

the second day afterwards that he was told that the man who came into the room was Constable King, and that he was killed by the shot.

MacCallum was charged with, 1st, threatening to shoot Constable MacNiven; and 2nd, the murder of Constable King. The medical witnesses were agreed that he was not insane when in prison awaiting his trial, and that there was no evidence to show that he was insane on 20th December. Counsel for the prisoner had two strings to his bow: 1st, that the shooting of the constable was accidental; 2nd, that the prisoner, though not perhaps actually insane, was naturally a nervous, excitable, morbidly impulsive person with a bad heredity, whose mind had been weakened by one or more attacks of insanity, and by his mode of life, and who therefore could hardly be accounted as altogether responsible for his actions.

MacCallum was by a majority found guilty of manslaughter, and he was sentenced to fifteen years' penal servitude. The verdict was not unexpected, but the sentence has been generally regarded as very lenient, and is said to have been a pleasant surprise to the prisoner.

It may be noted that in the examination of one of the medical witnesses the judge asked what "mania" the prisoner had suffered from when at Rosehall. The witness said he would call the disease melancholia and not mania. The judge then asked, "Melancholia is not mania?" His lordship seemed to regard the terms "insanity" and "mania" as synonymous, and to look upon melancholia as a milder or less serious disease hardly amounting to insanity at all.

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#### FIRES IN ASYLUMS.

We regret to note that two serious fires in asylums have occurred during the last quarter. At that which occurred at Flower House one of the patients lost his life; and at that which occurred at Aberdeen, in the asylum laundry, but for the prompt and gallant conduct of the Assistant Medical Officers, Drs. Matthews and Moir, there would also have been a fatal issue. Dr. Mercier was aroused at 3 a.m., and at once telephoned for the fire brigade, but the arrangements of the telephone company were so imperfect that it was nearly an hour before the engine and escape arrived. Most valuable time was frittered away, great damage was done, and a life was lost under circumstances which were peculiarly distressing. The patient was placed in safety by Dr. Mercier, but went back into danger to secure his belongings, and so was overcome and perished. The coroner's jury expressed their opinion as follows:—"That much valuable time might have been saved if the operator of the National Telephone Company at Bromley had been instructed to communicate direct to the London Fire Brigade." When a company persuades the public to subscribe to their system, as the National Telephone Company does, specially to combat the dangers of fire, it is nothing less than scandalous that their methods are so imperfect. The result to Dr. Mercier was infinitely worse than if he had never leant upon that broken reed.

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#### SUICIDE BY SWALLOWING A SPOON.

An unusual cause of death was the subject of a coroner's inquest at Hanwell Asylum on the 24th December. The patient was a woman labouring under delusions of various kinds, but she was not regarded as suicidal. Dr. Lord, who was in the ward at the time, was summoned by a nurse, who told him that the patient had swallowed a spoon. It was removed with some difficulty, the bowl of the spoon having been wedged in the œsophagus, and the top behind the soft palate. There was considerable injury and inflammation, consequent upon the force used by the patient, and she died of exhaustion and diarrhœa. The coroner drew attention to the fact that there had only been two cases of suicide in Hanwell Asylum