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Editorial.

A DISGRACE TO HUMANITY.

We frequently refrain from dealing with hospital cases concerning which inquests are held, believing that sufficient publicity is given to them in the daily Press. But the circumstances of the death of Rose Askew, who was treated recently in the surgery of St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, are so exceptional that we consider we should fail in our duty if we did not refer to them.

Briefly, a student of the hospital was in a hansom in the Marylebone Road when this unfortunate woman was knocked down, the wheel of the vehicle passing over her. When picked up she was insensible and bleeding from the mouth. She was at once placed in the hansom and taken to the hospital, where her wounds were dressed, and she partially recovered consciousness. The history of the accident and injury was therefore well authenticated.

The House Surgeon, Dr. Coombes, deposed that the deceased woman was only partially conscious when he saw her. All the injuries he could find were cuts on her forehead and upper lip, which were dressed. At ten o'clock she seemed more conscious, but the worse for drink, and at 11.45, as she appeared better, and there was no bed available in the hospital, he suggested to a porter to call a policeman to take her to the infirmary. She was not absolutely conscious, but he thought her fit to be moved, otherwise he would have had a bed made up for her on the floor. He did not think her ill enough to be sent to the infirmary, and only suggested it as a precautionary measure.

The night porter at the hospital deposed that the constable called in said it was no use taking the woman to the infirmary, but if she were drunk he would take her to the station.

What followed must be regarded as a disgrace to humanity. The poor creature was deposited by the porter at midnight,

in the bitter cold, on the ground outside the hospital. This official stated at the inquest that "He did not see any ambulance. . . . Witness left her on the ground in the footway, and went back to his duties." A constable said that the woman had no skirt on, and no underclothing, nothing from her waist downwards, no boots, only stockings. When he remonstrated with the porter, he replied, "That's the way they put them out at St. Thomas's." He afterwards brought out her dress and threw it on her, and a pair of corsets. Dr. Schofield, the police surgeon, said he was so disgusted with the way the deceased had been sent out that he wrote to the hospital authorities.

After admission to the infirmary the woman became paralysed, and gradually sank, and died within a week of the accident. It was proved that death was due to congestive pneumonia following paralysis caused by an injury to the spinal cord, and that there was also a small fracture of the skull. It is almost incredible that a story revealing such callousness and disregard for decency can be related in connection with one of the great metropolitan hospitals at the present day. It will, no doubt, intensify the strong feeling of many persons against the system of the support of hospitals by a central board by which contributions are pooled and distributed. There is much to be said in favour of subscription to individual hospitals, concerning which the subscriber has satisfied himself that the patients are humanely dealt with.

Another point which forces itself upon our attention in connection with this case is that, apparently, the porter dealt with it from first to last. Was there no nurse on duty in the surgery? We presume not, for no woman worthy of the name could have allowed a patient to be sent out in the way described. But certainly it is essential for the adequate organisation of the nursing department of a large hospital that a trained nurse should be on

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