showed that he was keenly alive to the importance of any measures which would favourably influence the treatment of mental disease in the incipient stages. The impression received by the deputation was that the Lord Chancellor was favourably inclined to consider the desirability of legislation as suggested by the committee, although he expressed an opinion that the time proposed (six months) was too long. This criticism, however, is in itself a strong evidence of his lordship's general acceptance of the principle.

This favourable reception of the opinions of the Associations is without doubt due in great measure to the importance attached by the Lord Chancellor to their representations, and is a distinct encouragement to the Parliamentary Committees of the Associations, whose arduous work has won the recognition of which this success is an evidence.

The Criminal Evidence Act.

The judicial development of the Criminal Evidence Act, 1898, has made considerable progress during the past few months. It has now been decided (Queen *v.* Rhodes) that the inquiry before a grand jury is not a "stage of the proceedings" at which a prisoner is entitled to give evidence, and that there is nothing in the new Act to affect the right of prosecuting counsel to sum up the case against an accused person, where it otherwise exists, or to prevent a judge from commenting on a prisoner's failure to go into the witness-box. So far it cannot be said that the statute has worked otherwise than well. Two fresh points have arisen, however, and are awaiting judicial solution. It has been suggested that a magistrate, before whom a prisoner charged with an indictable offence gives evidence, has no right to order his discharge if he is satisfied that the allegations against him are unfounded. This view of the law is almost certainly incorrect.

The other difficulty has been with regard to the prosecution for perjury of a prisoner who gives false evidence in the witness-box. As a matter of strict law, there seems no doubt that such prosecutions are competent. But the judges are about to con-

sider in council the conditions under which they ought to be permitted, as the freedom with which several members of the Bench were at first disposed to threaten them was having the effect of deterring prisoners from availing themselves of the right conferred on them by the statute.

Constructive Murder.

Mr. Ambrose, Q.C., shortly before his appointment as Master in Lunacy, introduced into Parliament a bill to make by implication the act of bringing about abortion no longer a capital offence. Although Mr. Justice Phillimore was most unfairly criticised in connection with the case of Lieutenant Wark, the result of that *cause célèbre* shows that public opinion in this country is ripe for an amendment of the law in this direction. In one of the earlier abortion cases of the present legal year, the Attorney-General, who prosecuted for the Crown, propounded the theory that a homicide under such circumstances might amount to constructive murder only, if not to mere manslaughter. The legal soundness of this theory is, however, very doubtful, and it is much better that the problem should be solved by direct legislation.

The Lunacy Law and Borderland Cases.

The treatment of mental disease in its early stages has received so much consideration of late that the case of Regina *v.* Reichardt, tried at Kingston-on-Thames on January 4th, 5th, and 6th of this year, is of especial interest at this moment, and owing to the importance of the questions raised, demands serious attention.

The case, briefly stated, is that a lady suffering from mental depression and hysteria attempted suicide, recovered, repented, and was recommended by an eminent physician to go to the house of Dr. Reichardt for care and treatment. She was seen at Dr. Reichardt's by a prominent specialist, who decided that,