

BOOK REVIEW

J. M. Ballo,¹ M.D.

A Review of Scientific and Expert Evidence in Criminal Advocacy

REFERENCE: Cederbaums, J. G. and Arnold, Selma, *Scientific and Expert Evidence in Criminal Advocacy*, Practising Law Institute, New York City, 1975, 537 pages, \$25.00.

Scientific and Expert Evidence in Criminal Advocacy is an overview of those aspects of forensic science which may have a crucial impact on courtroom proceedings. It is directed primarily at members of the legal profession but may be read with profit by those in other areas of the forensic sciences who desire a brief acquaintance with a particular topic.

As is the case with most edited books of multiple authorship, this work has its high and low points. Most useful are the chapters on current and projected methods for drug testing, forensic psychiatry, and ballistics. There are two well-balanced and well-reasoned introductory chapters on the "Use and Misuse of Scientific Evidence" and "Practical Pitfalls in Handling Scientific Evidence."

Unfortunately, the level of comprehensibility, accuracy, and appropriateness varies widely within the book. The chapter on polygraph testimony, an "actual" court transcript, rambles. The chapter on forensic activation analysis is a technical reprint out of character with the rest of the book, and the chapter entitled "The Autopsy in Criminal Cases" contains doubtful statements about crib deaths, concentrations of carbon monoxide in burn victims, and other subjects that mar an otherwise useful outline of a difficult subject. Many of the photographic reproductions associated with this chapter are either out of focus or do not clearly show what is intended.

With these reservations, I would say this book serves a useful purpose. It is not suitable as a formal textbook on the subject, and it is not intended to be such, but as a brief summary and review of the subject it is satisfactory.

¹Staff pathologist, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, Washington, D.C. 20306.