

## MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

THURSDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER, 1913.

ROBERT MARTIN BEATTIE, M.B., examined. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are in charge of the Auckland Mental Hospital?—Yes.

2. Will you state briefly to the Committee what you know about Johnston's case?—Thomas Henry Johnston was admitted to the Auckland Mental Hospital on the 15th December, 1912, on the certificates of Drs. Craig and Galligan and the order of two Justices of the Peace—Messrs. Moore and Toy. Would it be right at this stage to read the certificates—the original medical certificates—I have them with me.

3. I think so?—Dr. Galligan states, under the heading "Facts observed by me on the occasion of the examination," "Very erratic, very despondent and melancholic; thinks it better for wife and family to be dead than live in poverty: people despise them because they are poor." Then, "Never examined *re* mental condition before." His wife is reported to have stated to Dr. Galligan, "He fired a pistol-shot (but only injured her) to save her and family from financial trouble, and he could die happy afterwards. Both Dr. Craig and myself saw scars of said injury." Dr. Galligan also says that the patient is "feeble-minded and epileptic (minor)," and that the cause of his mental condition was "excessive worry (strike affairs). Was shot in right leg." He also states that he regards Johnston as suicidal and dangerous.

4. *Hon. Mr. Fisher.*] Is Dr. Galligan a Waihi doctor?—Yes.

5. And Dr. Craig?—He also is a Waihi doctor. In his certificate Dr. Craig states, under "Facts observed by me on the occasion of the examination," "Emotional and excitable. States that he has been hypnotized by his stepfather, and that since then he has been a different man. He is subject to the *petit mal* of epilepsy, and informs me that under a year ago, under great financial stress, he made up his mind to kill his wife and children. He did shoot his wife through the right arm as she lay asleep, but made no second attempt. Questioned as to the correctness of his action, states that he can see no wrong in what he did; that it was to save his wife from poverty, and his children from the consequences of their being children of his and inheriting his peculiarities." These, I may point out, are not "facts observed by himself" at all, although they are given under that head. These facts with regard to the shooting could not have been facts observed by Dr. Craig at the time. Johnston's wife also states to Dr. Craig, "He has been depressed lately. A few months ago he shot her through the arm as she lay in bed." Dr. Craig says that the cause of Johnston's mental condition is "misfortune and financial worry, also excitement due to the recent strike." He does not state anything about epilepsy. He states that he regards Johnston as suicidal and dangerous.

6. *The Chairman.*] That shooting was some time prior to the Waihi affair?—Eight months previously. There is nothing unusual in the committal order—just the ordinary committal order.

7. *Hon. Mr. Fisher.*] What is the date of it?—The 14th December, 1912.

8. *The Chairman.*] What was the mental condition of the man when he came under your charge?—After I examined him I came to the conclusion that he was sane. There was no evidence to justify the statement that he was epileptic, and I thought the facts with regard to the shooting which took place eight months previously should not have been inserted in the medical certificate. After Johnston had been with me some time I wrote to Dr. Craig, who was a fellow-student with me and a personal friend—I wrote a private letter asking him to give me any evidence with regard to Johnston's mental condition which he had acquired in Waihi, and also any facts he could with regard to an epileptic condition. Unfortunately, just at that time a statement appeared in the Auckland *Herald* in the nature of an interview. Dr. Craig concluded that I had given an interview to the *Herald*, and in reply to my correspondence snubbed me—gave me no information. I then wrote to him again telling him that I knew nothing about the interview, directly or indirectly, and asking again for information. To that letter I got no satisfactory reply. I then examined Johnston again very carefully on the 3rd January, and came to the conclusion that he was perfectly sound, that there was no evidence to justify the diagnosis of epilepsy at any time in his history, and I told him that I would take a trip to Waihi and make all possible inquiries there. Unfortunately, Johnston the next day took the law into his own hands and escaped. In the meantime I had been in communication with his wife, and ascertained from her also that there was no epilepsy, and that the shooting had taken place eight months prior to his committal. In the interval Johnston had been perfectly sane, but was at times slightly depressed owing to financial trouble and the difficulty in getting work. She stated also that he was not unusually depressed after the accident at Waihi, but he was sometimes nervous of the consequences of his action in becoming what he called a "strike-breaker." She stated that she knew nothing at all about the epileptic condition, and no reason at all to justify Johnston's committal to a mental hospital. She also stated with regard to the shooting of herself that it was a pure accident, and that none of the doctors had examined her and seen the scar, as recorded in the paper. I think those are the main facts.

9. *Hon. Mr. Fisher.*] How long was it after the examination by these two doctors that you saw the patient?—I saw him the following day. He was examined on the 14th, and I saw him on the 15th.