

The Quebec law, instead of attempting to utilize the medical examination as a means of reducing expenses, has avoided all medical evidence as much as possible, and has placed so many restrictions upon the performance of autopsies that the number of these has been reduced to a minimum. This has had the undesired effect of giving a very unsatisfactory service, without securing the economy aimed at, as may be judged from the fact that, in London, where autopsies are ordered in fifty per cent. of all the deaths investigated, the average cost is only \$15.35 for each case; while, in Montreal, with autopsies in only 13 per cent. of the cases, the cost has averaged \$22.28.

During the period from January 1st to September 30th, there were 301 deaths investigated in the district of Montreal. The expense, after deducting \$150 allowed for my trip, amounted to \$6,705.85, or \$22.28 for each case investigated; in spite of the fact that no medical fees at all were paid in 98 cases, or nearly one-third of the whole.

Of this sum, \$295, or an average of 98 cents for each case, was directly spent for autopsies, this amount representing the additional fee of \$5 over the cost of an external examination; and the full fee of \$10 in 17 cases, where external examination fees were paid to other medical witnesses, and the official physician called simply to do the autopsy. After deducting this \$295 and also \$200 charged to chemical analyses, arising indirectly out of the results of the autopsies from the total expense (\$6,705.85), there remain \$6,210.85, or \$20.63 spent on an average in each case for coroners' and physicians' fees, constables' fees, clerk hire, transport and care of bodies, rent of rooms, mileage and other incidental expenses before the investigation had reached a stage when an autopsy could be legally authorized:—much more than is spent for the entire investigations in Lon-

don, although autopsies are performed there in 50 per cent. of all the cases. This looks rather as if article 268g led to twenty dollars being spent in every ten dollars saved. In 1890-92, the average cost of 240 inquests held yearly was \$22.50 each, of which 37 cents was directly paid for autopsies.

On the other hand, the early performance of an autopsy would certainly have shown, in half the cases, that no grounds existed for holding an inquest, and so have saved a large number of inquests; the average cost of which was more than double that of an autopsy, while the verdicts were often absurdly at variance with the facts (or absence of facts) elicited by the enquiry.

It is evident that too large a proportion of the money spent in Montreal for Coroners' investigations is frittered away in fees and expenses (which may be perfectly legal and permissible under the law, but are absolutely useless in furthering the investigation), and this has led to an undesirable economy in which the real objects of the enquiry are lost sight of.

As some doubt existed as to the power of the Province to pass a statute, authorizing the performance of autopsies as a preliminary means of investigating deaths from unknown causes, under suspicious circumstances, I have made careful enquiries on the subject of the Department of Justice at Ottawa. I was informed the Province has a perfect right to authorize this, and that there is nothing in British or Canadian criminal law to prevent it, or render it inadvisable.

I am not advocating the indiscriminate and wholesale performance of autopsies when they are not needed to show whether death was due to violence or not; but no restriction should be placed upon their being made when really called for.

Even without autopsies, a preliminary inquiry and view of the body often yield satisfactory information that death has been