

REVIEW.

THE SALE OF FOOD AND DRUGS ACTS. BELL and SCRIVENER. Second edition.
(Shaw and Sons, Fetter Lane, E.C. Price 4s. 6d.)

The appearance of a second edition of this book affords additional evidence of the increased interest taken in the working of the Food Acts. The chemical reviewer would be guilty of a presumptuous act were he to venture upon a criticism of the purely legal portions of a book written by two learned barristers, but as far as we can see, the authors have recorded, in a very systematic manner, the most important of the numerous decisions given in courts of law touching the Sale of Food and Drugs Acts. Perhaps we might have been spared a good many of the decisions of the lower courts, which, as every analyst knows, are puzzling and contradictory.

But the authors have attempted to do more than write a legal guide, for, apparently without any chemical qualification, they have ventured to enter into the discussion of matters purely chemical, with results such as might have been anticipated. In commenting upon Section 6, truly described as "a most important section, and the entire working of the Sale of Food and Drugs Act very nearly depends upon it," the authors discuss the composition of the more important articles of food. We are sorry to find that the remarks under this head are neither characterized by the absence of bias nor by the presence of modern knowledge. They often appear to be a faint echo of the information contained in a well-known little handbook on "The Chemistry of Foods" published eleven years ago. Thus, the remarks as to the variability of the composition of butter-fat are obviously not based upon analyses of commercial butters made from the mixed milk of a number of cows. In connection with the adulteration of butter, "the more common offence" is, nowadays, not the sale of a factitious article, but rather the sale of mixtures of butter and margarine. The remark that "it is a common practice to mix a certain proportion of starch with yeast as a preservative" appears uncalled for, unless the book were written for defence advocates only. As to milk, the book takes us back to those bygone times in which the notorious lecture was delivered at the Health Exhibition, the Manchester milk case occurred, and the old Wanklyn process was in use, with limits fixed at 9 per cent. and 2·5 per cent. respectively.

The chemical part of the little work affords another proof of the good sense contained in the old adage, where the cobbler is advised to strictly confine his attention to his last.

O. H.