

doubtless, by the desire of offering something of at least a passing value, and of adding, it may be, a fragment to the store of human knowledge." What we have seen and read of this book, in our opinion abundantly justifies its claims to existence, and we have no doubt that, to the student especially, it will prove a useful work. The author has not scrupled, whenever it seemed to him proper, to make use of the recorded experience of other authorities. The pages of the book are enriched from Taylor, Guy, Christisen, Orfila, Tardieu, Caspar, and in the author's own country from Wharton & Still's "Medical Jurisprudence," and Professor Warmley's "Nero-Chemistry of Poisons," a work which well deserves to be called magnificent, when we consider the profusion and excellence of its illustrations. The first part of the book is devoted to "The Mode of Action of Poisons on the Animal Economy; Circumstances which modify the Action of Poisons; the Post-mortem Inhibition of Poisons; the Evidences of Poisoning; and to Medico-Legal questions connected with Poisoning. A chapter is also devoted to "The Duties and Privileges of Medical Experts." Here our author deploras what has been sneeringly termed by newspapers, the "war of the experts;" that collision and difference of opinion which, from its frequency, the public have come to expect as a matter of course, and, in consequence, to reject all expert testimony as superfluous if not worthless; "a result which, it is to be feared, is not unfrequently reached also by the jury, to the great and manifest disparagement of justice." This unfortunate state of affairs is due to the fact that, in trials for poisoning as well as other medico-legal cases, it is quite usual to find medical men summoned as experts, both by prosecution and defence, who have never made the subject of toxicology a special study, and are, of course, ignorant of the important details of the science; but who, nevertheless, because they are "doctors," and are erroneously supposed to know, will venture to assume this most important function, and will even presume from the witness-box to enlighten the court and jury on one of the most intricate branches of science, and will hazard opinions which may probably determine the momentous issues of life and death."

The remedy suggested is, of course, the only proper one, and it is simply marvellous that it

has not been applied sooner in England and France, as well as in the United States and our own country, where the old objectionable system still prevails. These improvised experts should, of course, be excluded from poison trials, and the responsibility confided to genuine experts, as in Germany, where, in criminal cases, the experts first summoned "are exclusively those whom the State, after proper examination of their competency and skill in such particular inquiries, has duly authorized to act for this purpose; while, in addition, there is organized a tribunal of experts, to which the opinions of expert witnesses can be referred."

Some such remedy as this just mentioned is urgently needed to save medical evidence from the opprobrium from which it too often justly suffers.

These general questions having been disposed of, the author proceeds to the toxicology of particular poisons. He adopts the classification adopted by Taylor, but with some slight modifications. Poisons are divided into two classes, irritants and neuratics, the latter being divided into (a) cerebral, (b) spinal, and (c) cerebro-spinal. The individual poisons are then treated in detail, those which are most frequently employed coming in for a proportionately larger share of attention. The tests for each are given with due attention to detail. This part of the work is thoroughly up to the time.

The author has not, however, entered on the subject of spectrum analyses. The following are his reasons:—"This truly beautiful method of analytical research has developed the most wonderful results, both in chemistry and in other departments of medical science. In point of delicacy, it far transcends the most subtle and refined chemical reactions, and as a corroborative means of evidence, it will doubtless prove of great value to the toxicologist. But, as it deals, so to speak, with infinitesimals, we do not think that it would be safe, in a case of alleged poisoning, to rest the evidence solely upon the spectral demonstration of the supposed toxic agent, to the exclusion of the recognized chemical tests. When an accumulated experience with spectral analysis has rendered the identification of the various poisons absolutely and exclusively certain, we can probably afford to abandon altogether the more tedious and complex methods of chemical research.