However, as a result of the union of toxin and receptor the latter is destroyed, injuring the cell in this respect.

Here we leave Ehrlich, temporarily, and turn our attention to the investigations of Weigert. As a result of his studies on the mechanism of repair after injury, Weigert noted the prodigality of nature in its reaction to injury. He found that, in cells having the ability to repair damage done to them, the reaction was always in excess of the damage. In other words, if one cell only had been destroyed, the body replaced it by an excessive reproduction of cells of that type, and this fact is embodied in what is known as Weigert's Law of Overproduction in Repair.

Applying this law to the formation of antibodies we find that one toxin receptor having been destroyed, the cell, in its efforts to replace the receptor, produces not one, but a large number of similar receptors. There is only place for the attachment of one to the cell,—what becomes of the others? They remain free in the blood stream. Each has the same structure as the original; each has, therefore, the power of combining with a toxin molecule and thereby preventing it from acting directly on the cell and causing injury; and each is, therefore, a free antibody, in this case a free antitoxin.

This, in brief, is the nucleus of the side-chain theory of Ehrlich upon which our present explanation of the mechanism of immunity depends.

A consideration of the practical applications of immunology in the treatment and prevention of disease will be discussed in a later paper.

THE ALUMNAE ASSOCIATIONS: THEIR POWER AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AS AFFECT- ING THE SCHOOLS, THE GRADUATES, AND THE COMMUNITY¹

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This subject is one of the most vital that the nursing profession faces, the alumnae associations forming, as it were, the backbone of its organizations. At various times, doubt has been expressed as to the wisdom of the reorganization of the American Nurses' Association, for some have feared that the alumnae association would lose its prestige and thereby its importance be lessened to the new graduates.

¹Read at the annual meeting of the New York State Nurses' Association, Albany, October, 1920.

In the establishment of the American Nurses' Association, the alumnae association was the only form of organization which we had and which could be brought into existence in all parts of the country, but as time went on, and state, county, city associations, and even clubs, were admitted into its membership, it became unwieldy, with much duplication of membership, and with the state associations exercising less influence, in some instances, than did the older alumnae associations. The reorganization which changed this and placed the state as the unit in the American Nurses' Association; the district, in the state; and the alumnae, in the district; gave the alumnae association for the first time its proper relation to the national association and placed upon it the greatest responsibility of all,—that of the decision as to the individuals who make up our organizations, applying the standards for membership, as to professional honor and general morale. This leaves it as the great connecting link between the school and the profession, standing as a sponsor for the young graduate whom the school has selected, trained and, it is hoped, inspired, before sending her out to join the ranks of those engaged in the great battle for health. The alumnae association may have to correct the mistakes the school has made; it may have to add to the education there begun. Does it always see this responsibility?

Why have we founded these associations? What are the powers we delegate to them? What are the privileges we expect from them?

The objects vary but little. Most alumnae by-laws state that there is organization to promote a closer unity among the graduates of the school to uphold a code of ethics, raise the standard of nursing, and some add, as the case may be, to provide a sick benefit or to furnish and maintain an endowed room for the graduates who are members in good standing. It is needless to say that our alumnae associations have done these last-named things, as well as giving financial support to our various national funds,—The Isabel Hampton Robb Scholarship Fund, the McIsaac Loan Fund, the Nurses' Relief Fund.

A letter from Miss Nutting, whom I consulted on this point, says:

There is, of course, a considerable difference between the direct purposes and problems of a college alumnae, for instance, and the alumnae of a professional school, but in general aims and ideals they are enough alike to make a study of either association helpful. The guiding principle in each is that of mutual aid as an essential factor in human progress and all such associations do obviously rest on the basic idea that about the worst evil in the world is selfishness. * * * It is by such improvements, which do not come about through isolation from one's fellows, but by constant association, that we advance the status and the power for good of a body of workers * * * and only in this way do we maintain the "honor and

dignity" of a profession. * * * Only by a friendly association can we really know the problems of our fellow workers or can we find a way of imposing some restraint on the egotistic, self-advancing members, or help to keep the weak and unstable members in line.

The history of Trade Unions affords an interesting and important study for us, since in origin and nature they really rest upon such a high ethical foundation,—they make for the beginnings of self-government and a training in self-government, and the subordination of self to larger interests.

John Mitchell, in his most interesting book on labor or trades unions, states: "Trade unionism is based upon the idea of free working men united for the purpose of fixing conditions of labor." Whatever we may have decided to-day, it is most certain that our first alumnae associations had no idea of "fixing conditions of labor." They were rather associations for mutual help and improvement and in many instances were for recreation, with occasional lectures by the medical profession. The hospital and the medical profession fixed our conditions of labor and when, to-day, nurses are more or less trying to fix those same conditions, it is considered as commercialism, and a loss of ideals is thereby supposedly proved. I cannot remember having seen any alumnae by-laws in which "protection" and the "improving of our condition of life" is so much as hinted at. That all the benefits for which we are striving are also incidental to a labor union, is undoubtedly true, and there are yet other benefits which we ought to be gaining. Mr. Mitchell says: "Members learn that each member is entitled to a hearing—and thereby learn tolerance of others' opinions, even when they do not agree with his."

Most of our alumnae associations stand for the establishment of a code of ethics. Has a definite code ever been adopted by our profession or by any branch of it? Tradition has it that when the Associated Alumnae was established, Dr. John Billings was consulted and advised against a code, saying: "Be good women; that is enough." The American Medical Association has, I am sure, such a code, to which its members subscribe. The apparent inability of both nurses and the public to distinguish between etiquette and ethics makes it possible that a code of ethics might be helpful. The Golden Rule might be adopted, as nothing applies better in nursing.

We have touched on what is being done "for mutual aid" within our associations, but most of our alumnae give their aid to many causes which the sick benefit could not reach, such as the Memorial Fund, the bill to secure relative rank for Army nurses, etc. Many are trying to establish pension funds.

In raising the standard of nursing, the alumnae have also done their share by furnishing funds and workers in obtaining better laws governing the profession. Some alumnae associations are now

engaged in an effort to raise funds for the endowment of their schools. Others have given and are still offering scholarships to their graduates. These are most desirable objects and yet we are not satisfied.

We have stated that the alumnae associations are responsible for the personnel of the American Nurses' Association and for maintaining its standards. Is this responsibility always appreciated by the associations and guarded accordingly? To quote from an article which outlines some of the duties of an Alumnae: "To exclude or expel unworthy individuals; to censure or warn backsliding members; to expose, so far as it can be legally and honorably done, the wrong and injuries done to our best standards; and to check harmful tendencies as we may meet them."

Could not complaints of failure in duty or obligation on the part of its members be taken up by the alumnae which has a threefold interest, not only justice to the public which it serves, but to the nurse herself, who too often is not heard, and the maintenance of the standards of the whole nursing organization which are challenged by any failure of the individual. I have no doubt that many of the criticisms to which the nursing profession is subjected could be met and the differences settled at this source.

Many alumnae associations ask for advice as to what can be done to interest the members. "Nothing will bring them out but a party or a discussion of hours and prices."

Healthy signs, both of them, if properly guided. Who does not like a party? It means a change, something different. No one needs a change, re-creation, more than nurses do. Perhaps we shall have nurses graduated who are immediately interested in the profession as it concerns *all*, and not just self, when the nurses trained with recreation and work going hand in hand get out among us. But most of the nurses in the alumnae to-day are thinking in terms of self, because no one else thought of her during her two or three years of training. She wants to sit still and be entertained, but she is bored if she does, as is everyone who is not *sharing* in all activities. Give her something to do. A paper to write opens limitless possibilities of interesting reading. Telling of her own work makes her take an interest in that of other people. Trying to get people to work and being met by the countless excuses, makes one understand the parable of the Bible and brings to mind "They then with one accord began to make excuse." The rebuffs met have made some women vow they will ever after do what they are asked. As to those who are interested in hours and prices, let them make a study of prices with regard to the cost of living in certain localities, not only of nurses, but of others in similar lines of work. A study of a given number of cases and

the number of hours of actual work done by nurses would be of immense value and is needed in the adjustment of charges, in every state in the Union.

In the report of the sixth annual meeting of the Associated Alumnae, there is a very illuminating paper on "How to Prepare Our Student Nurses for the Duties of the Alumnae." Miss Walker, the author, speaks of the importance of the selection of graduates for hospital positions because of their part in the education of the student. Might not our alumnae associations see, right here, an opportunity for concerted action,—for not less than the officers of the school are the graduates on special duty responsible for the ideals, viewpoint, and general behavior of the student nurse on graduation. Here the alumnae association will reap as its members sow. The superintendents are helpless in these times of need; they must take the graduates regardless of their morale. Should not the alumnae association assume the responsibility for its members? Here is a chance for a code of ethics in carrying out the hospital etiquette.

Miss Walker, in enumerating the methods of educating the student for her alumnae duties, goes on to say: "She should study nursing history, be drilled in parliamentary law, be taught to formulate thought and opinion, and to express herself in a businesslike manner, and be taught the needs of the community." She then quotes the following from Kropotkin: "Every specialist or expert ought to know the work of other specialists or experts to understand and sympathize with what they have to do." In fact, Miss Walker felt then that the schools should do what many of our schools are trying to do to-day, to send out broadminded, thinking women, knowing something of many fields, and with a foundation in her own field which will stimulate her to action and make her realize that she has but just begun, at the bottom of the ladder, and must climb, working shoulder to shoulder not only with those in her own profession, but with others, taking an intelligent interest in the work of others. As health, which is her specialty, is the root of the nation's prosperity, she must take an intelligent interest in the affairs of the nation, realizing that in national affairs we have the same divisions of national, state, county, and city, and that here as in our own profession, all depends on the individual.

While this is our conception of the duty of the school in the education of the nurse, it was not until recently that the superintendent of nurses had either the time or the assistants necessary to put it in practice, so to-day, in most cases, this education of the new graduate to her responsibilities rests with the alumnae association.

The alumnae association must plan so that its meetings are

carried on strictly according to parliamentary law and its members drilled to its usage. Much unhappiness and strife could be prevented if this were done.

Presidents sometimes do not control the meeting, some even do all of the talking instead of presiding and guiding; members do not discuss the matters presented at the proper time, i. e., after the motion is made or, in fact, at the meeting, and refrain from voting, when not pleased with the motion, seemingly oblivious to the fact that if they do not vote, they are practically voting with the majority.

When we speak of the Alumnae as filling out where the school has failed, do we not see a new responsibility devolving on the association,—that of letting the board of directors know where the school is failing? Who knows this as well as the nurse, who sees wherein her school has failed from what she, herself, lacks? A mistaken sense of loyalty sometimes makes a nurse claim a satisfaction with her school which she does not feel and which is not justified. Disloyalty makes others criticise both superintendent and school in a most unwise and unguarded manner. There are two kinds of criticism, destructive and constructive. The former may be given at any time and any place, without knowledge of the facts, before strangers, and where it will do a vast amount of harm from the lack of correct information on the part of the listeners; this in plain English may be called gossip. The other is given after thought, investigation, and a careful study of the facts, with a clear idea of a remedy, and it is given to the proper authorities at the proper time and place.

Let me give some examples: a subject is up for consideration before the alumnae, the motion is made and seconded, thrown open for discussion, voted upon, and carried, and you and I did not discuss it, nor vote against it; we did not vote at all, but when the matter has been decided by the vote of the *majority*, we criticise it and disapprove of it. This is destructive criticism,—gossip. The same is true of a nurse who discusses her superintendent or her school in a public place instead of going, if her criticism is upheld by the facts, to the superintendent, or the training school board. She is also indulging in destructive criticism or gossip. Any superintendent worthy of the name is glad of constructive criticism. Ought not matters worthy of repetition and to which the superintendent's attention should be called, be taken to the Executive Board of the Alumnae and, after due investigation and study of the facts, be presented to the training school authorities through dignified action of the Alumnae? Also it would seem true of our schools, as of colleges and universities, that a member of the Alumnae should be on the board of the school; she should be an educated, broadminded woman, unafraid. Such an

one would be the right hand of the superintendent, in getting the nurse's viewpoint to the Board; she would be a valuable advisor to them in the matter of getting to the public the proper information as to the needs of the school.

Two remarkable factors in the controversy as to the content of a nurse's education, to-day, is that the question always asked is: What do the doctors say? Not, What do the nurses say? The doctor himself tells what the nurse needs; he does not ask, What have you, in your work, found that you need?

Another responsibility of the Alumnae is welcoming and supporting a new superintendent, even when she is a graduate of another school. This would bring a new era. The Alumnae should be the first to realize the value of new ideas, of new blood. It has taken even till to-day, in some parts of the country, to realize that one school can give as good a training as another and turn out as capable, or perhaps more capable, women. Will our alumnae associations be the first to take the true university idea that the biggest, best prepared woman is the one they want for their school and not continue the old plan of the best woman, *if* a graduate of *our* school; if not, then we must have a poorer one, for first and always she must have been graduated from "our school." Many a superintendent has failed from no other cause than the enmity of the alumnae,—because "she is not of us."

In the present crisis through which our schools are passing, there is no recruiting agency so valuable as the alumnae. The graduate who criticizes her school in a thoughtless or exaggerated way, or the graduate who talks to strangers of the hardships and lack of appreciation shown the profession, are the kind who, after twenty years of nursing still talk of the nurse's life being only from seven to ten years. Be she young or old, she is the kind that is sorry for herself and yet never has time or interest to give to her organization. She is the greatest hindrance to our recruiting that can be found. She who sighs over the "inferior type" of the students of to-day, who is sure that the shortage of applicants is due to too high standards, seems utterly unconscious of the contradiction and has no idea that she is contributing to the shortage. Should not the Alumnae try to educate its members from such thoughtless habits of negation? Should not the Alumnae try and keep pace with the school and with science? Any medical book that is more than ten years old and which has not been rewritten nor revised is no longer of much use, (which perhaps is why the medical staff makes periodical donations to the training school library) except for certain fundamental things which are always true.

Science is overturning all theories every little while and then methods change. Is not the graduate who has never taken a post-graduate course, never bought or read nursing or medical magazines, never read any up-to-date books, very much like those medical books? She is probably very proficient in bedside care, but is she in a position to pronounce judgment on nursing education?

The alumnae association should promote among its members mutual understanding of subjects pertaining to the profession of nursing, particularly as taught in and relating to the school from which its members graduated. It should be a forum where its members are prepared for duties in the district and the state, and it should have a special supervision of the ethical standards and performance of its members. To this we might add that the alumnae association should use this forum to prepare its members to exercise the rights and privileges of citizenship which have been conferred on women and which should be used by professional women with the greatest care.

We have been used to hearing nurses make excuses for their neglect to inform themselves on subjects of city, state, and national policy on the ground of lack of time, lack of interest,—all the usual excuses—but to-day no woman, and least of all one engaged in a work so vital to the nation as restoring and maintaining the health of its citizens, can plead any of the old excuses, she is an enfranchised citizen and as such upon her rests an obligation. Her alumnae associations should help her prepare to perform these in the wisest manner by bringing to its meetings those who can inform her.

In closing let me quote from two of our most valued women: Miss Palmer said, years ago: "Organization is the power of the age, without it nothing great can be accomplished and all questions having the ultimate good of the profession in view, depend upon united action for success."

Miss Dock, in writing on our national organization work, quoted the following:

The nation devolves all that it can upon the state, the state on the county, the county on the township, the township on the individual. It is to be hoped beyond a doubt that the merits of the individual as regards character and ability are what they should be,—remembering that upon these two qualities rest the honor and universal acknowledgment of our organization.