

we are not here concerned) were his due. The obvious lesson of the case is that practitioners who are called upon to certify in such cases should take heed that their examination of the alleged lunatic is sufficiently complete to stand subsequent investigation, and that the facts placed by them on the certificate contain definite and sufficient evidence of such unsoundness of mind as would justify the patient's restraint. The case can only strengthen the already apparent, and natural, reluctance of practitioners to certify, even in the very clearest cases. Ultimately this cannot but operate adversely to the general welfare of society.

REX *v.* GEORGE SHARPES.

THIS case was tried at Warwick Assizes, on March 9, before Mr. Justice Shearman. The prisoner was a farm labourer, aged 19 years, and he was accused of the murder of Mrs. Mary Crabtree, the wife of his employer, on January 13. Sharpes had been an inmate of a reformatory school. He had been employed by Mr. Crabtree on a farm in Cheshire, and on the latter moving to another farm, at Ladbroke, in Warwickshire, Sharpes came there also.

The actual facts of the case were not disputed, the defence being that of insanity. The prisoner had murdered Mrs. Crabtree by striking her on the head with a hammer, thus fracturing her skull. A few minutes later he was seen by a girl, who, noting that he had blood on his hands, asked him what he had done. He replied, "I wonder what I have done." Soon after this he inflicted a wound on his own neck, and was removed to a local hospital. While there, he wrote a confession, which was read at the trial. In this statement he said, "Something entered my head in the morning to kill Mrs. Crabtree, and the thought kept worrying me all the morning. She passed as I was working at the wall. I struck her on the head. I tried to clear up the mess with my cap. Mrs. Crabtree told people that I had been in a reformatory."

Very little evidence was adduced in support of the plea of insanity. It was stated that the prisoner was born as the result of a long and difficult labour, that he had complained of headaches, that he was of weak physique, and that he had certain physical deformities.

Dr. Hamblin Smith, the Medical Officer of Birmingham Prison, stated that the prisoner was of average intelligence, and had shown no signs of insanity.

Counsel urged that there was just that small degree of motive which would not affect a healthy mind, but which might affect an abnormal mind. The motive was that the accused had an

obsession that Mrs. Crabtree had done him a wrong by telling people that he had been in a reformatory.

The judge, in summing up, said that the question for the jury (and for the jury alone) was not whether the accused was abnormal, but whether he was insane. A verdict of "guilty" was returned, and sentence of death was passed.

As in practically all murder cases, the matter was taken to the Court of Criminal Appeal. It was contended that the judge's ruling that the question of "abnormality" could not be considered, was wrong. Counsel for the prosecution were not called upon. The Lord Chief Justice, in giving judgment, said that there was a fact in the case which had not come up before. The appellant had set out his grounds of appeal in a remarkable document. It was a reasoned argument in support of the conclusion that he was insane, well put together, clearly expressed, and in logical and chronological sequence. Not the least important part was the last sentence, in which the appellant had said, "I did not intend to kill Mrs. Crabtree, but only to stun her, and then take advantage of her." If that statement was to be accepted, it confirmed the righteousness of the jury's verdict. No fault could be found with the judge's summing-up. The appeal was dismissed.

The Home Secretary did not interfere with the sentence, and the prisoner was duly hanged. Whether the second statement recorded the actual motive for the crime, or whether it was an after-thought, must remain a subject for speculation.

Occasional Notes.

THE LATE SIR FREDERICK W. MOTT, *K.B.E.*, F.R.S.

PREFACING our comments in April, 1923, on the retirement of Sir Frederick Mott from the service of the London County Council we stated that it was happily not the occasion for a funeral oration, nor did it connote a cessation of his wide activities in the world of neurology and psychopathology which had distinguished his career.

To our great sorrow, on June 8 the latter came to pass, and his panegyric has been spoken by that great master in physiology, Prof. E. H. Starling, in eloquent words, descriptive of a career devoted primarily to the elucidation of the age-long mystery surrounding the relationship of mind and matter, and then to the