she was insane.—The jury at once found the accused Guilty, but of unsound mind and not responsible for her actions.—Winchester Autumn Assizes, November 18th (Mr. Justice Wills).—"Hampshire Chronicle," November 23rd.

The above case is very remarkable in that the prisoner was found insane in spite of the elaborate and systematic character of the series of crimes that she had committed. She had altered several cheques so successfully that two of £3 and £5 had been actually passed through the bank and cleared for £300 and £500 respectively. She had concocted the elaborate story about the extortion of the £16, and had actually gone the length of not only applying for and procuring a summons, but of prosecuting at the Assize. A more hopeless case for establishing the plea of insanity could scarcely be imagined. The experts who testified to the insanity had not seen the prisoner until four months after the offence, yet they were allowed to say that the insanity had extended back over that period, and one at least was allowed to state that in his opinion the prisoner was unaccountable for her actions.

PROBATE CASES.

Brown and Baker v. Pain. Sprake v. Day.

During the early weeks in November there were two cases in the Probate Court before Mr. Justice Barnes of interest to the Association. They were both questions in which the validity of wills was contested on the ground of insanity in the testators. In the first case, Brown and Baker *v.* Pain, the facts were briefly as follows:—A gentleman who had been employed as clerk in the Courts of Justice, and who for several months before the final breakdown in his mental health had been unfit for even simple copying work. When seen by an expert in June, 1894, he was suffering unmistakably from general paralysis of the insane in an advanced stage, so that he had no knowledge of time or place, and was quite incapable of taking care of himself or of recognising his duties and responsibilities. The real question at issue was whether within a short time (two or three weeks in fact) of that period he might have been able to dispose of his property. The trial lasted five days (see "Times," November 7th, 8th, 9th, 12th and 13th), and there was the usual amount of conflict as to the capacity of (Mr. Toogood) deceased at or about the end of May, 1894. There was only one medical witness to support the sanity of the deceased shortly before the time at which he made his will, and this witness was not particularly strong as to his mental capacity. On the other hand, a doctor who saw him frequently and Dr. Savage considered it very unlikely that deceased could have made a valid will at the time alleged. In cross-examination the latter witness was asked what he considered to be the points proving capacity in a testator, and he said that he considered the following to be essential:—First, a knowledge of the property to be devised; second, a knowledge of the relatives who might be benefited; third, a just appreciation of the testator's relationship to his friends and relatives; fourth, power of self-control, enough to prevent undue influence; and finally, memory of recent and more distant events. This definition was accepted by the judge and counsel as good and falling in with all legal judgments. Considerable stress in cross-examination was laid upon the periods of remission, or, as they were called, lucid intervals, which may occur in general paralysis of the insane, and Dr. Savage in cross-examination admitted that in general paralysis of the insane it is common to have intervals during which responsibility may exist to the full. It will be remembered that only last year the same question was raised (*re* Crabtree) as to the validity of a will made by a general paralytic during a remission, and it seems to be established that during lucid intervals testamentary acts may properly be performed. In the end the jury found for the will, which was made within so short a time of the full development of symptoms of general paralysis of the insane. This case once more bears out the common experience that an English jury will very rarely upset a fairly reasonable will on any grounds whatever, and that unless a very distinct insanity can be made evident before the drawing up of the will, the plea of insanity afterwards will be of little value.

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In the other case a compromise, which so often occurs in these Probate cases, prevented any point of medical or legal interest being decided. It was the case of Sprake *v.* Day. In this case again a man who undoubtedly was insane, suffering from general progressive dementia, associated with age, made a will in June, was markedly demented in July, and died in the autumn, and yet because the provisions of the will were not unreasonable, it seems pretty certain that if a compromise had not been made the will would have been upheld.

ATTENDANT KILLED BY PATIENT AT THE CANE HILL ASYLUM.

An inquest was held on the 27th September last on an attendant named Finch, who had died from injuries of the head received in attempting to overpower a patient who had climbed on to the roof of the asylum, from an airing court, by means of a stack pipe. Finch voluntarily ascended to the roof and was unfortunately unhelmeted by a first blow from the patient, who was armed with a piece of board, a second blow inflicting the fatal injuries.

This occurrence emphasises the desirability of rendering pipes in such situations unclimbable, and suggests the desirability of placing on record the various plans which have been adopted under similar circumstances to retrieve the patient.

The use of the fire-hose was not resorted to in this case from fear of washing the patient off, although this has often been successful. In one recent case, the patient, left to himself, came down voluntarily, and in another a bribe of beer and tobacco proved efficacious.

This case was quoted in the October number of the Journal as an example of the necessity of obtaining power, by the County Councils, to make grants to the wives and children of attendants losing their lives in the performance of duty.

CONFERENCE AT WAKEFIELD ON THE CARE OF HARMLESS LUNATICS.

A conference between the members of the General Asylums Committee of the West Riding County Council and representatives of Poor Law Unions within the Riding, was held on November 11th, at the Town Hall, Wakefield, for the purpose of considering the best means of providing for harmless pauper lunatics. The alternative suggestions appear to have been: (1) Increasing the accommodation of existing asylum; (2) building a new asylum "of a simple and homely character" for patients of this class; (3) providing accommodation in workhouses. A fourth possible alternative, that of boarding-out such patients, does not appear to have been mentioned. No definite conclusion was arrived at. The majority of the guardians who took part in the discussion were opposed to the return of patients from asylums to workhouses.

Whatever course may be taken, we trust that the proposal for increasing the accommodation of the existing asylums will not be adopted. They are already quite large enough, and the policy of enlarging the number of patients in an asylum beyond that for which it was originally built is a bad one.

THE BENCH AND LUNACY CASES.

The annexed extract from the *Sussex Daily News* is worthy of the attention of those concerned with the admission of patients to asylums:—"At the close of the ordinary business before the Bench Mr. Parsons, Clerk to the Thakeham Board of Guardians, said he had been directed by his Board to make application respecting the decision of the Bench in regard to lunacy cases. The Board regretted that the Bench had come to the decision that in future any appointments with Justices in regard to such cases should be made through their Clerk, so that he could attend. He was directed to ask the Bench to reconsider the matter.—Mr. West said without the Magistrates' Clerk in attendance it put the Magistrates in an extremely inconvenient position, having to act without any advice. He had himself acted without the Magistrates' Clerk very much against his will, but the