

most of the purposes for which they have been provided throughout the country at the public expense. The secretary to the Lord Chancellor replies to the petitioners that 'his lordship has communicated with the coroner on the subject of your petition, and has informed him that, while his lordship thinks it desirable not to express an extra-judicial opinion on the subject of the coroner's jurisdiction in relation to the removal of a body, he regards it as of the highest importance that in assuming such a power, the coroner should be guided by the consideration whether grave public inconvenience would follow from any other course.' In this particular instance the difference between the committee and the coroner as to the legality of the removal appears to be of long standing, for the coroner, in his reply to the petition, refers to a remark of Mr. Secretary Cross to the committee when they solicited his intervention—that 'the officers of the infirmary should readily conform to all legal requirements of the coroner, and should render to him every assistance in the conduct of his inquest.'—*Law Journal (London)*.

EXTRAJUDICIAL CONFESSIONS.

The common law has always been hostile to confessions or admissions of guilt not made with absolute free will. In this respect it differs from the doctrine of the civil law and the derived usage of continental jurisprudence, under which the normal method of trial was, and is, to extract from the accused by torture or the ingenious interrogatories which form the staple of French detective literature, and led to the fall of the Star Chamber, such an admission of his guilt as would save the need of extrinsic evidence. Without stopping to trace out the origin of this distinction, we may suggest that it arose *in favorem vitæ* from the severity of the old punishments for felony, and from the right of the accused to select the mode of his trial, and the old theory that his guilt depended on the verdict of the vicinage—i.e. local public opinion—coupled with a well-grounded hostility to any method which would enable the Crown to work forfeitures by extracting admissions, and it is curious to observe that the one case in which confession, as distinguished from a plea of guilty, was essential was where the offender claimed benefit of clergy, and the consequent right to abjure the realm, as in a case where the jurisdiction of the common law was declined by a privileged