

**The Proper Teaching of Anatomy.\***

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Now that nursing has become a recognised art, and that its title to respect and interest has been established before the public, by so many noble and conspicuous lives, and such great deeds; and as mere natural aptitude, or courage and determination, or even the fortunate possession of a vigorous constitution, are not sufficient qualities without a long and careful course of training to make a woman able to meet the requirements for a modern nurse, the work of teaching should be made an art, too, and the very subjects which are regarded now as bugbears, and unfortunate, but necessary evils in the training school, should be taught with skill and pains, and made as interesting, and as profitable, as the branches which are *per se* more attractive. Unfortunately, it is to be feared that, even in those institutions where the ward and bedside work has been carried to the highest perfection, the methods of instruction, particularly in the branch of anatomy, have remained inadequate to the needs of the time.

It is true that a whole library of books has recently sprung up, supposed to be peculiarly adapted to requirements of pupils in training schools, but there is reason for thinking that the majority of such works can base their claim for attention on no stronger ground than the statement on the title page that they are "for nurses." When the nurse has spent several dollars in the purchase of such a book, expecting to find something written especially for her, in view of her previous lack of familiarity with technical terms, allowing for the many demands made elsewhere on her memory and her time, and designed to spare her any additional hours of labour or any unnecessary difficulty, it must be very disappointing to find she has procured nothing more than a compend under a different name or a re-hash of some large work dedicated to a very different class of persons.

It is eminently proper to exact of medical students an intimate knowledge of anatomical minutiae. It is true that they are soon forgotten, but in later years, when the adoption of some specialty makes thorough familiarity with the anatomy of the eye, or the pelvic organs, or the nervous system, an absolute necessity, reviewing comes easy, thanks to the original drill in college. Still, every physician knows the difficulty of retaining even the more important facts of anatomy without frequent dissections and autopsies. Many are able to practise successfully with but a scant recollection of origins and insertions, condyles, tubercles and foramina. Indeed, for the ordinary doctor a very precise

knowledge of anatomical detail is rather an accomplishment, and an evidence of culture, than an absolute necessity.

Now, if we look at the conditions in which a nurse is placed, it will readily be seen that a very different system, and not a mere modification of that in vogue in the medical school, must be employed. The most conspicuous difference, at first glance, is that of the time at command. After a period of two, or at the most three, years the nurse must have acquired all her store of knowledge, both theoretical and practical, and of this time, in nearly all cases, the best part is devoted to the most trying manual labour; labour that taxes both the physical and emotional sides of one's nature to the utmost. Often in the hospitals where I served as resident I have seen nurses, of exceptional abilities, nodding over their books toward the close of a hard day's labour, or else overcoming a demand on the part of their bodies for rest, strengthened by the desire to excel, and goaded by the fear of examinations. Again, when one realises that in the case of many women, who are destined to become excellent nurses, early educational advantages may have been lacking, and that the training school aims in part to train and improve every faculty, so that they shall be stronger in every way for the work before them, it cannot be unimportant to select, most carefully, all that shall be prescribed, cutting down the amount to be memorised to its smallest dimensions, in order that no excuse may exist, for the very pernicious habit of cramming, which is sure to be adopted, when the material to be assimilated, and the time allotted for so doing, are disproportionate.

All knowledge is valuable, but the training school, with its limitations, and its definite aim, does not include the making of accomplished anatomists, or obstetricians, or physiologists. These and other subjects are to be inculcated with a view to making nurses practical helpers to the sick and co-operators with the physicians in charge. Everything must be taught that is essential to the making of an intelligent assistant to the operator, or the diagnostician, or the therapist. But not everything that would contribute still more thereto can be taught, because the time is limited and only what is going to be a permanent acquisition will be of any value. All that is required must be required indeed. It is useless to have a smattering of details, and be shaky on essentials. I remember hearing an examiner boast that his pupils could rattle off glibly the bones of the orbit, "seven in number, eleven in the two," but not long after we were laughing at members in the same class who could not affirm positively whether the femur was in the arm and the humerus in the leg, or not!

*(To be continued.)*\*Reprinted from the *Trained Nurse*.

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