

of progress, and an instructive illustration of the standpoint of the psychologist of to-day. From psycho-physics and anthropometry to histology and experimental pathology the tendency is constant towards observation and experimentation in contradistinction to speculation. It is no part of our purpose here to criticise the views and suggestions put forward by Dr. Van Giesen on cerebral pathology, but we are unable to pass over his comparison of the nerve-cell to an octopus. The statement is made that the nerve-cell, like the octopus, has power of movement over its "tentacles." To quote Dr. Van Giesen, "this retraction and expansion of the arm of the nerve-cell, in groups, systems, and communities of brain-cells, drawing it in or out of the circuit of transmission of nervous impulse, is the final unveiling of the secret of a whole host of mental phenomena which hitherto have seemed mysterious to the last degree." Again, "These attributes of extension and expansion of the nerve-cell hold one spellbound in the vast flood of light shed upon the explanation of insanity." We are told that among the phenomena to be explained by "retraction and expansion of the tentacles of the nerve-cell octopus" are those of double consciousness, hypnosis, hysteria, and of the "whole great important groups of psychopathic functional diseases;" also the cardinal symptoms of epilepsy in the manifestations of the fit, and some of the violent manifestations of insanity. What may be Dr. Van Giesen's basis for these remarkable statements and hypotheses we know not, but we are certainly impatient to learn upon what evidence they are grounded.

Criminal Evidence.

At last the Evidence in Criminal Cases Bill has become law. It is not necessary to say more of the statute itself here than that it makes every person charged with an offence, and the wife or husband of such person as the case may be, a competent witness for the defence at every stage of the proceedings, under the conditions specified in the Act. The arguments for and against this measure, which we believe to be a pre-eminently salutary one, have been agitated in this country for many years, and are familiar to every educated section of the community. The combatants on both sides will now be content to wait to see their predictions verified, or the reverse, by the event. The great danger against which the judiciary will have to guard

in superintending the administration of the new statute will, in our opinion, be the possible abuse by counsel, from excess of zeal, of the right of cross-examining prisoners electing to give evidence on their own behalf. But from the admirable manner in which the judges have confirmed the right of "summing up" enjoyed by counsel for the prosecution under Denman's Act, within safe working limits, we have no fear of the result of the fresh test to which the Legislature is now submitting their firmness and capacity.

Prison Reform.

Whether the flogging of prisoners in gaols for breaches of discipline is good policy or not is a question in regard to which experts may and do entertain very different opinions. But there will be little disposition in any quarter, we should think, to criticise adversely the provision of the new Prisons Act that such punishment shall only be inflicted in cases of mutiny and violence, and then after judicial inquiry by a Board of visiting justices, with a stipendiary magistrate to act with them if necessary, and after ratification of the sentence by the Secretary of State. This reform in the law will achieve several desirable ends. It will confine what is, under any circumstances, a brutal punishment to cases of real gravity and brutality; it will protect prisoners against the whims to which even visiting justices are subject; and it will secure that uniformity of practice in regard to prison floggings which has hitherto in England been conspicuous by its absence.

Inebriates Act.

The Inebriates Act of 1898 marks a very distinct and important advance in the treatment of habitual drunkards.

The power given to courts to order the detention of habitual drunkards guilty of crime, in an inebriate reformatory for not more than three years, will go far to end the "Cakebread" class.

Crimes of alcoholic origin, too, will be probably considerably reduced. Alcoholic homicides, for example, are commonly the result of a prolonged course of alcoholic violence, and such cases, it may be hoped, will in future be arrested before attaining their full development.

The inebriate reformatories which the Act empowers the Secretary of State to establish, or which may be established by the councils of counties and boroughs, will need to be