

## NURSING AND NURSING EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES.

The Report of the Committee for the Study of Nursing Education in the United States of America, appointed by the President of the Rockefeller Foundation to prepare a definite proposal for a course of training for public health nurses, the scope of the enquiry being subsequently enlarged to include the entire subject of nursing education, financial support for the investigation being provided by the Foundation, is a document of the first importance. We have previously drawn attention to it in this journal, but propose now to discuss it in further detail.

The Chairman of the Committee was Professor C. E. A. Winslow, and the actual conduct of its investigation was placed in the hands of Miss Josephine Goldmark, "whose eminent achievements in social research peculiarly fitted her for such a task."

The first point of special interest to those concerned in the prospect offered by nursing as a profession offering a means of self-support, is that it is stated there are in America "practical" or "experienced" nurses, 151,996; and of "trained" and "registered" nurses, 149,128; and that student nurses to the number of 54,053 were registered in Schools of Nursing at the conclusion of the Survey. If these figures are correct, and in the two latter groups, at least, the census returns upon which they are apparently based may be taken as approximately accurate, they represent a supply of one nurse, trained or untrained, to every 294 "well persons," and of an educated or graduate nurse to every 700 people throughout the country.

The Report states:—

"This would seem to give an adequate supply of nurses if numbers alone are considered, provided a proper distribution could be secured"; but it further points out:—

"The majority of trained nurses are concentrated in the larger cities, so that the rural districts in many States are wholly lacking in service of this kind. The evidence is that at present in the cities the supply of trained nurses is adequate to existing demands in normal times. The reason why many persons who need nursing care in hospitals, or in the homes of the poor, fail to receive it, is to be sought in economic factors rather than in the shortage of nurses."

Under ordinary circumstances, there is thus too great concentration of nurses in the cities, and thus uncertain employment; while, in rural localities, in which the certainty of regular employment is still more doubtful, there is an undoubted shortage (indeed, the rural districts, in many States, are wholly lacking in service of this kind), which can probably only be met by their provision by some public authority.

The difficulty, all the world over, where the supply of an adequate nursing service is con-

cerned, is to meet the needs of the public during an epidemic, and yet to provide employment for nurses in normal times.

The supply of private nurses to meet the public need is probably adequate, one reason being that so many more members of the public, when ill, go into hospital for treatment, with the result that a gradual transference of nurses from private duty and hospital service is gradually taking place, but still not in sufficient proportion to the increase in hospital patients.

In regard to the qualifications of the Public Health Nurse the Committee state:

"We are convinced that the teacher of hygiene in the home should possess in the first place the fundamental education of the nurse and that this should be supplemented by a graduate course in the special problems of public health. . . . We believe that the general considerations so far discussed warrant the following conclusions.

"*Conclusion 1.*—That since constructive health work and health teaching in families is best done by persons:—(a) Capable of giving general health instruction, as distinguished from instruction in any one speciality; and (b) capable of rendering bedside care at need. The agent responsible for such constructive health work and health teaching in families should have completed the nurses' training. There will, of course, be need for the employment, in addition to the public health nurse, of other types of experts such as nutrition workers, social workers, occupation therapists, and the like.

"That as soon as may be practicable, all agencies, public or private, employing public health nurses, should require as a prerequisite for employment the basic hospital training, followed by a post-graduate course, including both class work and field work in public health nursing."

"Of such highly-qualified nurses there is an undoubted shortage because, according to the census returns there are 11,000 public health nurses, whereas the number which the Committee estimate as needed is 50,000. The Committee state:

"*Conclusion 2.*—That the career open to young women of high capacity, in public health nursing, or in hospital supervision and nursing education, is one of the most attractive fields now open, in its promise of professional success and of rewarding public service; and that every effort should be made to attract such women into this field.

"In regard to one of the remedies which has been suggested to relieve existing conditions, *i.e.*, the employment of a less highly educated nurse with a lower salary, because of the alleged prohibitive cost of the graduate nurse the Committee state:

"It seems clear to the Committee that if two types of nurse are desirable, the distinction should be drawn, not on economic grounds, but according to the types of illness involved. We are even somewhat doubtful as to the possibility of attaining very substantial economies by the introduction of a subsidiary type of private duty nurse. Our

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)