

FOREWORD

Each year there is a sharp increase in the number of potentially poisonous substances to which man is exposed. They are met with in the factories, in the fields, and in the homes. They often contaminate the air, may be present in food or beverage, and are contained in most medicines.

The number of instances of illness and death caused by poisoning as reported in the vital statistics of countries where such figures are compiled probably represents only a small fraction of those which actually occur. Thus, in one large American industrial community a total of 66 cases of lead poisoning were reported over a seven-year period. During the seventh year, the services of an analyst and the facilities of a well-equipped laboratory were made available to the physicians of the community for making urinary lead determinations. At the same time, a program of professional education concerned with the clinical recognition of lead poisoning was launched. The following year, 65 cases were recognized. Since there was no reason to believe that there had been anything like a seven-fold increase in poisoning during that particular year, it was inferred that the apparent increase was due largely to better detection.

Whatever the facts may be as to the frequency with which poisoning actually occurs, it is clear that there is a need in most countries for much better facilities than now exist for securing toxicological analyses as well as for greater alertness on the part of the medical profession in the recognition of poisoning.

The many advances that have been made in the field during the past several decades are widely scattered and relatively difficult to locate. They are to be found in the files of more than a hundred scientific journals, in the many monographs that deal with special analytical methods or with special kinds of poisoning, and in chapters devoted to analytical toxicology that are to be found in various textbooks of legal medicine.

The first reaction on learning the contents of these two volumes, of one whose requirements for knowledge in the field although frequent and diversified are not such as to justify the maintenance of a large special library, is one of great relief. It is to be hoped that these volumes

will stimulate a general interest in this important subject—an interest that will lead to improvement in the recognition and prevention of poisoning and in the care of the poisoned.

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