

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

A SAD CASE

At the Magistrate's Court, Timaru, on Saturday, before Mr E. D, Mosley, S.M., Martin Joseph Greelish, a returned soldier, was charged with attempted suicide by shooting himself on 12th October. The case was conducted by Senior Sergeant Fahey.

The defendant admitted the charge and elected to be dealt with summarily.

Senior Sergeant Fahey related the facts of the case. Defendant had reached his home on the date in question about 7.30 p.m. He was quite sober and at about 11 o'clock he had a cup of tea at his mother-in-law's place. Apparently after this there were some words between these parties and defendant was shortly afterwards with a pea-rifle in his hand. His mother-in-law, however, took the rifle from him, defendant thereupon leaving the house. A little later on a shot was heard and defendant was found lying at the back door with another rifle alongside him. It transpired that defendant had gone to his brother's place and got a rifle there, and the shot passed through his ear. When found the defendant was in a fit and a doctor was sent for immediately. Defendant remained in the fit until 2 o'clock next morning, having been removed to Timaru Hospital in the meantime. It seemed, said the Senior Sergeant, that the defendant considered he had been harshly treated by the Defence authorities. He received no pension and was not able for hard work, and was apparently of the opinion that others not so disabled as he was were receiving pensions. Defendant was a good worker, but took fits which usually lasted as long as two hours.

Defendant, on being asked if he had anything to say, expressed his sorrow at the occurrence. Interrogated by the Magistrate, he stated that he had two children aged 2 years and 8 months, and 14 or 15 months respectively. He had been at the front about three or four months, and at Passchendaele he received three slight wounds and was gassed. He was with the 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade. He was 25 years of age and his wife was 21.

Sergeant Dwan, in answer to the Magistrate, stated that defendant was a hard working man. He had several times taken fits during work and in one of these it was four hours before he came to. His last occupation was on relief work, but he did not appear to be physically fit for hard manual labour. His financial position was causing him worry. There was little work to be had about Temuka at present. Defendant's father [father-in-law], who was a very good workman, had done nothing for six months or so. The family had been labouring under great difficulties.

Defendant's mother-in-law gave evidence much on the lines of Senior Sergeant Fahey's opening statement.

The Magistrate pointed out to the defendant the seriousness of the position into which he had placed himself. One could not but feel sorry for defendant, but he must not be foolish. No good would be done, His Worship stated, addressing defendant, by attempting such an act as he had, and he had only to think of the position his wife and children would be left in. His Worship said he would put defendant under the care of Sergeant Dwan, the Probation Officer, for 12 months. He had power to send him to prison for four years, but they considered that the lesson he had had might be sufficient. He was sure Sergeant Dwan would do anything he could for him.

In reply to the Magistrate, defendant said he sometimes had a drink or two, but never thought of it when he had work to do.

His Worship: "You should not do that. I think a prohibition order would be a good thing. You will be prohibited during the currency of your probationary period."