
STUDENT NURSES' ASSOCIATION SECTION

Reports and Articles for this Section will be welcomed by the Hon. Organising Secretary, Miss J. ROBSON, S.R.N., D.N., Rainy Hospital, Royapuram, Madras.

EVERY STUDENT NURSE AN ELEPHANT AND THEREFORE A TEACHER.

Elephants are herd animals, a number of families of elephants living and working together form the herd. The most experienced and wisest elephant is the leader of the herd, and all the other elephants are under his discipline.

In his wisdom he divides out his responsibilities and makes every member of his herd responsible for teaching a new member. The good name of the herd depends upon the trouble and care taken by each member to teach the younger members their duties and responsibilities to the herd.

This discipline which exists among herd animals is of the greatest use to man when he wants to use animals to carry out his purposes.

Some of you will have read an article that was published in the September *Journal*, of the way in which dietetics and nursing are carried out in an Elephants' Camp. At that same camp I learned a great deal of the usefulness of the herd instinct and was lost in admiration of the way in which the Forest Department have used this instinct. There we were in the home and training ground of a great team of working elephants, who carted timber, and did all the work of forest clearance, under the leadership of an enormous old fellow called Forester. Forester's duties towards a new member of the herd start the day an unwary elephant falls into the pit covered with branches and leaves that has been prepared for him. Forester is brought to the side of the pit with an enormous rope round his body, a noose of which is also passed round the head of the captured elephant. Then Forester communicates to the new elephant that he is changing herds, and that Forester is the Lord High Governor of the new herd, and that the first lesson is how to get out of that pit. By gentle pulling on the rope the newly captured elephant is brought up the sloping sides of the pit into the level ground, and taken home, where his training begins in earnest.

You may be saying what on earth has all this got to do with me. A great deal, for you are also a herd animal, and cannot do your best work if totally separated from your kind.

It is the herd instinct that has brought us to Nagpur for this Conference. Drawing us like a magnet to meet other nurses, other people who wear caps and aprons or caps and *saries*, others who wash patients, feed babies, carry out nursing procedures, struggle to persuade patients' relatives to leave the patient in hospital until the doctor's treatment has had a chance, attend classes, study and appear for examinations, fail or pass and so on to the next subject that waits to be conquered. We know that inspiration and courage for further effort comes from fellowship, and that we shall achieve more, and inspire those who have sent us, to go on plodding along the more merrily, because of the time we have had together.

Those wise Forest Rangers at Teppukadu know that once a new elephant's curiosity is roused in what the members of the working gang are doing, he or she will become interested, and the interest being directed on to the activities of the old members of the gang the new ones will imitate.

Isn't this just what happens in our training schools? Aren't you eaten up with curiosity to know how it is your Staff Nurse manages to pass that stomach tube so easily, how she succeeds in making that paralysed patient so comfortable in such a variety of positions? Don't you find yourself trying to copy her? At first one's efforts are as clumsy as the efforts of the baby elephant to feed itself, only once or twice were its efforts to get twigs and leaves into its mouth successful, then it found that it had no teeth with which to masticate. You too, need much practice before your signing up charts can be signed to say that you have successfully and skilfully carried out each nursing duty. I should like to think that with every Sister's signature went the vow of the student nurse to always carry out that particular nursing duty as she had done it the day she was signed for it.

Here we come up against a difficulty. Sometimes nurses who learn by imitation, just as all animals do, see a nursing procedure carried out once or twice in the demonstration room, and daily, often many times a day in the wards by their senior students, and they notice differences.

There was a mackintosh used in the demonstration room, it doesn't seem to appear in the ward, there were two catheters boiled for catheterisation in class, because Sister said there must be a second one ready in case you made a mistake and went into the vagina and so contaminated your first, but the nurses in the ward seem sure of not making mistakes.

Which way will the new nurses imitate, the way they saw once or twice in the class room, or the way they see every day in the wards? Isn't it reasonable that the track in the eye memory part of their brains which has been run over hundreds of times will be deeper than the one that has only been trodden once or twice.

A word to Senior Nurses. The reputation of the school is in your hands. You train your juniors, whether you want to or not. It is you they will imitate. Isn't it worth seeing to it that they copy the best way.

A word to the Juniors, and it's the same as that which has gone to the seniors. The reputation of your training school is in your hands. What about those probationers who see you give bed pans, who do not see the screen. Who watch you attend infectious cases and do not see you put on the overall. Do you remember being shocked the first time you noticed these differences yourself? Have you forgotten now, that there is a better way, the way the probationers must follow if they are to be good nurses.

A word to the Probationers. Do you say, please we are only learning, we can't teach. Can't you? What about that patient's relation who will leave the food for the patient exposed to the flies. Can't you tell her what you know about the way Dysentery and Typhoid are spread? Can't you be so careful yourself about keeping bed pans covered, and food away from flies, that the relations and patients will imitate you?

The realisation that every student nurse is a teacher, and the resolution, to make the most of the opportunities this responsibility brings with it, will help you more than any thing in your own studies.

I believe that you never really know a thing until you have taught it to some one else, then it becomes yours in a peculiar way. You have mastered it and expressed it clearly to another, you have seen where it still held difficulties for them, and have tried to clear those difficulties up. A subject which you have made your own in this way is difficult to forget.

You will hear nurses say, 'If only we had more time to study there would be some hope of us remembering, but we are always on duty.' This is true, but the real problem does not lie in having too little time, but in not knowing how to make good use of the time you have.



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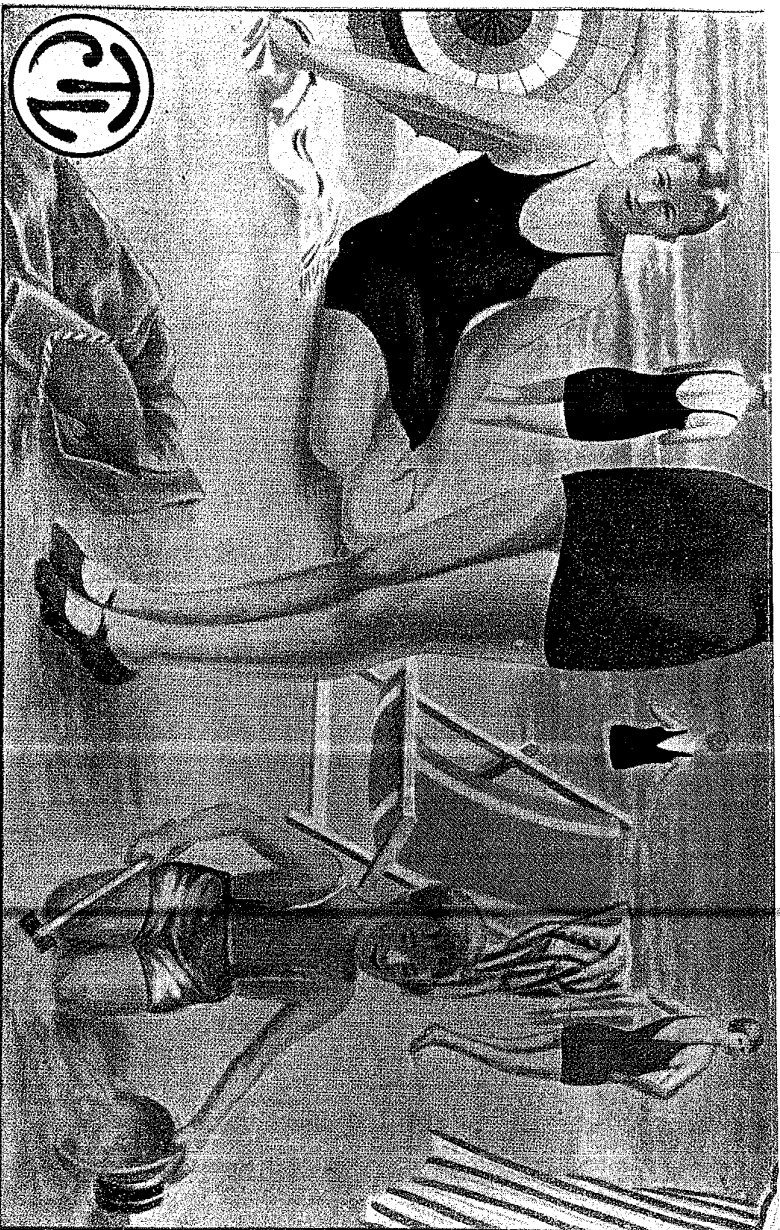
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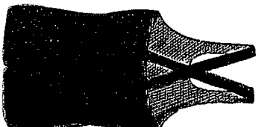
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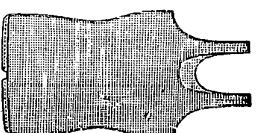


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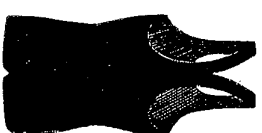
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Let us take an example :—

You have a class on the bones of the lower extremity and the muscles that move them. The teacher rouses your curiosity by referring to a fracture case which has been in the Surgical Ward recently, and suggesting that you are now going to find out exactly what had happened to that patient's femur, and why it was that she could not move it.

You *listen* anxiously, and all that you *hear* is registered in your mind, you have a skeleton in front of you, and the separate bones which you are allowed to handle. What *your eyes have seen* and *your hands felt* will be stored in your mind. That evening you have your usual study hour and you take your note book and pencil up to the skeleton, and you make diagrams of those bones. As you draw you say to yourself the name of the part you are drawing, for you have your textbook open before you. You notice very carefully the proportions of the bones and the angles of the proportions, for you know that you will have to make diagrams from memory in the examination, and so when your diagrams are finished, you shut the skeleton cupboard and your books and test your visual memory by trying to do a diagram from memory. With a little training and much handling of the bones you will be able to do this.

Then you take a duster and make it do the work of the muscles by attaching it to its origin and insertion and seeing the effect when you contract it, i.e. pull the folds together and so shorten the fibres. This is best done with two people, as you will want four hands to hold and shorten, and you have the advantage of hearing each other's voices as you say where the various muscles are attached and what their action is.

Perhaps, one of your classmates missed the class. So the next day you teach her what you have learned from your own observation and actions the day before. You will find that short periods of concentrated study, in the same place, and at the same time each day using all your senses to fill the cupboard of your memory, then expressing what you have learned by showing another nurse in the ward how to do it, or teaching a classmate or relation of a patient, is the ideal way of studying, and one which is perfectly fitted for conditions in a nurses' training school. So be good elephants.

All of you know that Florence Nightingale was very interested in Public Health work in India, and that although she never visited this land, she helped to stimulate those who were working here by her publications through the Christian Literature Society.

I have often wondered what her reactions would be to conditions in Modern India, if she visited us today.

Would she be disappointed in the amount that her nurses have accomplished in the years since her death?

She would not remain untouched by the tremendous challenge of our Infant mortality, Maternal mortality, Infectious diseases that have been stamped out of other countries, but remain to sap India's manhood and womanhood. The deficiency diseases that persist in spite of all the modern knowledge on dietetics, and the filth and complacency of the people which must ever be a challenge to every nursing student; stimulating her to master her studies that she may go out fully equipped to wage a war against these great blots upon our profession.

The student nurse does not need to wait until she is a trained nurse, before she can do anything to prevent disease and relieve suffering.

She is the most fortunate of all students, for her work from the first day she enters the wards brings her into contact with little children, funny old grannies, dear old grandfathers, very young mothers and older mothers, in fact with representatives of the whole human family, her herd. Every one

of them has some thing to teach her of human need, beauty of kindliness, effects of evil, and countless other things. Every one demands something of her, even if it is only a drink of water, a bed pan, or a hot bottle in her junior days. These are her students, these she can, if she will, teach, at a time when they are most ready to receive suggestions.

Thus it is given to you student nurses to carry on the traditions of the past, but to add to them the new knowledge and vision, which day by day are being added to our equipment of knowledge.

A famous physiologist hardly ever gives a lecture, without telling his students that 'The truth of to-day, is the error of tomorrow'. Science is a living, growing truth, which helps us to teach others to have healthy bodies, minds, and spirits. I am reminded of some thing very beautiful, which I saw on a fruit farm, a short time ago. They had been grafting guava trees. There we saw the old guava tree, with little guava plants, with their roots in tiny pots, bound firmly on to the branches of the big tree.

We were told that cuttings are taken from a guava tree, and are brought on in pots, then when the young plant is well established, it is bound on to the tree in the way we saw them. The young plant once more becomes merged into the old tree, draws sap from her, and after a time no longer needs to seek nourishment from the roots in the little pot. Then once more a cutting is taken of the branch which is now neither new nor old, but a combination of both. Some thing different, full of health and strength and able to grow alone and bear splendid fruit. Such a plant is flourishing in our compound, to-day.

I am also reminded of the lovely way in which the heart of the mammal, the elephant's heart and your heart have developed.

In a slow old earthworm there is no central blood pump at all. In the shark family, you find that the large blood vessel in the ventral surface of its body is bent upon itself to form a single pump, the action of which is to send deoxygenated blood to the gill slits, through which water enters the fishes' body, and here blood in the capillaries is able to take its oxygen from the water.

The frog needs a better pump than flies and its large arterial vessel has been folded into four, and forms a double pump, which is specially adapted to a frog's way of living partly in, and partly out of the water.

Then comes the heart of the mammal, the heart of the elephant, and your heart and mine.

~~This time you find a perfect double pump, with two receiving chambers, and two distributing chambers, one to the lungs for the blood to get its oxygen, and one to send the oxygenated blood all over the body.~~

Nothing that is old has been discarded from the earthworm to the mammal, but the old has been used and changed into some thing that is able to cope with the work of bringing oxygen to the tissues of a great animal like the elephant, or a complicated little animal like you or me.

So, you student nurses must not think that you are not loyal to the pioneers who blazed our trail, when you learn. Some thing new, and new ways of doing old duties. Think of the guava tree and the human heart, and realise that you get your light of knowledge from the flame, which the nurses of the past have lit, yet, yours is a new light, and from generation to generation the light of nursing becomes a clearer, more penetrating flame.

A lamp set on a map of India is the badge of the Trained Nurses' Association of India, which we hope you will all wear, when you become full members.

A lamp needs a daily supply of oil, if it is to give a clear, steady light.