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REPORT ON CORONERS' INQUESTS.

THE HONORABLE THE ATTORNEY GENERAL,
Quebec.

SIR,—For the sake of convenience, I have placed in an appendix the information obtained during my recent trip to Coroner's Courts in the United States; and have also added some other statistics, etc., bearing upon the subject of reforming the Coroner law, with comments.

In the past, the chief complaints in regard to the Coroner's Courts of this Province seem to have been that (1) deaths were investigated which were not, in the first instance, strongly suspicious; (2) that the investigations were unsatisfactory and inconclusive; and (3) that the expense appeared excessive in proportion to the results obtained.

The various changes in the Coroner law of the Province do not appear to have removed these objections, and the new arrangement made in Montreal, at the commencement of the present year, of having a lawyer appointed as Coroner, with an official physician to make all medical examinations, has not, as yet, greatly improved matters.

In this connection, it must be remembered that the plan of an official medical examiner has not had a fair trial during the nine months for which it has been in force, as the medical expert has only been consulted in less than one-half of the inquests; and in eighty-five of the eighty-eight preliminary enquiries, made from January to May, 1893, was not consulted at all; owing, no doubt, to the absence of definite instructions from head-quarters upon this point. It is evident that, where the official physician is not summoned, the Coroner becomes responsible for the investigation of both medical and legal sides of the case.