BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.

The sixty-third Annual Meeting was held in London, July 30th to August 2nd, 1895, and was one of the most successful which has as yet assembled.

The section for psychology was well attended and of the highest interest. President, W. John Mickle, M.D.; Vice-Presidents, J. T. McDowall, M.D., H. Rayner, M.D., T. Claye Shaw, M.D., D. Nicolson, M.D., G. H. Savage, M.D., L. A. Weatherly, M.D.; Hon. Secretaries, J. Chambers, M.D., J. Taylor, M.D., T. Seymour Tuke, M.B.

We have much pleasure in referring our readers to the pages of the Journal for record of part of the scientific work done.

RECENT MEDICO-LEGAL CASES.

ABSTRACTED BY C. MERCIER, M.B.

[The Editors will be obliged by Members of the Association sending them the fullest reports of all the cases in which they may be concerned, or which come to their knowledge, especially what may be contained in the law reports of local newspapers.]

Reg v. Smith.—"The Barnsley Child Murder."

Prisoner went to the house of a neighbour and borrowed a cobbler's knife, returned home, took his daughter (aged 3) on to his knee and cut her throat. Very shortly after the murder prisoner said to a neighbour, "I have done it, I have killed my daughter Laura." When placed in the dock the prisoner seemed dazed, and when asked to plead, mumbled out some words which could not be understood. At the suggestion of the prosecution a plea of not guilty was entered. Counsel for the *prosecution* (Mr. Wallace, Q.C.), after stating the facts of the case, added that it was his duty to place before the jury facts which, he thought, would lead them to the conclusion that at the time the prisoner was not responsible for his actions.

Dr. Kay, Superintendent of Wadsley Asylum, gave evidence that the prisoner's father had committed suicide, and repeated statements tending to prove insanity that had been made to him by the wife of the prisoner: "The hereditary predisposition to insanity, the injury to the head, and the fact that he had been confined in an asylum shortly before the murder, went to prove that he was insane at the time he committed the act. Witness felt perfectly satisfied that at the time of the occurrence he was not responsible for his actions, and he was insane at the present time."

The Judge—Do you think he would know the difference between right and wrong?—Yes, if he were asked the question.

Do you think he was capable of understanding the nature and quality of the act?—No, my lord.

On what ground do you say that?—I think he was thoroughly under the influence of the idea of killing the child, and his mind was so disordered that he did not know what he was doing.

Do you think he understood that using the knife on the child's throat would deprive it of life?—Yes.

Was he capable of deliberation?—I think not.

Was he capable of controlling the impulse?—No, I think that some physical restraint might have brought him to.

Do you think anything short of that would have done it?—No, I do not.

Dr. Clark, Medical Officer of Wakefield Prison, said that at the time of the occurrence the prisoner might have been able to distinguish right from wrong in the abstract, but he could not restrain himself, and was not able to understand the nature and quality of the act he committed.

The Judge is reported to have said that the only question for the jury was whether at the time he committed the act the prisoner was sane.

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