

Legal Matters.

DEATH FROM EXPOSURE.

The circumstances of the death of a Taunton lady while a patient in a nursing home in that town, were the subject of an inquiry by the Deputy Coroner for West Somerset, Mr. D. S. Watson, last week.

The husband of the deceased lady, Mr. James B. Hunt, said she had been unwell for two months and rather depressed, and she had expressed the wish for change and rest. He sent her to Minehead, and after ten days she did not feel so well. At Christmas, as she was anxious to be at home, he brought her back to Taunton, and placed her at the nursing home in Silver Street.

Miss Gertrude Florence Wingate said she was a professional nurse, and kept the home in Silver Street, which was her own. She was assisted by a probationer, Miss Florence Agnes Snell, and never had more assistance permanently, but had a trained nurse, if she required one. Mrs. Watson, who was suffering from nervous breakdown, was sent into the home by Dr. Farrant, and treated by rest in bed. Nurse Snell slept in her room and reported that she was restless the first night. The patient stayed in bed on Christmas Day, and seemed bright and happy. The next night she was given a powder in some hot milk about 10.45. On the morning of the 26th, the nurse came to her at 7.30 and told her Mrs. Hunt's bed was empty. She immediately got up and searched the house, and then went and informed Dr. Farrant. About 12.30 p.m. she found the deceased, still in her night attire, in the dyke quite dead, lying on her side. The water was about nine or ten inches deep. She had no reason to suspect the patient of suicidal tendencies. The doctor gave no special instructions, except that a nurse should sleep in the room with her for company.

The probationer gave evidence to the same effect. She said that she gave the sleeping draught about eleven, but did not know what was in it. She was herself a heavy sleeper. She woke at seven the next morning, but did not miss the deceased until 7.30.

The servant deposed to finding the kitchen door wide open when she went down in the morning. She informed Nurse Snell, who was dressing in a room adjoining Mrs. Hunt's. She was told to switch on the light, and then they saw that Mrs. Hunt had gone. Nurse Snell went and told the Sister.

P.-C. Parsons testified to finding the deceased.

The doctor, Mr. Charles Farrant, said the deceased was suffering from a nervous breakdown due to frequent lactation. She had some bad nights at Minehead, but was considerably better on her return. He was quite satisfied with her condition, and made arrangements for her to go into the home, where she was undergoing "what was known as the rest cure—to stay in bed and have some one with her." The patient complained of pains in the head. In reply to the Coroner, he said he had every confidence in Nurse Wingate's home. The deceased was not in a condition to

take considerable exercise, and if out of doors on a night like that following Christmas Day, which was so cold, and with a pulse so previously shaky, she would not be able to stand it.

The jury returned a verdict that the deceased died from exposure, and expressed their sympathy with the husband and children.

The sick require care and attention by night as well as day, and, therefore, in all nursing homes there should be a night nurse on duty. It is manifest that no nurse can watch a patient or attend to her wants while she is asleep, and the practice of putting a nurse to sleep in the patient's room should be abolished.

A TERRIBLE CASE.

An inquest was held last week by Dr. George Danford Thomas into the terrible circumstances of the death of the male child of Esther Edith Cross, aged 34, which was found in a box at 4, Bisham's Gardens, Highgate.

Mrs. E. S. Wheeler, a boarding-house keeper, deposed that the nurse came from a nursing institute at Highgate, and slept in the house on the previous Monday. She brought a box with her and left it behind her. On the subsequent Wednesday one of the Sisters from the institute called and opened the box, which contained a parcel. On the parcel being opened by Dr. Henderson, it was found to contain the body of a male child, which was not born in her house.

Dr. Alexander M. Henderson said that he found the child dead, but still warm. There was a large gaping wound over two inches in length on the left side of the chest. The child was fully developed and weighed nearly eight pounds; it was born alive, and death was due to the wound in the chest, the lungs being penetrated. The wound must have been inflicted directly the child was born. There were wounds on the child's head, the skull having been penetrated twice by the scissors. The mother, Miss Cross, admitted to him that the child was hers, after having been told that the body had been found in her box. She asserted it had not breathed. As the nurse was ill, he had her removed to the Great Northern Central Hospital.

A Police-Inspector produced bloodstained scissors and clothing belonging to Miss Cross, and Dr. George Fletcher, Divisional Surgeon, X Division, said that there was no doubt the child had a separate existence.

The inquest was adjourned.

NURSING UNIFORM IN THE DOCK.

At Norwich, last week, Gertrude Wright appeared in the dock in nursing uniform, to answer to the charge of obtaining money on false pretences from Mrs. Catherine Mary Jones.

She was arrested in Yarmouth, being at the time a ward maid in the Yarmouth General Hospital.

Detective-Inspector High informed the Bench that there were several previous convictions against her for a similar offence, and one for felony.

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