

into the cause of any violent or sudden death, wheresoever it takes place or howsoever it is brought about.

On the occasion of an air raid, when the attention of the police is fully occupied, murder might be done in the streets of London. It is therefore necessary that the coroner shall be at liberty to hold an inquest, although to all outward seeming the deceased could only have suffered death at the hands of an enemy airman.

THE DUTY OF THE CORONER.

And so it comes about that even in the twentieth century—in the midst of a European war—one whose office was established in the year of grace 1276, still has a useful function to perform! For many years there was a controversy in the law courts as to what circumstances justify a coroner in holding an inquest. According to some authorities, the coroner had no right to obtrude himself into a private household, without any pretence of the deceased having died otherwise than by a natural death. It is, however, now decreed by statute that a jury shall be summoned where a coroner is informed that the dead body of a person is lying within his jurisdiction and there is reasonable cause to suspect that such person has died either a violent or an unnatural death, or has died a sudden death of which the cause is unknown, or has died in prison.

Our coroners, as a rule, exercise a wise discretion, and one seldom hears an objection being raised by relatives. There was a case a few years ago where a coroner inquired into the death of a "body" which was found in a box at a railway station. Half-way through the inquest was abandoned, no one being able to identify the remains. No complaint of these abortive proceedings is on record—possibly because it was proved that the bones were those of an Egyptian mummy 5,000 years old!

The jury, which formerly numbered from 12 to 23, has now by special Act been reduced to from 7 to 11, and will probably remain there. As the panel from which the jurors are drawn is large, it is not surprising to hear that their verdicts often reflect the popular sentiment. Early in the war some of these good men