



## FIELD EXPERIENCE *for* STUDENT NURSES OFFERED *in* CATTARAUGUS COUNTY

WHEN the Cattaraugus County Department of Health undertook in 1923 to organize a county-wide nursing service it was no easy matter to assemble a competent personnel, even with the assistance of the National Organization for Public Health Nursing. Rural public health nursing is so new in the United States, dating only, as a nation-wide movement, from the World War, and conditions in the rural field are in important respects so different from urban conditions, that the supply of nurses who have had special preparation, whether through training or through experience, is far behind the demand. Just how many there are is not known, but certainly not enough to meet even present demands. If by some chance it were pro-

posed to supply the rural districts of the United States overnight with nurses in the ratio estimated by Dr. C. E. A. Winslow to be essential for adequate service, one to each two thousand of the population (*see* p. 32) more than 25,000 would be needed. That is more than twice the total number of public health nurses, most of them in cities, who were found in the entire country in 1924 by the National Organization for Public Health Nursing.

OF special interest, therefore, both to public health workers and to those who are occupied with the educational problems involved, to say nothing of the nurses themselves, is the opportunity for field training in rural public

health nursing which is offered in Cattaraugus County, New York, to students of Teachers College, Columbia University. Plans for it were worked out in 1925 by a special committee under the chairmanship of Miss Lillian A. Hudson, Assistant Professor of Nursing Education in Teachers College. The first



group of students went to the County in 1926; and the appropriation by the Milbank Memorial Fund for the work of the rural health demonstration in 1927 includes an item to cover the cost for a second season.

ON July 6, 1926, the four students of the pioneer group reported for their three months' training. All of these students had completed the certificate course in public health nursing at Teachers College and had had experience in the best standards of public health nursing in urban centers. Each student had an allowance of fifty dollars a month and travelling expenses, the use of a Ford coupe, and a bag completely equipped.

They spent the first week in Olean, where a concentrated program of lectures and conferences with heads of bureaus and special supervising nurses gave them an introduction to the work. After this they were sent to the three districts which had been selected as the teaching centers, and a

typically rural area was assigned to each student as her own territory. During the second and third weeks she accompanied the local staff nurse on observation visits to all types of cases, learned her way around, and made acquaintance with the local facilities and resources. After the third week she was entirely responsible for the work in her particular area, with guidance from the special supervising nurses.

In the course of the summer each student made home visits to patients in her own territory who represented many varieties of work. She assisted at five or six types of clinic. She organized and taught a class either in home hygiene and care of the sick or in child care. She attended the meet-

ings of the Nurses' Committee in her district. She had continuous personal supervision from the educational director in the Bureau of Public Health Nursing, and visits from the special supervising nurses, the nutrition specialist, and the staff nurse in charge of the district in which she was working.

## EXCURSIONS

and conferences were scattered through the summer, carefully planned to give an insight into as many aspects as possible of rural health work. There were visits to a village water supply and sewage disposal system; to the Olean water supply system and the Olean milk pasteurization plant; to the Health Camp in Allegany State Park; to a model dairy farm; to the Adams Memorial Hospital at Perrysburg and the State Hospital for Mental Diseases at Gowanda, as well as to the County and

city offices and institutions. Each student spent one day at the County fair, with definite duties in the way of teaching and demonstration at the exhibits. At the opening of the school year each one attended the Teachers' Institute in her district, when the school health program for the year was presented to the teachers by the director of the County School Health Service and the supervisor of school nursing.

IN August and September when the students were working alone, they made 658 visits, seeing 1,007 patients. The number visited by each ranged from 180 to 295. The total cost of supplying the training, including financial outlay and an allowance for the time of the staff which was spent in supervision, was estimated at \$1,731.

THE supervisory nurses made reports on each student



under their observation, which were forwarded to Teachers College. The students also were asked for their criticisms and suggestions, and these were placed in the hands of the committee which planned the course. Miss Hudson, chairman of the committee, summarizes her impressions of the initial season training as follows:

"I found the students felt that the experience had been of the greatest value to them, and gave opportunity for experience in those phases of community work so necessary for the student going into rural, state, or county positions, and which our urban centers rarely, if ever, offer. Problems of organization and administration arising out of the area to be covered, the attitude of the people, the needs of the services and the resources of the community, or the county and state, were all of great interest to them, and they especially valued the experience of working in local

units where they were responsible to a local committee. They feel they appreciate more fully the value of each citizen being intelligent about his health needs and accepting his rightful responsibility for supporting the policies of either public or private organizations that may be trying to provide the service. I feel that the students' preparation and previous experience in urban centers made it possible for them to enter into the program there without endangering the service to any individual patient or the family, a factor which must be carefully safeguarded in all student work."

It is Miss Hudson's view that the opportunities for training in Cattaraugus County are so rich, and the need for well prepared public health nurses for positions in county and state work is so great, that the students to whom this field experience is offered should be chosen with the greatest degree of care.

