

DEATH AT HOSPITAL.

MENTAL PATIENT BURNT.

Nurses' Stories at Inquest.

MELBOURNE, Oct. 9.—Doubts whether he had been told the whole truth about an incident at the Mont Park Mental Hospital on September 23, when a woman patient, aged 35, suffered burns from which she died three days later, were expressed by the Coroner (Mr. Tingate, P.M.) at an inquest into the woman's death today. Evidence was given that when the patient was admitted it was known that she had suicidal tendencies and had threatened to set fire to her clothing.

Dr. Stanley Jacob Cantor, senior medical officer at the hospital, said that early on the morning of September 23 he saw Nurses Pringle and Keating applying dressings to a woman patient suffering from burns. In a conversation with the nurses he gained the impression that they had been smoking and had left a box of matches on a chair. Neither nurse had made a direct admission.

Nurse Zoe Roberta Pringle said that at 4.5 a.m. on September 23 she relinquished charge of a dormitory. Nurse Keating relieved her. No matches had been used that night.

Nurse Elsie May Keating said that when she relieved Nurse Pringle she took a seat in the dormitory. The woman patient was in bed. Later she heard screams and rushed to a lavatory, where she saw the woman standing enveloped in flames. She extinguished the flames with a blanket and received slight burns herself. She rarely smoked and had no cigarettes or matches that night.

The Coroner: Can you give any reason why you told the matron that matches were on a chair?

Witness: I was very upset and do not know what I told the matron.

A finding that the woman died from self-inflicted burns while of unsound mind was recorded.