

NOTE ON THE DISINFECTION OF PHYSICIANS' CLOTHING.

BY ROBT. L. DICKINSON, M.D.,

Lecturer on Obstetrics and Assistant Obstetrician to the Long Island College Hospital.

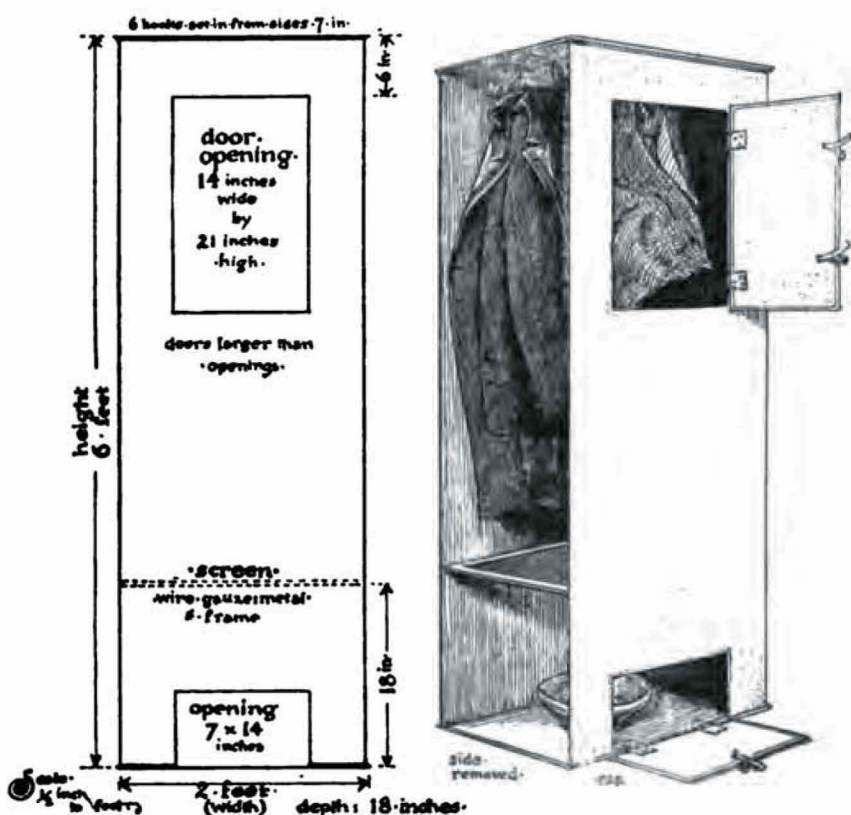
Read before the Medical Society of the County of Kings, June 19th, 1888.

A simple, ready method is needed—and an inexpensive one as well. The man busy in practice will shirk cumbrous devices. If he has but to hang his suit on a hook, touch a light to a dash of alcohol, and close a door, he is altogether likely to carry out his good resolutions, and sterilize his clothing after every exposure. The galvanized iron closet devised by Dr. Chas. Jewett, which I have used for some months with much satisfaction, meets these indications. Certain modifications suggested by experience are added in this description.

Few houses have spare closets which can be kept empty for this purpose, or so placed that fumes escaping would not greatly inconvenience the occupants of the remainder of the floor. But the metal box may be placed in any desired position, as in the yard or under the front steps.

The disinfectant used is sulphur. The employment of dry heat at 230° Fahrenheit for one or two hours is impracticable by any simple method which does not require watching. Steam saturates, and might cause shrinking. Chlorine acts only in the presence of moisture, under which condition the colors and texture of fabrics will be affected. Sulphurous acid gas is efficient, inexpensive, and easily produced. It is endorsed by the writers on hygiene, by the National and local Health Boards, and by the Committee on Disinfectants of the American Public Health Association in their exhaustive report (Dr. Sternberg, Chairman, in *Phila. Med. News*, December, 1885).

Half an ounce is all that is required by the cubic air space of this closet, but I usually throw half a pound into the bowl to ensure the most complete saturation, and to allow of some leakage. An ounce of alcohol ignites the sulphur readily. More than a small quantity of alcohol should not be used for fear of the flames leaping up high—although danger of igniting the clothes is obviated by the screen.



Galvanized iron fumigating closet: elevation and perspective. The side is removed to show the interior, with the screen between the two compartments.

The closet should be six feet high, two feet wide, and eighteen inches deep. A shorter closet brings the clothing down on the screen. The screen is made of ordinary mosquito wire gauze. The openings

are kept as small as they conveniently may be. Should the upper door not close tightly, a piece of cloth larger than the door can be placed on its inner side and lapped back over its edges, although this has not been found at all necessary in practice.

Four hours' exposure of the clothing in this closet is probably sufficient, but the suit may well be hung up in the evening and left over night. It may be worn again in the morning without needing to be aired; in such case the wearer scents sulphur faintly for some hours, but no one else is conscious of the odor.

The cost of this closet is about thirteen dollars.