

Bein.\* He failed to detect the usual metallic or alkaloidal poisons, but found a ptomaine, which arose probably either through the spoliation of the coffee by means of sea water or by overroasting the product. Massee,† describes a blight (*Pestalozzia guepini* Dermaz) which occurs on the tea plantations of Ássam and is doing considerable damage.

The well-known property, which formaldehyde possesses, of forming insoluble compounds with proteid substances, and applied by Beckmann to the estimation of gelatin and albumin in peptones, has been recently applied by Trillat‡ to the detection and estimation of gelatin in general and especially when mixed with gums.

In the examination of various cereals A. van Bastelaer§ finds that upon heating 1 part of the cereal with 5 parts of water at a temperature of 11 to 12° C. for 1 hour that certain characteristics are brought out; rye giving a rather viscous solution; linseed and buckwheat yielding a thick mucilage; whereas wheat, rice, spelt, barley and oatmeal give solutions of rather even viscosity. He further finds that the leguminous cereals, upon shaking the solutions, develop a large amount of froth, whereas the solution of corn does not froth. All of the cereals, with the exception of rice, yield a precipitate with picric acid, the largest amount of precipitate having been produced with the leguminous cereals. Alcohol, likewise, produces a precipitate with solutions of rice, barley, buckwheat and the leguminous cereals the precipitate of the leguminous cereals and flaxseed being soluble in ammonia.

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#### POSITION OF WOMEN IN BABYLONIA.

A RECENT treatise by Victor Marx defines the position of women in Babylonia during the period 604-485 B. C., as illustrated by the con-

\* Zeitschr. f. angew. Chem., 1898, 658; Analyst, 1899, p. 36.

† Pharm. Zeit., 1899, p. 749.

‡ Ann. Chim. Anal. App., 1898, p. 401; Analyst, 1899, p. 35.

§ Jour. Pharm. Chim., 1898, VIII., 43; Pharm. Centralb., 1899, p. 303.

tract literature of the times; his treatise forms half of Heft 1, Band IV., of the Beiträge zur Assyriologie und semitischen Sprachwissenschaft, Leipzig, 1899; and is reviewed at some length by J. Dyneley Prince in the *American Journal of Philology*, Vol. XX., pp. 104-106. The contracts indicate that Babylonian maidens held property in their own right, and that there were definite marriage stipulations relating to dowry, incidentally indicating the dependence of the son on his father's wishes in the choice of a wife. The dowry contracts were definite, stating the amount and nature of the property to be given, providing for payment by instalments and arranging for payment by a brother in case of the father's decease, the dowry being regarded as a legally collectable debt, payable in kind if money were lacking. The legal recipient of the dowry was the son-in-law, yet the daughter (wife) retained such proprietary interest therein that if invested in realty by the husband it was in the wife's name. Married women were competent to conduct transactions relating to money, to realty, and to slaves, their contracts being sometimes witnessed by the husband; while various business transactions were performed in common by husband and wife, the former being alone responsible as guarantor, the mere presence of the wife giving legality to the husband's transactions, at least in certain cases. There are indications that husband and wife enjoyed approximately equal rights with respect to property, the control of children, etc.; there is little reference to the husband's duty to support the wife, though it appears that in case of divorce the husband paid alimony according to his means. Frequent reference to slaves appears in the contracts, but the author postpones discussion of the subjects of slavery and of the condition of female slaves. The information brought to light through the study of these ancient contracts bears on the development of institutions. Apparently the regulations governing the contracts studied pertained chiefly to urban life; certainly the regulations seem hardly in accord with the customs prevailing among contemporary nomadic tribes and still maintained among their descendants of similar habit.

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