

to be prevented, and your Committee urges strongly that it is as unnecessary as it is unbecoming. It has been superseded in many States by a system of sworn affidavit of the fact of death and the identity of the body, and this course should be followed here.

5. *Suicide*.—The existing law does not demand inquest in cases of *felo de se*. This your Committee, on the whole, is inclined to consider a disadvantage. The general opinion of the community is strongly opposed to suicide, and were it to be recognized that this mode of death necessarily involved a public investigation, there is little doubt that the unpleasant publicity of the subsequent proceedings would act as a deterrent in not a few cases. As a matter of fact, suicide is on the increase in those States where this deterrent does not exist or has of late years been removed.

6. *Medical Evidence*.—A study of the verdicts brought by the coroners' juries shows clearly that the decision of points of medical evidence is a matter that should not be left to non-medical persons. Statements utterly at variance with the cause of death assigned have been time after time accepted blindly by coroner and jury. The appreciation of medical facts, and the opinions to be formed from these facts, come properly within the domain of the medical expert. It cannot be expected that the legal coroner and the jury should without fail form correct opinions upon delicate medical problems.

Another point with regard to medical evidence may here be brought forward. The practitioner who is called to testify as a physician differs from the other witnesses, from the fact that he is called in his professional capacity. The value of his evidence lies in this, that he has studied the condition of deceased prior to death, and his evidence must depend for its value upon the importance of these earlier professional studies in throwing light upon the cause of death. To this extent, therefore, his evidence is expert evidence, and as such it ought to receive a recompense. But under the present system no fee whatsoever is allowed save for external or internal examination of the body