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AUTOPSIES AT CORONERS' INQUESTS.

We have repeatedly called attention to the defective nature of the medical evidence given at inquests in connection with deaths supposed to be due to other than natural causes.

In particular, the tendency under the present law to hold an autopsy in only one out of every 10 or 20 cases investigated by the coroner is highly dangerous to the safety of the community. With the appointment of a new coroner in Montreal, it was understood to be the intention of the Provincial Government to place the matter upon a satisfactory footing and not only to allow the additional information furnished by autopsies to be availed of in every case where the circumstances demanded it, but further by appointing specially qualified experts to conduct these autopsies to ensure their being properly done in each instance.

We regret to find that this arrangement is far from being carried out at present. Autopsies are as rare as inquests are common, the reason alleged being that the expense of the additional fee for opening the body is too great.

The Quebec statutes provide a fee of five dollars for an external examination, and one of ten dollars for a complete autopsy. The latter sum is supposed, officially, to form such a tempting bait to medical witnesses that great care has to be taken to prevent them from insisting upon autopsies in too many cases.

Now the external examination of a body as usually performed in Montreal, is a matter requiring from five to ten minutes of the physician's time. No written report is required by law, and any guess, however wild, at the cause of death in-