

THE REPUBLICAN.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, FEB. 23, 1917.

Medical Experts in Murder Trials.

We clip the following excellent article on medical experts from a late number of the New York Herald, and ask for it an attentive perusal.

The great Wharton trial still drags its weary length along, illustrating in a striking manner the uncertainty as to results of facts obtainable from the evidence of medical experts. It would seem as if the advance in the exact sciences tended more and more to prove the danger of implicitly relying on medical testimony alone in criminal trials. Mrs. Ellen G. Wharton is accused of poisoning General Ketchum with tartar emetic for the purpose of relieving herself of an indebtedness of two thousand six hundred dollars. The case for the prosecution, when presented alone, seemed a mountain of proof in itself, under which the prisoner was crushed beyond deliverance. The circumstantial evidence seemed to point conclusively that Mrs. Wharton had administered the poison, which Dr. Aiken and Professor Toney swore they found in the stomach of the deceased. The symptoms of the moribund were stated to have been those of one intoxicated with antimony, and Dr. P. C. Williams, who attended him, declared that upon these symptoms and some sediment in a tumbler he first founded his suspicion of foul play. The case at the trial, however, indeed for the defense, lay against whom all these aptly joined conclusions and damning points were found. The ingenuity with which the prosecution had joined all the links of information together was regarded as creditable to their sagacity and diligent labor in the people's cause. Nineteen days had they labored to weave the web around her, and on the 27th of December last, Attorney General Syester rested his case there appeared to be small room for Mrs. Wharton's escape from the meshes which would hold her until the juries claimed their own. The defense arose to its heroic task, and during the last eight days have done such serious damage to the case for the prosecution that it seems no longer tenable. And the most curious thing is that it has been done wholly by purely circumstantial evidence that this has been brought about. Dr. Aiken and Toney professed to have found poison. Professors McCulloch, Genth and Reese testified and appear to have proved that no antimony had been found by the tests at all. They showed conclusively that the results obtained in the experiments could have been produced by the action of the reagents employed by Aiken and Toney upon the medicine administered before General Ketchum's death, and left it open to serious doubt but that the poison, if any, was contained in the reagents themselves. The discredit thus thrown upon the so-called analyses started the antechamber, who had taken the prosecuting professors at their word. The most fatal objection to the chemical testimony came from Professor Genth. It may be summarized in a few of his replies as follows: "Whenever a substance is to be treated for the presence of any poison—antimony, for instance—it is necessary under all circumstances to use the best methods known, and which are not liable to error; and in case of metallic poisons to produce the metal, and to produce the metal in such a quantity that by a subsequent investigation of that metal no doubt at all can be left as to its nature."

The professors had not produced their antimony. After thus nullifying the analyses, the defense proceeded to throw doubt upon the medical testimony as to the cause of death. Dr. Warren, of Baltimore, declared the symptoms to be those of a disease well known in that city as malignant purpuric fever, or, technically, epidemic cerebro-spinal meningitis.

Turning a moment from the medical evidence it may be noticed that another important point taken up by the defense is indicated in the evidence of young Mrs. Cottman, who testified to finding torn strips of paper after Mrs. Wharton having an interview with General Ketchum at the house of Mrs. Chubb. The defense evidently intend to support Mrs. Wharton's statement that the note for two thousand six hundred dollars was destroyed there after being handed to her by the deceased.

It will be seen, then, that the defense, as far as developed, sustains more or less strongly, first, that if antimony were found it should have been presented; second, that no antimony was found; third, that he did not die of antimonial poisoning, but of purpuric fever; fourth, that he took no antimony; fifth, that Mrs. Wharton owed nothing to General Ketchum; and sixth, that she was not the murderer of General Ketchum at the time of his decease. It is a complete *reductio ad absurdum* of the theory of the prosecution, which places its allegations in an order exactly inverse to those given. Many more days must elapse before the case goes to the jury; but the impression that the case for the prosecution has broken down takes away much speculation on the result. Now, what is painfully apparent throughout this trial is the total incompleteness of the medical men engaged to analyze the contents of the stomach in the first instance. For the accused woman whose life is in jeopardy we have profound sympathy that her chances of a shameful death rested on the fallacious and careless conclusions of such disgraces to a profession which is nothing if not exact and absolute. The failure of the analyses will, naturally leave a mental gap which it may be found impossible to fill. It may be proven that antimony was not found; but it cannot be now declared with certainty that it could not have been. This is extremely regrettable, as much for Mrs. Wharton's sake as in the pure interests of justice. It teaches a lesson that when searches and analyses of this kind are required to be made upon the highest obtainable science should be used, and no one other is anything better than forensic and criminal. The public will watch the remaining days of this extraordinary trial with intense interest.

RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES OF CLEARFIELD CO. FOR 1917.

Table with columns for Receipts and Expenditures, listing various items like taxes, salaries, and other financial transactions for the county.

RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES OF CLEARFIELD CO. FOR 1917.

Main financial table for Clearfield County, detailing receipts from various sources and expenditures for different departments and services.

CERTIFICATES.

We, the undersigned, Commissioners of the county of Clearfield, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, having examined the several accounts and vouchers of Lever Flegal, Esq., Treasurer of said county, for the year 1917, certify that we find them correct and true, and that the same are in full payment of the amount due to the county treasury.

THE UNDERSIGNED, Auditors of Clearfield County, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, having met at the Court House, in the Borough of Clearfield, according to law, and having examined the several accounts and vouchers of Lever Flegal, Esq., Treasurer of said county, for the year 1917, do hereby certify that we find them correct and true, and that the same are in full payment of the amount due to the county treasury.

NOTICE. We, the undersigned, Auditors of Clearfield County, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, having met at the Court House, in the Borough of Clearfield, according to law, and having examined the several accounts and vouchers of Lever Flegal, Esq., Treasurer of said county, for the year 1917, do hereby certify that we find them correct and true, and that the same are in full payment of the amount due to the county treasury.

REED & POWELL. THE PROPRIETORS respectfully inform the citizens of Clearfield county that they have entirely refitted this establishment with the latest improved wood-working machinery, and are now prepared to execute all orders in their line of business. They will give special attention to the manufacture of material for home building, such as:

DRY GOODS, GROCERIES, HATS & CAPS, HOSIERY, SHOES, FLOUR, FEED, SALT, & CO., and other household necessities.

WEAVER & BETTS. DRY GOODS, GROCERIES, HATS & CAPS, HOSIERY, SHOES, FLOUR, FEED, SALT, & CO., and other household necessities.

PEACE IN EUROPE. GREAT EXCITEMENT IN FRENCHVILLE. L. M. COUDRIET, who has undertaken to supply all the citizens of the lower end of the county with fuel and kindling wood, is now ready to receive orders and supply them with the best quality of wood available.

DRY GOODS OF ALL KINDS. SHAW'S IMPROVED CONDITION POWDER. GROCERIES OF ALL KINDS. HARDWARE, GUNNERY, and other household necessities.

Hardware, Tinware, Etc.

TIN AND STOVE STORE! THE IRONSIDES. G. S. FLEGAL, Philsburg, Centre County, Pa.

THE UNDERSIGNED respectfully announces to the public that he has on hand a carefully selected and well assorted stock of STOVES, HEATERS, RANGES, HOLLOW WARE, TIN, COPPER AND SHEET-IRON WARE!

His Stock of Parlor & Heating Stoves is larger, better and cheaper than ever before exhibited to the public—consisting of:

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DRY GOODS OF ALL KINDS. SHAW'S IMPROVED CONDITION POWDER. GROCERIES OF ALL KINDS. HARDWARE, GUNNERY, and other household necessities.

Drugs & Medicines.

NEW DRUG STORE! WM. B. ALEXANDER, M. D., Druggist and Apothecary, CURWENSVILLE, PA.

THE UNDERSIGNED respectfully announces to the public that he has on hand a carefully selected and well assorted stock of PERFUMERY, TOILET ARTICLES, Hair Tonics, Combs, Brushes, Toilet Soaps, Creams, Pocket Books, Pens, Ink, Pencils and Paper, and a general assortment of this class of goods, all of the best quality.

Books and Stationery. THE UNDERSIGNED respectfully announces to the public that he has on hand a carefully selected and well assorted stock of BOOKS, STATIONERY, and other household necessities.

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Foundry and Machine Shops.

BIGLER, YOUNG & CO., FOUNDERS & MACHINISTS, PORTABLE & STATIONARY STEAM ENGINES.

THE UNDERSIGNED respectfully announces to the public that he has on hand a carefully selected and well assorted stock of STEAM ENGINES, PUMPS, and other household necessities.

Books and Stationery. THE UNDERSIGNED respectfully announces to the public that he has on hand a carefully selected and well assorted stock of BOOKS, STATIONERY, and other household necessities.

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Banks.

Clearfield County Bank. THE Clearfield County Bank is an incorporated institution having been organized by the shareholders of the Clearfield County Bank, which was organized in 1852.

County National Bank. ROOM in Masonic Building, one door north of Clearfield, Pa. Clearfield County Bank.

Banking & Collection House. McCORK & PERKS. Clearfield, Centre County, Pa.

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