as, for instance, whether, in the case of blue, it is the complementary colour yellow (which you conjure up after gazing on blue for a time) that exerts the greater influence or the actual blue itself. Then there are many deep problems on combinations of colour; if you paint a green field you will get quite a different feeling from that expanse of green according to whether you place in it a blue, yellow or red figure. The latter will give the whole picture a feeling of activity while figures in another colour would alter entirely the feeling that the picture arouses in you.

For long in some of its forms art has been the bridge between the spiritual and the material and when it is severed from human life by the effects of machinery or anything else the trinity is broken and harmony cannot be achieved. There is still much to be learnt, we consider, in the domain of occupational therapy. It may suit one person to sit down and paint a landscape and so expand and rid himself of some particular type of introspection, another may find curative elements in "playing about with colour" in some branch of craft, while others may need something connected with form rather than colour (as for instance pottery making or modelling in wood or plaster). This kind of analysis will come, the play of the four temperaments will enter into such analysis and many other considerations and observations, pathological and otherwise, before the healing that lies in freedom for the creative faculty is fully appreciated.

ROUEN :

GREAT MEMORIES.

The spirit of the Ramblers' Club led a few nurses to take advantage of one of the "Midget Cruises" of the Southern Railway and to set out upon experiences rich in their association with the Maid of France. Between 9 p.m. on a Friday evening and 9 a.m. on the following Monday we crowded into sixty hours of summertime many great memories, and all can be done for the sum of three guineas with a very comfortable berth on the *St. Briac* and excellent meals throughout the week-end. There is the charm of the midnight hour at Southampton, a journey to the French coast while you sleep, and then a long, sunny day on the Seine with its wooded hills in places, its charming water meadows and views of many a quaint old town.

But the real "thrill" for us was the first sight of the tower of the Cathedral of Rouen, and within ten minutes of our arrival we were seated in a charabanc for a journey round the town. Every old tower, every street and alley and corner there, seems to vibrate with the story of olden days, for at one time Rouen was a great Norman stronghold, and it played no inconsiderable part in the religion and history of old France. We drove first to the Colline

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