Aménités of a country doctor

A Sooner finds life in a small town delightful

By Dr. J. R. Hinshaw, '19

There are less than five hundred souls in this little town of Butler, Washita valley country, Western Oklahoma, where nine years ago kind fate and good fortune launched my career as a young doctor, just graduated from the state medical school of the University of Oklahoma. My only assets were: an understanding wife; a lovely baby girl; good health; high ambitions; a sheepskin; a goodly amount of energy and a half-paid for Model-T. My liabilities were: several hundred dollars worth of debts with interest still accruing; lack of experience and such.

Is it great to be poor and to have to struggle for money to build a little rural hospital? Yes. For to see the thing you are building rising up under your hands, and to put some of the work of your own hands into it, and to have the people you are building for help you build it, is life. To minister to these same people when they are sick, and to comfort and counsel them when they are troubled, makes life rich and very much worth while. “I’m going to be a doctor, like you some day, daddy,” says a fine little fellow who has been an on-looker in the operating room since he was three, and who refuses all inducements offered him, to leave until the operation is entirely finished. Yes, I am very proud of him.

But every day is a hard day for the country practitioner. Sometimes during epidemics we work the clock around. Often our nerves are frayed like tassels. Rest always comes, but all the days are full to the brim.
few thousand dollars, he becomes an extraordinary man." Many of my friends regarded me as extraordinary, when I decided to make this move, but extraordinarily foolish. Of course the first few years were a struggle. The last few have been easier. During this nine year period our little rural hospital has cared for 2,860 patients, most of whom would not, otherwise, have received the needed care, or would have been taken to city hospitals at greatly increased expense. More than three score babies have been born here, most of whom would not have had hospital facilities available but for our country institution. The difficulties of transporting patients (sometimes in a serious condition) for long distances are overcome; much expense is saved the patients by bringing hospital service within the reach of many who could not otherwise afford it; personal relationships and individual care are much more satisfactory, and there is less psychic dislocation; follow-up work is made possible which would be out of the question if the patient were treated in distant city hospitals. The community receives the educational values for more and healthful living; and physicians are encouraged to locate and remain in rural districts where modern facilities for self-improvement are available.

After all, 90 per cent or more of this great land of ours consists of "the country," so called. Then considering the fact that 90 per cent of the medical art practiced in this land of 120,000,000 people is practiced in the country and country towns of 10,000 population or less, is it not high time we are thinking of ways, means, and measures to give our country people adequate hospitalization?

Should I ever decide to take up city practice, which is hardly probable, I hope I shall be kind enough not to regret my move into the country that took me in as a green graduate, mercifully overlooked my early mistakes, and finally gave me the opportunity for becoming proficient enough to compete with my city brother in the noonday or afternoon of life. I shall be kind enough not to regret my early days of our nationhood, rev-ers, and delegations from Soviet Russia. The long, quiet sunsets of the prairie, the simple rugged unaffectedness of "the homefolks" and the homely worship with which they regard their doctor, all hold me in thrall. Not so bad either the country sausages, delicious chops, snowy lard for a whole year, and delicious cracklings through the whole winter? What about a whole half beef for $15.00, fresh eggs all the year 'round? Protest-