

THE WOOD ALCOHOL QUESTION.

PROGRESS is not always advantageous, and the refinements of modern life are often doubtful blessings. A conspicuous illustration of the untoward possibilities that may attend apparent victories of science, is found in the steadily increasing list of casualties reported since it has been found commercially feasible to deodorize and rectify methyl alcohol. As long as the wood alcohol of commerce was the vile-smelling nauseous, greenish liquid variously known as wood spirit, wood naphtha, pyroligneous spirit, etc., its many offensive qualities caused its use to be restricted to various legitimate manufacturing and other purposes, but in recent years it has appeared under new names, and in a more attractive guise. Deodorized and deprived of its disagreeable taste, it has been put on the market in new forms, highly recommended by its exploiters for many household purposes. Dr. Casey A. Wood, in an interesting discussion of the subject, in the *New York Medical Journal*, of January 7, 1905, points out the dangers attending the dissemination of this disguised poison, which now can be, and is, widely used to adulterate whiskey and other alcoholic beverages, witch hazel, bay rum, eau de cologne, Florida water, essences of all kinds, Jamaica ginger, ex-

tract of lemon, etc., and the various liniments, patent medicines, and domestic remedies, so appealing to a large fraction of the population. Dr. Wood says that already one hundred and fifty-eight authentic cases of blindness and one hundred and fifty-six deaths, due to wood alcohol, have been reported, and that there is every reason to believe that if the whole truth were known, the total number of cases would be largely increased, and the full number would exceed four hundred.