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EDITORIAL.

DIAGNOSIS NOT THE NURSE'S DUTY.

The circumstances under which an unconscious patient was refused admission to the Victoria Central Hospital, Liscard, related at an inquest on February 1st, reveal a laxity and inhumanity which we should have imagined would be condemned by every compassionate person, and we deeply regret that Mr. C. R. B. M'Gilchrist, Chairman of the hospital, should have supported the indefensible conduct of the officials concerned.

The facts are, briefly, that an unconscious woman was taken to the hospital. She was seen only by a nurse, who, according to the son's evidence, informed him that the case was not one for the hospital, and the patient must be taken back home, and on to workhouse hospital, and that the relieving officer would see to it.

Dr. F. W. Inman, who saw the patient about an hour after her return home, where she had been taken in the motor ambulance which conveyed her to the hospital, said she was deeply unconscious, and her right side was paralysed. She remained unconscious to a certain extent, and could not speak, and died the following Saturday from hæmorrhage of the brain, accelerated by a fall. As she was suffering from apoplexy, death might have occurred at any time. He believed the hospital was full and there was no room for the case.

The Coroner remarked that it would do the woman no good to be taken to the hospital and back again, and the witness concurred, saying that she might have been put on a couch at the hospital and examined again.

The nurse said that she saw the deceased woman in the out-patients' department. She did not fully examine her, but informed the doctor, who was in bed, and did not come to see the case. She told him that the patient was unconscious and vomiting. It was the doctor's orders that the woman should be removed to the workhouse hospital, and she accordingly rang up the relieving officer, who said if they

had not room for her in the hospital, she had better be sent home.

The evidence of this officer was at variance with the nurse's on this point, as he stated he suggested the patient should remain at the hospital till he saw her, but the nurse said she could not stop there. He visited the case as soon as possible, and found the husband in a sad state about the treatment of his wife at the hospital. They refused to hear of her going to the workhouse hospital as she was comfortably in bed, and had been seen by a doctor. He could not understand why the woman was not allowed to remain at the Central Hospital.

The Coroner told the jury that it was not part of their duty to make inquiry into the conduct of the hospital. At the same time he was sure they could not help feeling the woman had not been treated in the way the Committee would have liked her to be treated, but after the Chairman, Mr. C. R. B. M'Gilchrist, had made a statement, defending the action of the officials on behalf of the Committee of Management, and stating that they thought that sending the woman back home had nothing to do with her death, the Coroner said: "We understand now that whatever occurred when the woman was admitted is approved by the Hospital Committee."

It is inconceivable that in any hospital a case of this kind should be so dealt with. It should, of course, have been seen by the doctor, and the nurse had no right to assume any responsibility in regard to it. Diagnosis is not the nurse's duty. Until the doctor came down it was her duty to make the woman as comfortable as possible, and to keep her under observation. Instead of which, an unconscious patient, with a fresh cerebral hæmorrhage, a condition requiring absolute rest, was not even allowed to remain at the hospital until she could be seen by the relieving officer.

We are not surprised that an emphatic protest has been raised by the Wallasey Council, and that it has been proposed that the Council should withdraw its annual subscription of £300 until the management is entirely changed.

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