

than to decide upon their significance and the extent to which they are to be allowed to influence an opinion. The system at present in vogue, which necessitates hastily formed conclusions being submitted, without time for reflection, to an impatient jury, is one which is bound to lead, sooner or later, to serious error or miscarriage of justice, and which places the medical witness in a most unenviable position.

I have arranged the cases according to the causes of death found, rather than according to the verdicts given, and have considered chiefly the facts brought out by the examination, the conclusions formed from these, and the finding of the jury.

In drawing up reports the French form of protocol has been followed. The German system of numbering each paragraph is convenient for reference afterwards, but was found to be too cumbersome.

I.—DEATH BY DROWNING (22 CASES.)

Of the 22 cases, 18 were identified and 4 were those of unknown persons. Three autopsies were ordered, one of which was upon a body not identified. The remaining examinations were external only. In my opinion, autopsies should always be made where the facts of the death are not proved by eye-witnesses, or where there is any reason to suspect the good faith of such witnesses. Two verdicts of suicide and one of manslaughter were rendered, and in 14 the death was stated to be accidental. In the remaining five cases the verdict was simply found drowned or found in the water. In all but two of the identified persons the circumstances of the death were attested to by eye-witnesses, making the medical testimony merely corroborative. In these cases the bodies were usually found close to the scene of the accident, after the lapse of from a few hours to a few days.

When a body is found in the water, the following questions always arise :

- (a) How long has the body been in the water ?
- (b) Was the death due to drowning ?
- (c) Was the death the result of a crime ?