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EDITORIAL.

A PITIFUL STORY.

The Local Government Board inquiry on the death of the baby boy of Mrs. Helena Williams in the Toxteth Park Poor Law Infirmary, Liverpool, reveals a harrowing and almost incredible condition of affairs. Mrs. Williams was the wife of a second-lieutenant of the King's Liverpool Regiment, killed in action last year, and during the influenza epidemic in February last she and her baby were admitted to the above infirmary.

In the first place, why the widow of an officer who gave his life for his country should be driven to seek admission to a poor-law infirmary in illness needs some explanation.

Next, the baby was taken from its mother on admission and placed in another ward. In ten days' time the mother took him out, and sent for a doctor, but the child died ten hours later.

The Local Government Board enquiry was held by Mr. W. P. Elias and Mr. A. Fuller.

Mrs. Williams stated that when she entered the institution, suffering from influenza, her baby was taken from her. She asked for him each day, but was told by a nurse that he was healthy but she could not see him. When she did see him ten days later he was shockingly ill. She would not have known him except for a little cross hanging round his neck.

The Lord Mayor, at whose instance the facts were placed before the Local Government Board, stated at the enquiry that he was chairman of the Liverpool Officers' Families' Fund. From Mrs. Williams' statements he considered that there should be further enquiry.

The Deputy-Coroner stated that at the inquest on the baby he returned a verdict of death from broncho-pneumonia, and added a rider that he was not satisfied with the evidence

from the institution, and that there seemed to have been some neglect.

The medical and nursing evidence was amazing. Miss Edith Bradley, the nurse in charge of the children's ward, said that the child began with acute bronchitis on the fifth day. It was not intimated to her that the mother wished to see the child till it was ill; then it was taken to her. Under cross-examination the nurse admitted that the child's illness was not entered on the bed card, nor could she say why his weight was not recorded. She did not know he was kept on a diet for a healthy child.

Dr. Gertrude Cuttle, Medical Officer, said that Mrs. Williams, who was in the next ward, was not communicated with as to the state of her child. She visited both mother and child for 14 days, but did not know they were related. She could not explain why there was no record of nursing attention or medical treatment, as required by the Local Government Board instructions.

Dr. David Smart, Visiting Medical Officer, said the child could have been put with the mother without any risk, but there were so many Williamses in the institution they did not suspect the relationship. But mother and child were admitted together, and surely it had an identification card.

Poor little baby Williams! You were so changed in five days that your mother did not know you. She only knew your little cross. And there were so many of you, they did not know that you belonged to your own mother. Well, did you? Supposing in the general slackness the cross was changed? If we were that mother we should not rest till we had seen all the little Williamses who were in the ward during those ten days.

Evidently this institution needs drastic re-organization.

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