

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.

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.

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

during the past twenty years, and the jury returned a verdict of "Death from Misadventure."

CRIMINAL ANTHROPOLOGY.

The Italian Chamber of Deputies have passed the second reading of the Government Bill relating to habitual criminals. High praise was given to the late Dr. Bruce Thomson in the course of the debate. The present penal system was unsparingly denounced, and large hopes of social improvement were held out consequent on the operation of the new law. The incidents and observations of the last three years, together with this action on the part of Italy, will afford material for discussion at the International Congress of Criminal Anthropology which is to be held at the Hague in August next.

CRIMINAL LUNATICS IN ORDINARY ASYLUMS.

Lord Sandwich, at a meeting of the Huntingdonshire County Council, lately referred to the case of a man named Clifton, who had been tried for attempted murder, but was ordered to be detained during Her Majesty's pleasure. Clifton would have been sent to Broadmoor, but it was full, and the only alternative was to send him to the Three Counties Asylum. There was no reason to consider him dangerous, but only of weak intellect. Clifton managed to get amongst the stream of patients going out at one door when he should have gone out at another. He had never since been heard of. It was impossible to prevent a recurrence of this, because the whole principle of the care of lunatics was that they should be subjected to as little restraint as was possible. A caution had, however, been given to the attendants that a more careful watch should be set on those who were suspected of homicidal mania, or were dangerous to themselves or others. Beyond that it was impossible to go, except by such an increase of staff as would necessitate a total reorganisation and a reconstruction of the asylums throughout the country. If pressure was put on the Government, and they could see their way to provide more accommodation for criminal lunatics of this character, it would be the best way to prevent such escapes. Lord Sandwich moved that the attention of the Home Secretary be called to the matter, and this course was agreed to.

We trust that this case will cause some decided action on the part of the Government, for it has long been evident that such patients are unsuitable for ordinary treatment, and detrimental to the interests of their fellows in county asylums.

LUNACY IN COUNTRY DISTRICTS.

Dr. Bowes has issued a most interesting report on the existing high rate of lunacy in Wiltshire.

The first question discussed is whether the apparent increase of insanity in England is real or only due to accumulation of the chronic insane and the removal of many quiet dements from their homes and asylums. Dr. Bowes agrees with the general impression that there is some increase, but not enough to create alarm. He points out that there is a much larger proportion of insane to sane among the agricultural labourers than among miners and city dwellers. He shows that for thirty years the agricultural counties have shown most pauperism and most insanity. He thinks that marrying in and the poorness of the living and generally depressing vital conditions account for this. All this is true, but we believe that it is true also that the more feeble are left in the country to breed degenerates and to live from hand to mouth. The morally weak as well as the mentally feeble tend to collect