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THE Nursing Record AND The Hospital World.

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Editorial.

UNDER LOCK AND KEY.

A NOTHER death of a patient at a Metropolitan Infirmary having occurred from drinking a strong disinfectant placed in the lavatory of the ward, draws attention to the necessity of keeping all poisonous disinfectants under lock and key. It is not unusual to see in the lavatories of hospitals and infirmaries large bottles of strong solutions of carbolic and perchloride of mercury, placed there no doubt in order to be at hand for the necessary disinfection of infectious matter and ward appliances. At the same time the practice, though a usual, is a very dangerous one. Patients whose antecedents are necessarily to a great extent unknown, constantly and alone visit the lavatories where such disinfectants are exposed.

It is not too much to assume that a certain proportion of them have suicidal tendencies. It is, therefore, in the highest degree dangerous to confront them, when they are depressed and dispirited by illness, with an array of bottles containing strong poisons, by means of which self-destruction may be readily accomplished.

What, then, is to be done? For it is neces-

sary to be practical, as well as careful, and to realize that, though such poisons must be kept out of the hands of patients, they must be easy of access to the nursing staff. One solution of the difficulty would be that poisons should be placed in a *special cupboard in the lavatories*, and kept under lock and key and that each nurse should have a key of the poison cupboard. But when we consider the capacity of nurses for losing the keys of their own cupboards and drawers, so much so that in some institutions a fine of sixpence is imposed for every new key supplied, this plan does not seem very practicable. There would be a constant cry for keys, and it is not improbable that these might fall into the hands of the patients for whose protection they were designed. A more feasible arrangement would be a patent keyless lock, the secret of which would only be known to the nursing staff. It is certain that the lax way in which poisonous disinfectants have been left lying about in lavatories in the past cannot be permitted in the future, and that practical means must be devised whereby they may be kept under a system which renders them easy of access to the nursing staff and impossible of attainment by the patients.

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