

not bear out this assertion, and the coroner, Dr. Walkem, of Nanaimo, took occasion to give the witness a dressing-down which he won't forget for some time. The difficulties in getting proper certificates in cases of persons found dead in Vancouver we can appreciate from the fact that we happen to be the coroner of that city, and have had on more than one occasion differences with the City Council on the subject of inquests. In cities and municipalities, the expenses of inquests are shouldered by these bodies, but in outside districts under the immediate charge of the Government, the expenses are taken out of the Provincial treasury. In British Columbia the Government spares no expense in ferreting out the cause of death in all cases where parties die under the least suspicious circumstances. The administration of justice is something we are proud of here. But in the cities the coroners have an uphill work to do, as they are handicapped if they wish to do their duty thoroughly and well. The ordinary alderman, who, by the bye, is not over-intelligent, constitutes himself a judge in many cases of when and where it is not necessary to hold an inquest. If a man is shot down on the public streets in the presence of scores of witnesses, it is all right to hold an inquest: but men found dead in cabins or in hotels, if they occur with any frequency the aldermen raise a howl about extravagance if they are saddled with the ordinary coroner's fee, not to speak of the expenses of a *post mortem*. The coroner is accused immediately of holding unnecessary inquests, and if he is a sensitive man, he feels his position keenly. There is a strong temptation, therefore, at times to do the work allotted to him in a superficial way, for the police, as a rule, back up the aldermen, from whom they get their salaries, and whom they wish to please by keeping down expenses. The coroner, of course, can insist upon them doing their duty, but it is done in a half-hearted, perfunctory way which is disagreeable to this officer. The majority of policemen in small cities have very little knowledge of crime in its finer details, and it is only when gross manifestations are apparent that they bestir themselves in the way of investigation. It is different with the Provincial police, who, though only working for salaries, have more professional pride, and are more ambitious to make reputations. If the var-

ious coroners were supported by men of this kind, there would be less reason for complaint than there is now, and the ends of justice would be better satisfied. The law, too, would have to be altered, to allow *post mortems* to be performed without the summoning of a jury and witnesses, all of which entails a great deal of trouble, unless it is a case in which it is self-evident from the beginning that it is one of foul play.

From our present knowledge, however, we do not know of a single case where a medical man gave a certificate in the loose and irregular way that the medical witness in the Roberts' inquest confessed to have been guilty of. We hope, for the honour of the profession, that there are very few of our brethren that have so lax a view of their duty, both to themselves and to society, as to be instrumental in thwarting the ends of justice. If there have been, we trust they will take warning now, and turn over a new leaf. We cannot be too particular in granting certificates of death in the case of the unknown dead.

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#### A VISIT TO PRESTON RETREAT.

While spending the summer with Dr. Joseph Price, in Philadelphia, it was my privilege to occasionally visit the Retreat, where the arrangement, methods and results so impressed me that I concluded a report of my visits might be of interest, as illustrating the possibilities of the lying in chamber, where the management is according to the principles of modern surgical cleanliness.

Preston Retreat was established in 1839 by a wealthy physician, who recognized the necessity of an institution where poor but respectable married women could be provided with comfort and skilful attendance during their accouchement.

The building, which is of marble and of Grecian architecture, is situated in the centre of a large square and is surrounded by green lawns and shade trees. In the rear, and completely detached from the building, is the laundry, and to the extreme right, facing another street is the residence of the physician in charge, Dr. Joseph Price, who stands unique not only in his record at the Retreat but also in the department of pelvic surgery.

The arrangements for ventilation are complete. The halls are cruciform, opening upon the four