

"Some Delay," Says Coroner

NURSES and a doctor were closely questioned by the Coroner (Mr Grant, P.M.) on October 8 at the inquest on Allan Frederick Barnes, 6, an inmate of the Children's Cottages at the Kew Asylum, who received fatal scalds on August 18, and died next day.

Ellen Mary Cusack, nurse, of the Children's Cottages, Kew, described how on August 18 at about 9.18 a.m. Allan Barnes had come on to the verandah of the ward where injuries were dressed, and had slipped and tipped over an aluminium basin of boiling water which was on a table. The water fell on him, scalding his ear, chest and abdomen.

She poured carron oil all over him and sent for Acting Matron Hammer and Dr. Ryan. Miss Hammer arrived in a few minutes and rang the doctor and told him the facts. The doctor arrived an hour later. During the day the doctor constantly kept in touch with her and advised her, but at 8.45 a.m. the next day Allan Barnes died.

Nurse Cusack said that Barnes was not a bad patient, but he could not walk steadily.

"I do not know what caused him to fall. He seemed to fall and bring the basin with him," she said.

There were 16 boys on the verandah at the time of the accident, she told the Coroner.

The Coroner: Why didn't you put the basin out of their reach?

Nurse Cusack: I couldn't very well. I wanted to use it for a foment. I was standing right beside it.

"Doctor's Arrival"

Can you explain why you were not able to prevent the boy upsetting the basin over himself?—No, I cannot.

Was there anything to distract your attention?—I was preparing oiled silk for the foment.

How did you communicate with Dr. Ryan?—Through the acting matron. I sent for the matron before I sent for Dr. Ryan. Matron Hammer sent for him as soon as she knew the facts. About five minutes elapsed between the time of the accident and the matron telephoning for a doctor.

Do you know when Dr. Ryan arrived?—I cannot say definitely.

Jane Hoan Hammer, nurse, of the Children's Cottage, Kew, said that on the day of the accident she was acting matron. She rang for Dr. Ryan as soon as she saw Barnes's injuries. He pre-

scribed picric acid, which was applied to the scald.

"Special Mixture"

At about 11.30 a.m. Dr. Ryan exam-

ined Barnes and ordered carron oil and a special epileptic mixture," said Nurse Hammer. "I had already given him one dose of this medicine. He also ordered that a nurse be in constant attendance. Barnes died the next morning."

The Coroner: How many patients did Dr. Ryan see before he saw Barnes?

Nurse Hammer: He did the rounds on the female section before visiting Barnes. He came straight to Barnes before visiting the male ward.

When Dr. Ryan saw the child, what did he prescribe?—Carron oil.

But carron oil had already been applied. Did you not tell the doctor that?—No.

Why not?—It was an omission on my part, I suppose.

How many times did you visit the patient?—Oh, two or three times.

Did you want to relieve the pain by further treatment?—Naturally.

Did you ring the doctor again during the day?—No. I thought that it was his responsibility to visit the patient during the day.

Doctor's Evidence

Dr. William Bernard Ryan, medical officer of the Mental Hospital, Kew, said that when he saw the patient at 11.30 a.m. he prescribed repeated application of carron oil.

In answer to Detective Sickerdick, Dr. Ryan said that he had considered the use of morphine injections, and had decided that in Barnes's case they should not be used.

The Coroner: Why did you not go down as soon as you got the telephone message?

Dr. Ryan: I considered it a superficial burning of not much importance, judging from the description I received over the telephone.

Nurse Hammer said Dr. Ryan did not give him a definite description of the area of the scalds.

"Recognised Treatment"

Dr. Clive Farran-Ridge, of Mont Park Mental Hospital, said that he had performed a post-mortem on Barnes, and in his opinion death was caused by

formed a post-mortem on Barnes, and in his opinion death was caused by shock and toxemia, following scalds of the chest, face and neck.

In his opinion a spray of tannic acid would have been more effective in relieving Barnes's pain, although Dr. Ryan's treatment was a recognised one. With regard to the morphine injections, in fairness to Dr. Ryan, the highest authorities held they were harmful in certain cases of scalding to children.

A finding of accidental death was recorded.