

the ward, each with a bowl of carbolic, a tooth comb, and a bit of lint, and systematically comb all the heads on one side of the ward? Occasionally nurse disappears and presumably gets rid of the carbolic which contains "entomological specimens" as she is seen to put fresh carbolic into her bowl before attacking another head; but the comb remains the same. Number two, therefore, is left to the pleasing reflection that number one had what is known in hospital parlance as "a dirty head," and if the said number two has not supreme faith in the germicidal properties of carbolic he cannot suppress a shiver at the thought of the comb which is so soon to be used for himself. Remonstrance, he knows, will be ineffectual and useless, for, on "head night," all the heads in the ward must be combed, so he submits, with a shudder, and thinks inwardly that, although the hospital is a first-rate place, some of its manners and customs might, with advantage, be amended. We should like to know, for instance, which was likely to be the cleanest, the head of the lady to whom the "ostentatious search for entomological specimens," reported to have been made by the nurses of the Royal Free Hospital, was so distasteful, or the comb, which it is fair to assume had done good service in cleansing the heads of the denizens in Commercial Road, Leather Lane, and, may be, Saffron Hill.

Another institution which would doubtless be public property is the "ward tooth brush," only it is an extraordinary fact that tooth brushes are never supposed to be required by hospital patients. They may stay in for weeks, months, and years, but no suggestion comes from the nurses, who in other respects, apparently, live to wage war with dirt, that it is expedient that the patients should use tooth brushes. Is it not a fact that no arrangements are made to this end, and that if a better-class patient occasionally asks for a glass, or mug of water for this purpose he is considered exceedingly "faddy," and unnecessarily particular? Then as to ablutions—

#### "THE WARD TOWEL"

is not, perhaps, so usual as it used to be, but it is not many years since that it was in common use, and even now it has by no means disappeared. A step which may be thought to be in advance of the use of a common towel is the practice adopted by some hospitals of

requiring the patients to have their own brought in, but, considering the slums from which some of the patients come, this is, we think, a very doubtful benefit. We are of opinion that both soap and towels are best provided by the hospital authorities.

#### "DOSSET."

Another unsavory habit is that of requiring patients to provide their own tea, sugar, and butter. These provisions are naturally kept by the patient in his own locker, as he does not desire that they should go to swell the common stock, or that he should get his opposite neighbour's "margarine" in exchange for his own "best one-and-fourpenny." Imagine also the condition of the Dorset butter—which is, after all, that which is perhaps most commonly provided—after it has been kept from Sunday to Thursday in a ward of four-and-twenty sick people, and in a locker which may, or may not, be ventilated, and which contains, we may hope in separate compartments, the brush and comb, soap and towels, clean linen, and *soiled linen*, waiting the advent of the guid wife on next visiting day for removal. Considering the nature of the cases frequently under treatment we can only surmise, not having "sampled" the "Dosset" under these conditions, that its flavour would scarcely be calculated to tempt the capricious appetite of an invalid, and the practice of keeping food in ward lockers at all, is, to our mind, disgusting. When the day comes that our hospital committees include at least one lady amongst their members we venture to think that these atrocities will no longer be in vogue, but the masculine mind can scarcely be expected, or desired, to enter into these details of domestic management.

#### DECOY DUCKS.

AT a recent meeting of a hospital committee the action of the matron in declining to allow the nurses of the hospital to attend the local cricket matches for the purpose of selling flowers was fully approved by the committee. The fact was brought out by a minute of the house committee which stated that the honorary secretary of the annual Charity Cricket Matches had written "requesting the matron to explain at her earliest convenience the absence of the nurses to superintend the flower stalls at the cricket matches last year." We are entirely in sympathy with the matron

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