

Water on the spine	30 i; 43 b.
Water in the stomach (vague)	Pyrosis † 86 b.
Waterbrash	Pyrosis † 86 b.
Water canker	Noma? 39 d.
Water complaint (vague)	Dropsy? 30. Urinary disease † 92—100.
Water-pox	Small-pox, 1.
Watery gripes (vague)	Dysentery † 11.
Weaning	Was there any specific disease? 136.
Weaning brash	Lichen? 123.
Wearying (bad)	
Wen	33 i.
White flux (vague)	Leucorrhœa? 103.
White mouth (vague)	Thrush, 9.
White swelling	Note after 112.
Whitlow	131.
Wind dropsy	Tympanites? 86.
Wind rupture (bad)	
Wind spasms	54, 86.
Windpipe (contraction of)	From what cause? 69.
Windpipe (disease of)	69.
——— (inflammation of)	Tracheitis, 69. Croup, 81
Windy colic (vague)	82 †
Windy gravel (bad)	Gravel and flatulence † 97.
Withered sores (bad)	Ulcers † 32.
Womb (disease of)	What disease? cancer † 35.
——— (inflammation of)	Hysteritis, 102.
——— (polypus of)	37 c.
——— (rupture of)	From what cause? childbirth, 104
——— (strangulation of) (vague)	With prolapsus or introversio uteri? 101.
Worms	44.
Worm fever	44, 80.
Wound causing lockjaw	144, 53.
Yaws	131.
Yellow fever	16 b.
Yellow gum	Lichen strophulus, 123.
Yellow jaundice	Jaundice, 89 a.
Yellowwart	89.

PART II.

XI. A LETTER ADDRESSED TO CORONERS, WITH OBSERVATIONS ON THE REGISTRATION OF THE CAUSES OF VIOLENT DEATHS.

(CIRCULAR.)

General Register Office,
10th August, 1845.

SIR,

I HAVE the pleasure of transmitting to you a copy of my Sixth Annual Report, and I beg to direct your attention to pp. 210-266, in which I have given an abstract of the causes of the violent deaths in England, chiefly derived from the "informations" which you and the other coroners have given under the Registration Act.

In order that the results of the "informations" may be compared, and become really useful to the public, in pointing out the causes of violent deaths (which appear to be of much more frequent occurrence in this kingdom than in the rest of Europe), the nature of the fatal cases inquired into by juries must be returned somewhat more in detail than is done at present. In many "informations" all the facts that can be useful are stated; and it is only required that the practice, already partially existing, should be extended and made uniform, to place the whole upon a satisfactory footing.

You will observe, by referring to the Abstracts, pp. 234-6, that, exclusive of suicides, executions, some doubtful cases omitted, and 971 imperfectly returned in one year, 3305 persons were killed by mechanical injuries of various kinds—by falls, falls of stone, &c., machinery, railways, waggons, carriages, horses, and other agencies—fracturing their bones or crushing their bodies; 1950 lives were lost by water (drowning); 3057 by fire (148 by explosions, 2577 by burns, 332 by scalds); 188 persons were accidentally poisoned; 65 were murdered in ways not stated in the "informations;" and there were 83 cases of manslaughter.

It is believed that, although deaths by personal violence have diminished, poisoning, the violence called accidental, and the resulting dangers, have increased within the present century;—which may be ascribed to the number of deadly poisons now so accessible in every chemist's shop, the introduction of the new force of steam, the redoubled activity of traffic, travelling, navigation, agriculture, manufactures, and mining operations. Science itself creates new instruments of death. But if these instruments be brought to light by your inquests, described accurately, and placed fully before the public, science will find no difficulty in discovering

remedies, or rendering less harmful the new and striking, as well as the old and obscure, causes of violent death, which have made little noise, but have been in operation from time immemorial in every county of the kingdom.

It is to discover the dangers attendant on the occupations, pursuits, and various circumstances in which the population is placed, that I request your aid, in the hope that, if the causes of death are ascertained, additional security may be thrown around human life, and thus the great object of the coroner's inquest be promoted by the Registration Act.

The circumstances in which violent deaths happen are so various that it is impossible to suggest any general rule for the registration of every case; but if the great object of the "information" be kept steadily in view, little difficulty will be found in returning the "causes of violent death" in a manner sufficiently explicit and uniform to admit of comparison and analysis. In the accompanying paper, I have noticed the most important particulars required, and some of the defects and omissions which deprive many of the "informations" of that value and specific character which they should possess in conformity with the clause of the Registration Act requiring juries, under the direction of the coroner, to inquire into the "cause of death."

I have given a few specimens also of the better class of returns. Having taken the liberty of thus calling your attention to the points which I consider important in returning the causes of violent death, I confidently anticipate that for the future, in all cases in which inquests shall be held, the finding of the jury, as recorded in the register books of deaths, will contain all the particulars which it is desirable to ascertain.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your faithful Servant,
GEORGE GRAHAM,
Registrar-General.

To the Coroner of _____

XII. OBSERVATIONS ON THE REGISTRATION OF THE CAUSES OF VIOLENT DEATHS.

THE Registration Act has made it imperative in England to investigate and record the CAUSES of every person's death.* The object of the inquiry is, that the precise nature of these causes may be determined; that they may be carefully analyzed; and that means may hence be devised for guarding against their effects, and for throwing additional security around human life. To be of any use in improving the public health, preventing crime, and advancing medical science, the INQUIRY into the causes of violent death must be complete, and must include three classes of "particulars."

The questions to be proposed in reference to every case of death ascribable directly to external causes, are, (1.) Was the death caused by human agency? Did the person die by his own hands, or by the hands of other persons? or was his death accidental? (2.) What was the instrument, force, or thing by which death was caused? (3.) What was the nature of the fatal injury inflicted upon the body? The time that the person lived after the injury, and the place in which it was received, also demand attention.

1. The first class of facts comprised under the "Cause of Death," has reference to persons. It is the legal point of view.

The deaths caused by human agency are referred to several heads:—(1) Suicide, *felo de se*; (2) Murder, infanticide, fratricide, parricide;† (3) Manslaughter; (4) Excusable homicide; justifiable homicide; (5) Execution.

As well as the social and blood relationship of the person killed and the person who kills him, the circumstances in which the two parties are placed constitute important distinctions; he or they may be engaged at the time (a) in a chance fight, or pitched battle; in a duel, or in war; (b) in rebellion, incendiarism, smuggling, piracy, poaching, highway robbery, burglary, or in suppressing any of these crimes; a person may commit murder, and then kill himself; he may be a prisoner, or a deserter. (c) Persons sometimes die after surgical operations voluntarily submitted to for the relief of disease; (d) women are sometimes

* 6 and 7 Gul. IV. c. 86, and Schedule B.

† The latter forms of murder have not been recognized as distinct offences in English law; and the distinction has been abolished between murder and *petit treason*, or the murder of the master by a servant, the husband by the wife, the superior by an ecclesiastical person, 9 Geo. IV. c. 31. "To compass or imagine the death of our Lord the King, of our Lady his Queen, or of their eldest son and heir," is *high treason*, 25 Edw. III. c. 2.

killed by injuries in childbearing, or by attempts to procure abortion.

Violent deaths may thus be caused indirectly as well as directly, unintentionally, intentionally, or negligently, when the "man-killer" did not intend to do any harm, or when he intended only to punish, or to inflict an injury of a kind not usually fatal; when he or the person killed was acting legally or illegally. A man may kill his adversary in self-defence (chance medley).^{*} The motives which lead to the commission of murder and of suicide are an important link in the chain of causes.†

The condition of the person's intellect when death happens is also observed; he may be in a state of insanity, or of intoxication; in an epileptic fit, or asleep (sleep-walking).

Deaths by physical causes, or accidentally by men, are generally called "Accidental;" which by itself is not sufficiently explicit.

Few violent deaths can happen in which at least one or other of the circumstances in this class of facts should not be recorded. When no information can be obtained, it should be so stated.

2. *The second class of facts has reference to things: to the instruments employed where human agency is concerned; in other cases to the animals, machines, and ordinary mechanical forces or bodies of nature.* With reference to the public health it is the most important head of inquiry.

Death is caused by wounds, stoppage of breathing, burns, starvation, poison; and it is impossible to enumerate all the various ways in which, or the things by which, such fatal injuries are caused; but the following classed list of those which have been mentioned in the Returns, with some additions, may serve to fix attention on the many details which have to be attended to.

WEAPONS and INSTRUMENTS employed by MEN:—Sword, dagger, knife, razor, lancet, "fork thrown at," a club, bludgeon, "the fist" —whip (flogging):—pistol, gun, cannon (burst, shot, ball).

ANIMALS, domestic or wild:—Dog (bite of), (inflammation, lock-jaw after bite of), hydrophobia‡ (— weeks after bite of —); bite of a viper, rat, boar; bull, cow (tossed, dragged, gored by); bites, &c., of other animals.

^{*} "Chance medley is properly applied to such killing as happens in self-defence upon a sudden rencounter."—*Blackstone*, B. 4, c. xiv. "Chance medley is often erroneously applied to any manner of homicide by misadventure:" as in the following verdict—"Chance medley by laudanum."

† The presumed motives of the criminals are stated in the French criminal returns.

‡ The number of hours, days, or weeks intervening between the bite of the rabid animal and the appearance of hydrophobia, and between the first attack of disease and death, should be invariably recorded.

HORSE, Mule, Ass—thrown by, run away with, dashed against — by, run over by, kicked by,—in hunting, racing, &c.:—**WAGGON**, cart, timber-carriage, stage-waggon, van, gig, phaeton, private carriage, coach, cab, omnibus, stage-coach—(*the person* thrown off, fallen off, run over by, run against and crushed by), (*the vehicle* upsetting, run away with and dashed against —).

RAILWAYS—fall of embankments, cuttings, bridges, tunnels;—**RAILWAY CARRIAGES**—thrown off;—run over by (while at work, on duty or not, on the line); run against and crushed by, "jammed between two carriages;" upsetting, running off the line;—steam-engine — boiler exploding, setting fire to carriages, scalding. The name and part of the railway should be invariably returned.

INCLINED plane ("fall off").

STEAMERS, SAILING VESSELS, BARGES, BOATS, SHIPS:—Injuries in dockyards, "fall from docks,"—falling overboard,—from mast, "from ships' yards," "into the hold," "crushed between two vessels," "mast falling on," "entangled in machinery," "steam-boiler exploding, setting the ship on fire;" upsetting of pleasure-boats, barges, &c.;—shipwreck. The name of the ship, or steamer, should be stated; also the description of vessel—colliers—foreign traders, &c.

DWELLING-HOUSES—fall of, fall from scaffolding in building, fall from the roof, fall of bricks, from windows, down stairs, over banisters, into cellar; "fall from bed-room window asleep;" fall of chimney; burnt by the house taking fire.

WORKS—iron, copper, brass, lead, dye, print, bleaching, glass, china, earthenware (potteries).

Factories—cotton, silk, woollen, flax, &c.

Mills—flour, paper, bark, saw, &c.

Machines—thrashing, &c., water-wheel, windmill sails, horse-gin, windlass, capstan, &c.

Steam Engine—(a) explosion of boiler, (b) the engine itself. Fly-wheel, beam, connecting rod, piston rod, governor ball, &c.

Gearing—shafts, wheels, pulleys, straps, &c.

Machinery in Iron, &c. works—machine straps, rollers, planing-machines, lathes, drills, punches, rivetting, wire-drawing, pipe-drawing, &c., machines.

In *Print, Dye, and Bleaching works*—washing-wheels, printing and calendering machines.

In *Cotton Factories*—beater, devil, carding-machine, roving, stretching, doubling, throstle frame, loom mule, dressing machine.

In *Silk Factories*—throwing, reeling, winding, doubling, spinning-machine, loom, &c.

In *Woollen Factories*—combing, carding, teaseling, shearing, slubbing, roving, spinning, fulling-machines.

In *Flax Factories*—heckling, roving, doubling, spinning, &c. machines.

Miscellaneous machinery, or such as is used not in actual manufacturing, but in auxiliary processes, such as teagles, cranes, hoists, grindstones. Also mercury, lead, acids, alkalis, and other chemical agents, which are causes of death in manufactories, &c.

[The name of the work, or of the owner of the work, factory, or machine, should always be stated, as in the following instance:—“Laceration of the scalp by a carding machine in John Holt’s factory—lived 9 days; crisympelas, 5 days.”]

MINES and COAL-PITS—State the department the deceased was engaged in, under “rank or profession”—distinguishing the “viewer,” “overman,” “back-overman,” “hewer,” “putter,” “trapper,” “crane-boy,” “rolley-driver,” “rolley-way-man,” “Davy lamp-keeper,” “furnace-man,” “stable-keeper,” “wasteman,” “shifter,” “onsetter,” “banksman,” “brakesman,” &c.

Falls—in “shaft,” “staple,” “drift, or water-level,” “waste,” “rolley-way,” “tram-way,” “goaf,” “workings”—men falling through rope having been cut or broke when “riding away” (descending, &c.) or breaking of “pit chain,” or “slipping of knot,”—fall down “coal-pit shaft,” or “staple,” &c.

Falls—of stone or coal; of roof of mine; of “coal-pit tub;” “corse,” “kibble,” “prop,” “pick,” “hammer,” &c.

Blows—when driving in dark or light, by “crane-handle,” “rolley,” “tram,” “blasting stone or coal,” “hewing,” “drawing a jud,” blows of “capstan,” of swingle-tree, of gin or winsey, pit machinery, stamp mills, or steam-engine, &c.!

Explosion—State whether killed by the direct effect of fire, or from suffocation by the “after-damp,” “choke damp,” or “styth”—either immediately after the accident, or at a later period in rendering assistance, &c. State where the explosion happened, in the “waste,” “face of workings,” or “goaf,” &c.—whether “Davy lamps,” “raw lights,” or “flint mills,” were in use when the explosion happened—whether the mine had one shaft or more. In explosions fatal to many lives, note the diameter of the shaft and the acres of royalty; and whether the ventilation was conducted by a furnace or lamp, the method “simple,” “scaling, or compound;” whether the mine was working in the “whole, or the broken.” The name of the mine, and the owners’ names should be always recorded.

Drowning—in mines—where was the water from? What caused the accident? Was the shaft to the rise or the dip of the coal field or “seam”? Did the seam keep a “water engine,” and of what power was that engine?

QUARRIES:—“Roof of a quarry falling in,” “stone falling in,” “fell into a quarry.”

FALL of heavy substances:—Fall of stones, of limestone, “a piece of marble,” marl, sand; brick wall, “part of a new chapel,” a theatre, a bridge, “an arch;” “a piece of timber,” “wood,” “a pile of deals,” “a beam;” “a box of soap,” “a bale of cotton,” “a box of sugar;” “a mallet;” “a crane,” “a rope,” “a boat,” “a piece of iron.”

FALLS—from a ladder, scaffolding, “a rock,” “a tree,” a monument, a church tower, a steeple, an arch, a railway arch, a mill window, a wall, through a trap-door in the street,—in a malthouse; falls in running, skating, walking in *frosty weather*; “jumping from a building on fire;” falls in wrestling, jumping, running; falls into a pit, a saw-pit, a cave, a “stone delph,” from a wall “on a hand-stall” which ran into his body,” “on the spikes of iron railings,” from the quay on a boat; falls in an epileptic fit, in a state of intoxication, &c.

The breath is stopped in many forms of death, as in drowning, hanging, strangling, suffocation, choking, and inhaling mephitic gases. The general term which designates this mode of death is asphyxia or apnoea.

WATER:—**DROWNING**—(a) in bathing, skating, from falling out of boats, ships, &c.; jumping overboard; upsetting of boats, &c.; shipwreck, &c. (see Steamers, p. 71); (b) in the sea, a lake, river, canal, pit, pond, mill-dam, well, draw-well, clay-pit, cistern, a tub of water, “a tub of ale,” &c.; “a child drowned in the uterine fluid of the mother;” “fell into canal while drunk,” “fell into a vat of lime-water and ashes,” “drowned herself in a tub,” “suffocated in a ditch,” “suffocated by falling into mud in a fit.”

HANGING—with a cord, a pocket handkerchief, &c.—on a tree, a bed-post, &c. State whether the body touched the ground.

STRANGLING—with a cord, a handkerchief, a handkerchief tightened by a stick, &c.; “by the head passing through the rails of a chair.”

SUFFOCATING—overlaying by mother, brother, nurse, &c.; by stopping the mouth and the nostrils with the hand; smothered in a turn-up bed, &c.; “smothered by a hut falling on her,” “smothered by falling while drunk out of a loft into a cratch of hay;” smothered by compression and trampling on in a crowd; “suffocated by fixed air in the stomach produced by soda water.”

FOOD: CHOKING—by meat, by a fish-bone, an oyster, a cherry-stone, a pea, a bean. Killed by a nail, a half-sovereign, a pin falling into the windpipe.

MEPHITIC GASES—irrespirable or poisonous: carbonic acid—fixed air—in mines, graves, wells, chambers, the vapour of charcoal, of brick-kilns, of fermenting liquors; in brewers’ vats, &c.; nitrogen in wells, vaults, holds of ships; carburetted hydrogen, sulphuretted hydrogen, in mines, water-closets, sewers; “a sweep (age 9) suffocated in a flue.”

LIGHTNING—struck by, or killed by the fall of other bodies struck by lightning. [It should be stated in all cases whether the person was found alive and conscious,—where he was struck,—whether under a tree, or in a house, &c., and the nature of any visible injury on the body, and any circumstances which can explain the course the lightning took, or the death, should be briefly recorded.]

EXPLOSION—of gunpowder, of powder-mills, of fire-damp, of gas (for lighting) in mines, houses, &c.; in blasting, discharging fire-works, &c. [The cause of the explosion should be stated.]

FIRE—of houses, buildings; the clothes taking fire. [The way in which the fire originated and the article of dress, &c., that caught fire, should be stated.] “Clothes set on fire by another child;” “burnt herself in a fit of insanity.”

HOT WATER—“Falling into a vessel of hot water;” kettle of boiling water, saucepan, vessel of hot water—falling on; steam from steam boiler; drinking boiling water out of a kettle; “drinking hot coffee;” “falling into a brewery of scalding alewort;” “falling into new slaked lime.”

POISON—Sulphuric acid (oil of vitriol), nitric acid (aqua fortis), hydrochloric acid, oxalic acid, arsenic (oxide), corrosive sublimate, and the other compounds of mercury, verdigris, sulphate of copper (blue-stone), sulphate of zinc, nitrate of silver,—lead (acetate, carbonate),—baryta (hydrochlorate, carbonate)—cantharides, opium (solid), laudanum, muriate or acetate of morphia, hydrocyanic (or prussic) acid [state the strength of this acid], oil of bitter almonds—belladonna (berries of deadly nightshade), hemlock, henbane, tobacco, monkshood, foxglove (*digitalis*), strychnia, nux vomica, cocculus Indicus, fungi, alcohol.

[In all cases state the particular poison, and the dose when known; also the time elapsing between its administration and the person's death.]

MEDICINES—in over doses—taken or given; quack medicines.

SUBSTANCES swallowed, acting as irritants; “a piece of tin,” “a pewter tea-spoon,” “a piece of wood,” a pin swallowed causing ulcer of the stomach, “eating cucumbers,” “eating blackberries,” “convulsions from eating peas,” “drinking cold water when heated.”

DRINKING a large dose of spirits; **INTOXICATION** by spirits, wine, or ale; habitual intemperance; “apoplexy from drinking;” a book-keeper “hanged himself when delirious from drink;” “drunk, fell into the — canal and was drowned.”

STARVATION—exposure to the inclemencies of the weather; lost in a snow storm on —; frozen to death; privation of warmth and food; “lost in a lane, and died from cold and starvation;” “fell into a pit and was starved by cold;” “disease of liver and want of necessaries;” want of the necessaries of life through—[here add the cause.]

3. *Physical injuries, causing death, constitute the third class of facts.* It is the *medical* point of view.

FRACTURE—simple, compound, comminuted, of the skull, spine, pelvis, thigh, leg, ankle, arm.

RUPTURE of liver, lungs, spleen, gall-bladder, stomach, intestines, bladder; concussion of brain, of spine; contusion of any part; wound (gun-shot wound, stab, cut, lacerating wound of any part); artery or vein divided, and loss of blood; burns; scalds; blisters; any diseases—*inflammation* of any part, *ulceration*, *mortification*, *erysipelas*, *lock-jaw*.

In childbearing women—*rupture of uterus*; other injuries in delivery.

In new-born children—*crushed at birth*; killed immediately after birth, by a blow; suffocated; strangled; umbilical cord untied, bled to death.

4. The **PLACE** in which every death occurs is to be registered; with regard to accidents not immediately fatal—after which the sufferers die in hospitals or at home—it is right in almost all cases to state *where the fatal injury was inflicted*. The railway, canal, river, mine, factory, building, steamer, coach, &c., should be distinguished by its proper name.
5. The **TIME** the person lived after a mechanical injury of any kind—or after burns or scalds—should be noted; the *time* he was submerged in drowning, or suspended in hanging; and the time he lived after taking poisons, should, for the many purposes of medical jurisprudence, be ascertained and recorded.
6. The *rank* and *profession* of the person should be particularly described in the column having that heading.

It often happens that a complication of causes conspires to produce death; for instance, a person “falls—on a knife;” the most common cases of drowning are “falling—into the water;” in houses on fire the victims are generally suffocated by the smoke before the body is burnt; two or three kinds of poison are sometimes taken together, or shortly after each other, and then other means of destruction are resorted to. Any cause in the first class may be combined with almost any cause in the second, and that again may cause any injury or disease in the third class; hence the combinations of the three classes of causes are innumerable. Thus, if we take *Suicide* in the first class, it will be found that suicide has been committed in every variety of circumstances, with almost all the things and in almost all the ways specified in the second class; while with the several instruments selected, wounds and injuries have been inflicted on all the important organs of the body. So of *murder*.

CARE SHOULD BE TAKEN THAT EVERY RETURN OF A VIOLENT DEATH ANSWERS THE THREEFOLD INQUIRY INVOLVED UNDER “THE CAUSE OF DEATH;” *namely*,—

- (1) WAS THE DECEASED KILLED BY HIS OWN ACT, OR BY THAT OF OTHER PERSONS, AND IN WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES?
- (2) WHAT WERE THE MEANS, INSTRUMENTS, OR THINGS BY WHICH THE FATAL INJURY WAS PRODUCED?
- (3) WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF THE MORTAL INJURY, AND WHAT TIME ELAPSED BEFORE DEATH?

OR HAS ON THE FACE OF IT AN EXPLANATION OF THE OMISSION. AT THE SAME TIME THE STATEMENT SHOULD BE MADE AS CONCISE AS IT IS CLEAR AND COMPREHENSIVE: NO VAGUE OR UNNECESSARY WORD SHOULD BE INSERTED.

The following are examples of Returns of Violent Deaths, which leave little to be desired:—

Accidentally run over by a cart, while trying to stop a runaway horse—fracture of his skull, ribs, &c.—lived 10 hours.

Accidental fall from a ladder, by which his skull was fractured—lived 2 days.

Murdered by — in a duel, with a pistol ball; lungs perforated; lived 3 days.

Erysipelas from a wound in the leg, caused by the falling of a bar of iron, which struck him on the heel while at work—wound 9 days—the erysipelas 6 days before death.

[The statement in this and similar cases implies that the injury was accidental. The word "accidental" is superfluous, except where a person is killed directly, but accidentally, by human agency.]

Accidentally trod on by a dray horse; chest crushed; lived 5 minutes; (a child, age 2 years).

Accidentally drowned by falling from a schooner into the Thames. Under water 6 minutes.

Drowned by the accidental upsetting of a boat on the Thames—3 days in the water.

Drowned by accidentally falling into the Regent's Canal, while stepping from one boat to another. Under water 1 hour.

Accidental, from two logs of timber having fallen upon him—ruptured bladder (5 days). *p. mort.*

Accidental fall—wrist cut by a flint—followed by inflammation. (Lived 9 days.)

Suicide, with a knife, after stealing riband in a linendraper's shop—insane (?) at the moment of suicide. (Lived 1 hour.)

Accidental, cut through the skull, and deeply into the brain, by a circular saw in a saw-mill. (Died in a few minutes.)

Irritation and exhaustion consequent on a fracture of the arm, by a fall from a South-Western Railway carriage in motion. (Lived 5 weeks.)

Poisoning with arsenic, and exposure to that substance during work in a candle manufactory. [The effects of the poison should have been stated.]

Exhaustion, following a burn of the arm, 19 days since—the shirt sleeve caught fire over a candle.

Erysipelas of the arm, following accidental application of sulphuric acid to the fingers. (3 days.)

Temporary insanity—2½ oz. of laudanum, and strangulation with handkerchief.

Drowned by the accidental tilting and sinking of an overloaded boat, containing the deceased and others. Under water 3 hours.

Accidentally suffocated by inhaling the vapour of charcoal on board of a ship—exposed to the vapour 5 hours. [The name or description of ship should have been inserted.]

Suicide by arsenic—probably 20 grains in one dose—lived 20 hours.

Accidentally burnt by her clothes taking fire. [The particular articles of dress—gown, apron, cap, &c.—which took fire should be specified.]

Strangled with a cord, by the mother—wilful murder. [The mere term "Wilful Murder" is not sufficient. It is most important to specify the manner in which, and when known, the person by whom—the murder was committed.]

A blow on the head by a fall from an omnibus. [In this case the injury which was the effect of the blow could not be ascertained.]

Blows by John Downey—manslaughter. [Whether in a prize fight or not should have been stated.]

Leg crushed by machinery in Samuel Smith's silk factory; lived — weeks; abscess, 3 weeks.

Eye struck by a shuttle in Samuel Brown's woollen factory; lived — weeks; meningitis, 3 days.

Fracture of the skull, caused accidentally by a brick falling on him whilst descending a coal-pit shaft.

Accidental and instant death by being knocked down a coal-pit shaft by the swing-tree of a gin.

Wound and fracture of the jawbone from his clothes getting entangled with the spindle of a grinding stone at — iron works.

Fracture of the skull from his being seized with a fit, and falling out of a skip down a coal-shaft.

Overdose of Godfrey's Cordial, administered by mistake for syrup of rhubarb.

Poisoned by laudanum—no evidence to show whether by intention on the part of the mother.

Arsenic taken by herself through ill-treatment of her job mother.

Stroke of lightning in the Finchley-road—lived 14 hours—symptoms like the stupor of apoplexy—no morbid appearance found in any cavity of the body; but two slight burns were discoverable on the inner side of the fore-arm.

Accidental, from a compound fracture of the right thigh, occasioned by slipping into the moving machinery of a steam-engine, when on board of a steam-boat.

Hæmorrhage into the abdomen from accidental rupture of the liver, by crushing between two waggons on a railway train, while there at work. [The name of the railway should be given.]

Found dead in bed, apparently suffocated,—without marks of violence.

Imperfect Returns of the Causes of Violent Death.

"Accident."

"Accidental"—"accidental death;" "accidental by his own carelessness." [*Imperfect.*]

These cannot properly be called returns of the causes of death. They neither state the nature of the accident, nor the nature of

the injury. Was the "accident" in a mine, a steamer, or a factory, or was it on a railway?—Was it fracture, drowning, a burn, or poisoning, that caused the death? It is not necessary to mention other vague returns of the same kind, which leave the same questions unanswered.

"Wilful murder;" "manslaughter;" "justifiable homicide;" "felo de se;" "suicide." [Imperfect.]

All returns of this kind are imperfect. No mention is made of the means by which the "murder," for instance, was caused. Was it by strangling, a wound, a blow, drowning, shooting, or poison? In many cases other circumstances are required to be stated, in order to give a correct account of the "cause of death."

"Fracture of the skull;" "fracture of jawbone;" "a burn;" "rupture of diaphragm;" "suffocated." [Imperfect.]

Returns of this kind are imperfect. It is the exclusively medical view of the cases. The causes of the "fractures," &c., are not specified; nor the circumstances in which the injuries happened. Were they accidental deaths, suicides, or murders?

"Lock-jaw;" "erysipelas;" "mortification;" "delirium tremens."

Returns of this kind are "imperfect" when it is not stated whether they were or were not the results of external causes, or intemperance.

"Accidentally drowned;" "accidentally crushed;" "poisoned himself." [Imperfect.]

The place in which the person was drowned should have been stated. Was he precipitated into the water by the fall of a bridge, or the upsetting of a boat? Was he bathing, or skating, &c.? How was the body crushed, and by what?—What was the nature of the poison, &c.?

"By a machine."

"Injuries from machinery;" "fell down a coal-pit;" "explosion in a coal-pit." [Imperfect.]

The particular kind of machinery, and the names of the coal-pits, or of their owners, should have been returned.

"Water in the chest and pericardium, accelerated by exposure to the severity of the weather." [Imperfect.]

In this return the cause and circumstances of exposure should have been stated. From destitution? Want of clothing, fire, or lodging?—Did it occur in employment in the fields—on board ship—in a fishing-boat—in travelling—or in what other situation?

"Hydrophobia." [Imperfect.]

Was the disease caused by the bite of a dog, cat, or what other animal? How many days or hours elapsed between the bite and the first symptoms of hydrophobia; and how many between the first symptoms and death?

Little can be ascertained respecting the causes of some deaths;

but in cases like these, the *name of water or place* in which the person is found should be stated; and it should be added, whether "with or without marks of injury."

In many cases the evidence is insufficient to decide positively whether the person committed suicide, fell into the water accidentally, or was murdered. In such case the *probable cause* may be returned in a qualified manner, together with the name of the river or other water; such as "drowned in the Regent's Canal, probably by accident."

"Found drowned." "Found dead." [Imperfect.]

So of other cases, the cause, in favour of which there is a *strong probability*, should be stated with the proper qualifications. In other cases it should be stated that the circumstances are "unknown."

XIII. SUDDEN DEATHS.

Inquests are held in the cases of sudden as well as of violent deaths.* And it is stated by all the authorities in medical jurisprudence, that the causes of sudden deaths, often involved in great obscurity, can only be ascertained by an inspection of the principal organs. The body may have the same external appearance in death by apoplexy, syncope, aneurism, poison, or suffocation, and violence of other kinds; but if the death be distinctly traced to a disease by an inspection of the body, this at the same time determines "by what manner" the person "came to his end," and, with the usual collateral evidence, leaves no more room for suspicion of innocence than hope of impunity for crime.

In the returns of the causes of death, it is sometimes found that *affections of the mind* are stated to have been attended by fatal results, but are reported in a vague and unsatisfactory manner, such as "passion," "anxiety," "fright," "grief," "broken heart," "excitement." The following are better examples of returns of this character:—"Shock occasioned by the sudden death of her brother, who expired 3 months before;" "trouble for the death of her son, who died 6 weeks before;" "extreme grief, caused by one of her children having been lost for two days;" "mental anxiety from pecuniary embarrassments;" "illness caused by a fright from thunder and lightning;" "fright from her clothes taking fire." The following as regards both cause and effect, are complete: "apoplexy, produced by excitement while fighting in a state of intoxication;" "excitement and passion causing rupture of the left ventricle of the heart."

* "The court of the coroner is a court of record to inquire, when any one dies in prison, or comes to a violent or sudden death, *by what manner he came to his end*, Blackstone, b. 4, c. 19, s. 11; 1 Inst. 271; 2 Hal. P. C. 53; 2 Hawk. P. C. 42. See the 6 and 7 Viet. c. 12, as to the power of coroners to hold inquests where the cause of death arose out of their jurisdiction.

DEATHS OF LUNATICS AND PRISONERS.

In cases of insanity or lunacy, the fact and form of the malady should be invariably inserted in the "information;" thus,—mania, 1 year; phthisis, $\frac{1}{2}$ year. The cause of death by disease in *prisoners* can be generally ascertained, and should be returned on the same principles as ordinary cases of death. See *Statistical Nosology* and the *Medical Certificate Book*.

Extracts from 6 & 7 Gul. IV., cap. lxxxvi., being the "Act for registering Births, Deaths, and Marriages in England," relative to the Duties of Coroners and their Courts under that Act.

"In case any new-born child or any dead body shall be found exposed, the overseers of the poor in the case of the new-born child, and the coroner in the case of the dead body, shall forthwith give notice and information thereof, and of the place where such child or dead body was found, to the registrar."—SEC. 19.

"Provided always, That in every case in which an inquest shall be held on any dead body, the jury shall inquire of the particulars herein required to be registered concerning the death, and the coroner shall inform the registrar of the finding of the jury, and the registrar shall make the entry accordingly."—SEC. 25.

The particulars as given in Schedule (B) are "When died ('place of death' was added by the Amendment Act, 1 Vict., c. xxii., s. 8); name and surname, sex, age, rank or profession; cause of death."

"Provided always, That the coroner, upon holding any inquest, may order the body to be buried, if he shall think fit, before registry of the death, and shall in such case give a certificate of his order in writing under his hand, according to the form of Schedule (F.) to this Act annexed, to such undertaker or other person having charge of the funeral, which shall be delivered as aforesaid; and every person who shall bury or perform any funeral or any religious service for the burial of any dead body for which no certificate shall have been duly made and delivered as aforesaid, either by the registrar or coroner, and who shall not within seven days give notice thereof to the registrar, shall forfeit and pay any sum not exceeding ten pounds for every such offence."—SEC. 27.

SCHEDULE (F.)

"I, *James Smith*, Coroner for the County of *Dorset*, do hereby order the Burial of the Body now shown to the Inquest Jury as the Body of *John Jones*. Witness my Hand this *Eighth Day of March, 1836*.

"*James Smith*, Coroner."



