

Duvergie states that the changes in summer appear about 20 to 22 days earlier than in winter, the rate in spring and autumn being intermediate. In these late periods the signs are uncertain, and the relation between the summer and winter rates of alteration very inconstant. In winter maceration alone occurs; in summer putrefaction and maceration go on simultaneously. Immersion, while it lasts, retards putrefaction, but bodies removed from the water putrify with astonishing rapidity; hence the necessity of their being viewed without delay, in order not to confound the appearances produced while in the water with those which occur subsequently.

I have endeavoured, from my own cases, to check these statements as far as possible, and find out by a study of the appearances of bodies where the period of immersion was known, to see what statements might safely be made with regard to bodies found in the neighbourhood of Montreal.

The collection of facts on this head was made difficult by the fact that nearly all of the examinations had to be made under unfavourable conditions as regards light, the bodies often being laid out in rooms lighted with candles only. The absence of facilities for dictating full notes also made the task more difficult.

The rapid decomposition of bodies after they had been removed from the water was very striking. Bodies which looked perfectly fresh when first removed became almost unrecognizable in the course of a few hours. It was impossible to prevent the occurrence of these changes in the absence of a proper refrigerating chamber. The absence of a suitable morgue made it also impossible for the progress of decomposition to be followed and noted.

As will be seen by reference to the cases, the signs of immersion, or, in other words, the evidences of maceration, came on even more rapidly in summer than might be expected from Duvergie's table. After the end of June this was especially marked. In Cases 96 and 97, an immersion of a few hours in August was found to induce as marked maceration changes than would ensue in as many days in June.