

KEEP COURAGE NURSES!

This effusion of gratitude was received by one of the nurses at the Non-European Hospital:—

19/7/26.

Dear Nurses,

With respect and honour I beg to congratulate vastly for the hospitality and generosity you showed me during the period I was under your authorities.

So my authorities and I are wishing each and every nurse a vast appreciated success in your duties.

Keep courage nurses, obey your principals and authorities and see you get on with your abilities and consequently feel proud.

So let me not prolong my speeches but I want you to take matters from a chronological point of view, logically from a logical point.

I shall now come to a termination with my dispatching putting you all under the hands of the Lord and Father.

Ending with exceeding happiness,

From your dutiful and sincerely friend,

PAUL B. NIOHOLO.

It is customary for us to offer a prize with each number of the "Leech" for the best borborygmus. The loudest heard on this occasion emanates from the Nurses Home and reads as follows:—

"The nurses of the General Hospital have come to the following conclusion: That the medical journal known as the "Leech" should be re-named "The Cesspool."

HOSPITAL BACTERIOLOGY.

No. 2.—SISTERCERCI.

[It is customary for the laity to abbreviate the term **Sistercerci** into **Sister**. This practice, however, is apt to give rise to confusion, for, strictly speaking, Sisters form but one variety of the genus *Sistercercus*. Among the members of the medical profession, *Sistercerci* are generally referred to as **Nurses**, and we propose to adopt the latter practice, reserving the term *Sister* for the particular variety so designated.

We should also like to mention that many investigators regard *Sistercerci* as parasites, rather than bacteria, and while we agree that nurses are undoubtedly parasitic to man, in that they feed and multiply at his expense, we would point out that all pathogenic bacteria are in like manner parasitic. The borderline between bacteria and parasites is by no means clearly defined, and we feel that in the present hazy state of our knowledge it would be inadvisable to exclude the *Sistercerci* from this series of monographs.]

MORPHOLOGY & DEVELOPMENT.—Four varieties of this organism are generally distinguished—**Probationers**, "**Trained**" or **Staff Nurses**, **Sisters** and **Matrons**. It is important for the student to note that the

foregoing are in reality merely successive stages in the life-history of one organism, the most primitive or immature forms being the probationers, and the fully developed forms matrons.

It is not yet generally accepted that sisters and matrons are merely mature forms of probationers, owing to the striking differences in morphology, habits and cultural character. We ourselves, however, have witnessed the gradual transformation of probationers into staff nurses, then into sisters, and finally into matrons. We have not, it is true, observed the complete life history in any one organism, but this easily accounted for by the fact that the life of a nurse which reaches the stage of matron occupies, at a modest computation, probably not less than 50-75 years, hence it would require the continuous observations of several generations of investigators to trace the complete life history of one such organism. Very few probationers succeed in teaching complete maturity, their fate in some respects resembling that of the ova of fish, a large number of which are cast off, but few of which survive. It would appear that Nature's object in each case is to ensure the survival of the species.

While we know that fish spawn which fails to reach maturity is devoured by other fish, the student must not suppose that this is analogous to what happens in the case of young nurses. The fate of those who fail to reach full development, is indeed a much happier one, and is as follows. Each and every young nurse is continually on the look-out for a suitable host; having selected its victim, it deserts the colony and attaches itself firmly to the new host, which, when thus ensnared, has perforce to feed and maintain it for the rest of its life. This process is known as gametogony or marriage, and we wish particularly to point out that though probationers most frequently become gamesters, every nurse is a potential gamete. We have personal knowledge of several instances where even sisters have succeeded in attaining gametogony. Doctors having perforce to associate with nurses are in consequence frequently involved in gametogony, but the organism is catholic in its tastes, and, failing at doctor, will avidly attack and attach itself to a student, patient, or even visitor to the hospital.

Nurses, then, are more or less fusiform in shape, with a bifid caudal end used for propulsive purposes—usually self-propulsive. **Motility**, be it noted, while present in all forms, shows a definite diminution in activity as the organisms become older, until by the time they have become staff nurses it manifests itself as a mere sluggish movement of the body, generally in the direction of nutriment. The **cephalic** or upper end of the organism is of variable length, but is invariably fat, and is attached to the **body** by the **neck**, which is characteristically of remarkable length. "What a neck" is a phrase which might well have arisen from a survey of the nursing species. Apparently the chief function of the head is to absorb nutriment, which gains a ready and frequent entrance by means of a large aperture on the anterior aspect of the head. The ingestion of the food is accompanied by audible indications of the organism's appreciation.

Attached to the upper end of the body, lateral to the base of the neck, are two flagella, one on each side, with the functions of which the student would be well-advised to familiarise himself, albeit, always at a safe distance, for reasons which will be shortly indicated. They are for conveying food to the head aperture, and occasionally for rendering assistance to the medical staff. The feature to which we wish to direct special attention is the fact that the peripheral ends of the flagella are surmounted by horny outgrowths of the epidermis, which are frequently used with deadly effect when the organism is annoyed.

STAINING REACTIONS.—Nurses stain readily with practically anything. Powder, rouge and lipstick make the head end obvious, while the flagella have a ready affinity for picric, flavine, iodine. The bodies do not stain very well in sunlight, but it is noticeable that in the evenings

they assume a variety of brilliant colourings. It has been suggested that this affinity for bright colours is to be regarded as an indication of the organism's toxicity. It is certainly significant that in the few cases where the cephalic ends of the organisms do not stain well, such organisms appear to be practically harmless. Further, it is noticeable that as they age they appear to lose most of their staining properties, and it is noteworthy that these older forms are also much less dangerous than the youthful, brightly staining specimens. Like housemen, however, nurses are all **Damn Negative**.

With regard to the distinguishing morphological features of the individual varieties, attention is directed to the following points:—

PROBATIONERS:—These constitute the majority of the nursing species. As it is to be expected in immature forms, wide variations in size and shape form an outstanding characteristic. The view generally held is that they are the scavengers of the nursing colonies.

STAFF OR TRAINED NURSES:—The latter term frequently affords an inaccurate and misleading description of the organism so designated. "Staff" certainly is more appropriate, as indicative of their unbending characters.

It is probable that these are the most dangerous members of the nursing colonies, for having failed while probationers in attaining gametogony they are thereby rendered desperate, and consequently the student is warned to be on his guard.

SISTERS morphologically fall into two groups:—

1. Barrel-shaped organisms.
2. Attenuated or lathe-like forms.

It is probable that the barrel-shaped group owe their generous proportions to their feeble motility, for it is noteworthy that the attenuated forms exhibit great activity. Environment, here as elsewhere, probably plays a big part. Theatre-sisters, for example, have always been of the attenuated type. It remains to be noted that the head end of this variety is surmounted by a "veil," which resembles in every respect the flagellar membrane of the Trypanosome. Various theories have been propounded as to the function of these membranous structures, the one generally accepted being that it is designed to hide the head with the object of concealing as far as it is possible to do so, the signs of advancing age.

MATRONS.—These organisms are exceedingly rare, and our knowledge of their habits is correspondingly limited. Morphologically, they resemble sisters, but are so seldom seen that their existence has sometimes been questioned.

CULTURAL CHARACTERS.—In hospitals they appear to thrive on media consisting chiefly of bread, syrup, tea, stew and sago. A similar diet in a theatre or cabaret, however, has a powerful inhibitory effect and the growth soon dies out. We have obtained excellent results with a diet consisting of equal parts of chocolates, ices and alcohol. Under these conditions the organisms behave in a most interesting manner—they expand almost visibly, respond readily to advances, and exhibit marked clinging tendencies. They should not be cultivated under such conditions except for very brief and infrequent periods, otherwise they tend to become torpid, cling in limpet-like fashion, and are then exceedingly difficult to shake off.

In all media, growth is accompanied by prolific **gas-formation**; the gas is strongly acid in reaction, and is exceedingly toxic. All authorities agree that this applies particularly to the large colonies, in which the gas renders the atmosphere sufficiently foul to cause immediate collapse in students or doctors venturing there.

DISTRIBUTION.—Nurses may almost be described as ubiquitous. While growth is most abundant in General Hospitals, they occur wherever patients are to be found—nursing homes, cottage hospitals, even private

homes are not immune from their incursions. This affinity for patients is somewhat difficult to explain, but the probability is that patients, their resistance being impaired, form an easy prey, and that the nurses then fatten at their expense.

PATHOGENICITY.—Pathogenic chiefly to the male of the human species. All varieties are toxic on account of large amount of gas produced, but the most virulent forms, as already mentioned, are those with a deeply staining cephalic end.

IN THE DISSECTING THEATRE.

It is the hour of morning tea. The odour of formalin pervades the deserted hall. On the tables lie the bodies of the partly dissected dead, surrounded by dissecting manuals, in which scalpels and forceps act as book-markers.

Abruptly the silence is broken by the sound of voices and laughter, mingled with the noise of approaching feet. The doors swing open and groups of students enter and dispose themselves about their respective tables. A low hum of conversation fills the room, modified now and then by a smothered laugh or giggle—a proportion of the dissectors are women and behave accordingly.

At one table, the occupants—six men—evinced rather more animation than any other group. One student, ostensibly busy on the dissection of the posterior triangle, holds the floor. Judging by the appreciative smiles on the faces of his audience, and the burst of laughter which greets the conclusion of his remarks, an initiated observer might safely deduce that the topic is *not* anatomy.

"Oh, by the way," remarks a student who is neatly cutting his initials into the surface of the liver. "Do you know that we've got a new principal now."

Exclamations of surprise show quite definitely that they do not.

"Yes, I saw his name on a notice in the garage—'Trespassers will be Prosecuted,' or something like that."

His audience whistle their astonishment.

"We'll soon be kicked out of the School at this rate," says the highly indignant owner of a two-seater Ford. "Where the devil am I expected to park my car? Why, it's nearly as bad as the library notice—are you sure it doesn't say 'No admission to Thieves or Pickpockets'?"

"Cool down! Cool down!" advises the occupant of the posterior triangle, soothingly. "Don't forget we've got a Medical Committee—they'll soon stop all this nonsense. Why, those fellows are scared of nothing!"

Meanwhile, however, the Ford owner's emotions are so powerfully affected that he abset-mindedly picks up a scalpel and spends quite two minutes cleaning the pectoral fascia before he realises what he is doing.

"It's a wonder they don't make an exception for women students," observes an embittered misogynist who has been sharpening his scalpel assiduously since his arrival, and will probably continue to do so for some time to come. The deficiencies of the opposite sex evidently constitute his favourite subject, and he proceeds to enlarge at length. "Did you see the way they pushed in front at histology this morning? Chivalry plus Equality! Bah!"

"Oh, cut it out," admonishes his neighbour. "You're always picking the women out. The trouble with you is that you're biassedp—personally I think we might be worse off—look at the women in the final years!"

A faint murmur answers him. It sounds like "bandy-legged and