

CHAPTER 18

Medico-Legal Work.

A.—POST-MORTEM EXAMINATION

1. The questions to be determined by a post-mortem examination vary in different cases, and the possibility of determining them effectually is not in every case equally dependent on the stage which the process of putrefaction has reached.

Effect of decomposition.

Thus, in death from drowning, strangulation and various diseases, questions respecting the appearance of flesh tissues, and the amount of blood in parts are required to be considered, and these can only be determined soon after death, and before putrefaction has made much progress.

But it would be quite possible to determine the existence or absence of a wound or severe bruises of soft parts, even if decomposition were considerably advanced; and injuries of bones, pregnancy, presence of foreign bodies, metallic poisoning, and some profound organic diseases, are ascertainable long after death.

2. In each case the circumstances, so far as they are known, respecting the death and the discovery of the body, which are communicated by the Police, will enable the Medical Officer to form an opinion as to whether it would be possible by a post-mortem examination to throw any light on the cause of death and wherever such possibility exists or whenever nothing is known; it is his duty to make as full an examination as possible.

Duty of Medical Officer to conduct post-mortem examination when nothing is known about causes of death.

3. These considerations should guide a Magistrate in determining on the propriety or otherwise of exerting the power given him by law of ordering the exhumation of a body. In cases of doubt the Magistrate should; if possible, consult a Medical Officer before passing such an order.

Exhumation of body when advisable for examination.

Officers authorised to conduct post-mortem examinations.

4. The following notification of the Punjab Government is published for information :-

Punjab Government notification No. 332, dated the 3rd April, 1905

The following notification is issued regarding the Medical Officers authorised to conduct post-mortem examinations, in supersession of Notification No. 1067, dated 14th September, 1904:—

Body should be forwarded without delay.

1. In exercise of the powers conferred by section 174 of the Criminal Procedure Code, the Lieutenant Governor (now Governor) is pleased to appoint the Medical Officer hereinafter named to conduct postmortem examinations under that section, and to rule that, except as provided in clauses 3 and 4, bodies for such examinations shall be forwarded to the authorised officer employed within the district where the case arises, to whom they can be brought by rail or otherwise in the shortest time.

Medical officers authorized.

2. The authorised officers appointed under this Notification are—

- (1) all Civil Surgeons;
- (2) all Medical Officers hording collateral Civil charges;
- (3) all Staff Surgeons;
- (4) all Assistant Surgeons;

When body to be sent to Staff Surgeon.

3. Bodies for post-mortem examinations shall be forwarded to Staff Surgeons (a) when they are those of soldiers, camp followers or other persons entitled to the professional attendance of the Military Medical Staff, and (b) when they do not come under clause (a), but the death occurs within the jurisdiction of the Court of the Cantonment Magistrate and there is no Civil Surgeon or Assistant Surgeon residing in the Cantonment, or within 3 miles of it.

Fees of examination.

4. For rules *re* fees, see Chapter 9 "Witnesses—Criminal Courts."

Rules about the deposition of Medical witnesses and reports of Chemical Examiners.

5. Attention is invited to the special rules of evidence regarding the depositions of medical witnesses and the reports of Chemical Examiners contained in sections 509 and 510 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.