

and the fact of the pistol being found in his hand, would afford nothing but presumptive evidence that he destroyed himself with that instrument; and I imagine, Sir, that in cases of such importance, where demonstrative evidence can be obtained, those who are contented with presumptive evidence only, are highly culpable. The surgeon was severely censured in the one case for not performing a post-mortem examination, and it appears that the coroner equally deserves it in the other.

I beg to apologise for taking up so much of your time by this long description, but I have thought it a duty to inform you of the circumstance, and shall be happy to adopt any course which you may suggest on the occasion. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

THOMAS DYER,

Upper Norton-street, Surgeon.
Portland-place, Nov. 3, 1836.

CORONER'S INQUEST

WITH DEFICIENT EVIDENCE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—That every medical man ought to, and does, express feelings of gratitude towards you for your exertions in procuring the enactment of the Medical Witnesses Bill is pretty clear; but it appears that we have another difficulty to contend with, of nearly as great a magnitude as the one just conquered.

Last Monday I was called to a case of sudden death; on arrival I saw blood on the stairs, and finger-marks of blood on the (Qy. MS.) On entering the bed-room I found Mrs. Miller (the wife of a boatswain) lying on the floor, her head being in a pool of blood; there was a mark of a blow on the right side of the head, and a contused wound on the chin; half an hour prior to this she was in her usual state of health; the jury was summoned, and the coroner arrived on the following day to pass judgment, but upon what evidence did they arrive at the verdict of "Died by the visitation of God?" It appears that when Mrs. M. died there was no person in the house excepting her landlady and child, and it was upon the evidence of these two persons that the verdict was returned. Here, then, is decidedly an *ex parte* investigation, as neither the opinion of the neighbour who first arrived, nor my opinion, was deemed to be necessary. On a juryman's request that the medical attendant should be sent for, the proposal was overruled on the score of its "occupying too much time." I do not mean to insinuate that there was any foul play; on the contrary, I am convinced that such was not the case; but suppose murder had been perpetrated in this instance, it is not very probable that the two parties before alluded to would criminate themselves. Again, the juryman

did not, and do not at this moment, know, that there was a blow on the head, or a contused wound on the chin.

The Coroner's Court is justly considered one of very great importance, but it will cease to be an awful tribunal, even to the guilty, when such investigations are allowed to be dignified by the name of "Coroner's Inquests." Such proceedings are fraught with dangerous consequences, inasmuch as it is not every practitioner who can afford time in endeavouring to restore suspended animation, without recompense, and many, consequently, will refuse to go when called upon in cases of drowning, hanging, &c., not but that the well-known humanity of medical men will ever incite to exertion even those whose pecuniary position will not justify their following the dictates of their hearts.

I hope that ere long it will be rendered the imperative duty of the coroner to summon the medical attendant in every case. I am aware that there are many instances, wherein the circumstances attending the death are too palpable to render medical evidence requisite; but that would be a lesser evil than allowing examinations to be conducted after the fashion of this case.

Perhaps, Sir, if you can find room in your valuable periodical for this you will be kind enough to answer two questions.—

Our coroner, Mr. Hind, being in the habit of sending his son to preside as coroner, should I be justified in accepting his son's order?

Having an order for evidence only, and then another order afterwards given for making a post-mortem examination, should I (having two orders) be entitled to receive *three* or only *two* guineas? I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

J. R. HANCORN, Surgeon, &c.

Sheerness, Nov. 2, 1836.

(See page 280.—ED. L.)

MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS.

To the Editor.—SIR: I made the following extract a few months since, from the "Appendix to the Report of the Medical Education Committee." I think, perhaps its republication in your far-spreading journal would, in a slight degree, serve to demonstrate the "quality of the knowledge dispensed" at some of our principal medical schools. There were examined in three years, from

	Students.	Rejected.	Being
St. Bartholomew's,	194	17	1 in 11.
St. Thomas's, . . .	89	7	1 in 12.
St. George's, . . .	32	3	1 in 11.
Guy's,	109	5	1 in 21.
King's College, . .	13	2	1 in 6.
London University,	116	3	1 in 39.

You can verify this by reference to the report. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
London, Oct. 1836. F. T. U.