

of the law tends to throw obstacles in the way of autopsies being held. No coroner is allowed to make an autopsy himself or to order one, except with the consent of a majority of his jury.

A permissive clause,* entitling the coroner to order an autopsy when the jury object, does indeed exist, but appears to be seldom made use of. In the District of Montreal, which has a population of about 250,000, two years ago the average number of inquests annually held was 240, and in these only 12 autopsies were considered to be necessary. The cause of death in cases where no autopsies were held was not infrequently found to be "Visitation of God," but this being formally objected to by the legislature, "*Syncope of the Heart*" and "Serous Apoplexy" suddenly came into vogue. In certain cases of this "Serous Apoplexy," which found their way into dissecting rooms, fractured ribs, fractured skulls, and contusions of the abdomen, with laceration of the intestine, have been recorded. (*Medical News*, June, 1889.) Such lesions are, perhaps, better described as "Visitations of God" than as apoplexies.

The gross absurdities of the verdicts in such cases led to an agitation that the coroner should be a medical man, but as no regulation existed by which a coroner could legally perform autopsies, and as his duties are really judicial, it

*No coroner shall direct a post-mortem examination of any body upon which an inquest is being held, except upon the requisition of the majority of the jury, unless the coroner shall have made a declaration in writing, to be returned and filed with the inquisition, that, in his opinion, the holding of a post-mortem examination of the body was necessary in order to ascertain whether or not the deceased came to his death from violence or unfair means."—43-44 Vic., C. 10, S. 3, Article 2689. Revised Statutes; Province of Quebec.

In a recent case a coroner's verdict of manslaughter was brought in, and the suspected person indicted for the crime, where the death was supposed to be due to the effects of rupture of the urethra from a kick. No autopsy was ordered and the evidence of the physician who attended the case was not taken.