

by H.B.

FROM THE FORESTS OF CALIFORNIA ....to the wards of a Pennsylvania State hospital has been quite a jump. Out here in the East the grass, the fields, and the forests are green and beautiful; the rain is seemingly as plentiful and every bit as wet; the sun rises and sets with glowing pastel shades; the countrysides are calm and ever appealing. But in the cities the churches are more deserted; the extremes of poverty and plenty are much more in evidence; the heedless competitive scramble which characterizes our economy and challenges our continued social progress is even more exaggerated. The confining influence of congested housing areas, of limited group outlook, of racial embitterments, all mock our constitutional guarantee of "equality" of opportunity. The wards in which I work are filled with children....and men....and women from the "slum" areas--sent here largely because we've failed as Christians to build a Christian environment. And then after we've failed them once, we forget them, and consign them to a type of custodial care which is often nothing less than devilish in nature. In seven months I've seen no general visitation by a Protestant Pastor; the Catholic Priest comes every week. In other areas of service to the "least of these", there is evidence here that the Catholic Church is far out in the lead.

TO THE VIOLENT WARDS! After six months of work with bed patients who presented the usual problems of a hospital, and a few more, my request to transfer to our violent ward was granted. Two of our Baptist fellows were desirous of moving away from the clamour, the violence, and the danger of our most agitated patients; I'd never asked for any assignment but to there. One of our fellows, a Friend, from Salem, Oregon, has been doing yeoman service there for six months and for a good deal of that time he was acting quite acceptably as Charge of the building.

My most important duty is to break up 25 or 30 kicking and slugging matches which daily disturb the more normal antics of the 200 patients turned loose in a large "day-room". Fired into action by the "devils" of insecurity, fear, misunderstanding, physical pain, suspicion, etc., these scraps are often quite exciting affairs. My place is between the contestants, whether they are 2 or 6 in number, and my only weapon is the desire to prevent harm to those who have become incompetent to make their own decisions.

Our latest admission happened to be a fiery-tempered patient of foreign birth. The attendant that brought him from a quieter building had two scars on either side of his neck from knife wounds inflicted by the patient in a moment of furor. There are dozens of the patients with homicidal tendencies and an alertness is required every second of the day. Such crowded and dangerous conditions would never exist if our profiteering society would build proper quarters and hire competent help in sufficient numbers. But profiteers are interested in making money, not spending it. And church people for the most part are content to "let George do it" when it comes to acting the Good Samaritan. We haven't found that greater pleasure of turning spare time into acts of well-doing rather than of frivolous and escapist approach of a growing and healthy youth.

WHERE NEEDED I came because I felt the need was greatest here of all the possibilities open under the Alternative Service program. That the need for help is great is proved by my being alone in the "day-room" or the larger yard alone with 200 to 250 patients much of the time.

TENURE SHORT But my time here will soon be up. I'm here under conscription and conscription is an integral part of modern military operation. I'm more convinced than ever that war is utterly un-Christian, and I'm now ready to go the last step in opposing it. In the early winter I will have fulfilled my obligations undertaken here and will be free to become AWOL from a Twentieth Century system of public slavery. Thereby I bear my absolute testimony to Christian teachings. In the meantime I'm continuing full time ward work, participating in the diet experiment to aid starving populations in Europe and Asia; with two emergency transfusions I've given 4 pints of blood in 3 months. My health and spirits? High!!

\*  
Present  
stances  
in Phila...  
3 yrs...