

A "DREADFUL TRAGEDY OF ERRORS."

APPALLING IGNORANCE OF NURSE AND ORDERLY. TERRIBLE SUFFERING AND LONELY DEATH OF A SOLDIER.

At the request of trained nurses in the locality, who are justly indignant at the circumstances related, we publish in full a report from *The Western Gazette* concerning the inquest on James Gribbin, a private in the 3rd Batt. Royal Scots Regiment at Weymouth. Deep indignation is felt by trained nurses that a soldier suffering, according to the medical evidence, from mortal injuries, should have been sent away from the Sidney Hall Military Hospital, to which he had been taken, and without medical advice, on the assumption that he was drunk, sent back to camp, and left to die alone, lying on the ground, just covered with a blanket, in the Guard Room.

The Coroner for South Dorset (Mr. G. P. Symes), held an inquest, at the Guildhall, Weymouth, on Monday afternoon, concerning the death of a private of the Royal Scots Regiment, stationed at the Military Camp at Chickerell, who died on the morning of Saturday, the 13th, from injuries received on the previous night through being run over by a motor-car driven by Wm. Powell, a driver in the employ of Mr. E. W. Puffett. The deceased, who was a single man, was thirty-seven years of age, and a native of Midlothian.

Mr. W. T. Wilkinson represented Mr. Puffett and Sister Cuthbert, of the Sidney Hall Military Hospital; and the police in attendance were Superintendent Sprackling, P.S. Osment, and P.C. Harvey.

The Coroner said he wished in the first place to compliment P.C. Harvey, of the County Constabulary, for the very able manner in which he had prepared the evidence for presentation to the jury.

Superintendent Sprackling thanked the Coroner for his compliment to the officer, and said he would be pleased to forward an intimation of it to the proper quarter.

CONFLICT OF EVIDENCE.

In opening the case to the jury, the Coroner said it was a very important one, and one which, unfortunately, would involve a considerable conflict of evidence. The deceased appeared to have been knocked down by a motor-car, at about nine o'clock at night, near the Weymouth Cemetery. The driver was cautioned in the usual way by the police, and he said that at the time his car came upon the deceased he was lying in the road. Then some soldiers of the Northants Regiment, who were returning to Weymouth, said they passed the deceased just before the accident occurred, and that he was then walking in the ordinary way. The man was taken from under the motor-car and conveyed in it to the Sidney Hall Military Hospital,

but, unfortunately, they had another matter to consider as to what happened there. The doctors would tell the jury that one result of the car striking the man was that the pelvis was broken, and that very serious injuries were caused. There were injuries to the head, but they were not in any way the cause of death. At the Sidney Hall the deceased was helped out of the car, and as to what subsequently took place there appeared to be a good deal of recrimination amongst the witnesses on the question of sobriety, and it appeared to have been assumed, without much question, that the deceased was intoxicated. The deceased was taken in and seen by the nurse in charge and one of the orderlies; but the fact remained that they appeared to have taken upon themselves to say that he was drunk, and that the only injury he was suffering from consisted of wounds in the head. No doctor was sent for, but after the wound in the man's forehead had been bandaged afresh he was sent back to the Chickerell Camp. And here another conflict of evidence occurred, for the nurse said that she gave instructions for him to be taken to the hospital at the Red Barracks. But at the camp the dreadful tragedy of errors did not cease, and again conflict of evidence occurred. The injured man was taken to the guard tent, and the Sergeant of the Guard stated that he was not informed that he had been run over by a motor-car, the consequence being that he was simply treated as an intoxicated man who had been picked up in the road with a cut in his head. Some of the witnesses would say that the deceased walked into the guard tent, but the doctors would say that with the pelvis bone broken that was practically impossible, so he evidently must have been helped to a very considerable extent. Anyway, he was put in the guard tent with a blanket round him, and in a short time he died. It would be for the jury to say what was the cause of death, and whether any blame was to be attached to anyone.

Wm. Powell, the driver of the motor-car, who, after being cautioned by the Coroner, elected to give evidence, stated that at nine o'clock on Friday night he was returning from the Chickerell Camp with a motor-car. The car was empty, and as he came round the corner by the Weymouth Cemetery he saw a man lying straight across the road. He applied his brakes and pulled up, but by that time the front part of the car had passed over the man. He was not travelling fast at the time, and he thought he stopped in about half the length of the car. He saw some soldiers in the road, and shouted to them for assistance. They came, and with the aid of a lamp they saw the deceased on his back under the car. When they got the deceased out he was unconscious for a short time, but he recovered and said "I'm all right." Someone fetched water, and the deceased's face was bathed, after which he was put in the car and run down to the Sidney Hall. Witness had only two very poor side lights, as he had been told that night to put out head lights. It was a very dark night. Witness went into the Sidney Hall and saw a nurse attending to the

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