

alent for 'anlage.' Why should we not use the German term? Why is not the German combination of sounds as scientific as any Greek combination? Why should we turn to Greek, a language far remote from English, out of which we must manufacture the word we want, rather than turn to the kindred language of German, which contains the precise word we want, a word, moreover, which every one must understand, if he wishes to study the science of embryology? Another important consideration is that the word 'anlage' has already been so widely and so extensively adopted both in England and America that it is now probably universally understood and often looked upon by those who use it as an accepted and established English word. Indeed, I believe its usage has become so thoroughly established that not only is the word indispensable, but also it has become impracticable to attempt to modify it; that the substitution of *proton* or *primordium* could not be accomplished, and that the attempt to make such substitution would only create an unfortunate conflict of terms. I hope, therefore, that these attempts and all similar ones will be renounced. It may also be described as a nuisance—this incessant introduction of superfluous scientific terms—and particularly in the form it takes of constantly adding a great many elaborate artificial words of Greek origin which are thoroughly unnecessary for scientific purposes. It would tend far more to the promotion of science to strike out altogether—so that they should be forever forgotten—half of the terms which have been introduced during the last twenty years, than to make any further additions to them. The load of unnecessary technical terms which we have to carry is a terrible impediment, which hinders our progress every day. I cannot but consider it the result of a pedantic superstition, which appears like a Moloch to whom the life of Science must pay a heavy sacrifice.

CHARLES SEDGWICK MINOT.

HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL,

December 10, 1898.

IS THE BEACH PEA FOOD OR POISON?

CAN any botanical reader of SCIENCE give me any information in regard to the use as food

of the seeds of the common Beach Pea (*Lathyrus maritimus*)?

Some twenty years ago I was told a story of some children near Boston who were terribly poisoned from thoughtlessly eating these peas. In fact, my impression is that one or more of them were said to have died from the effects of the poison. Recently, however, in looking over the files of the 'Meddelelser om Grønland,' I came across the following note. In Lange's 'Conspectus floræ grœnlandicæ,' under the heading *Lathyrus maritimus* (Med. om Grønland, Hefte 3, p. 233), the author writes as follows: 'Obs. Seminibus combustis ad coffeæ parandam utuntur Grœnlandi,' quoting Wormskjöld as his authority. Of course, it is possible that roasting the peas to make coffee, neutralizes the poisonous principle if there be any. I should be glad of any further information on the subject, and, at all events, wish especially to call attention to this curious substitute for coffee.

JOHN MURDOCH.

PUBLIC LIBRARY, BOSTON.

[WE are informed by Mr. V. K. Chesnut that the seed of the beach pea, *Lathyrus maritimus*, is eaten while still green in a number of places, including England, parts of Alaska, Kamchatka and the Island of Yeso. No recorded cases of poisoning from this species are known to him, but a peculiar kind of poisoning is caused by eating the seeds of other species of *Lathyrus* for long periods at a time. It is a curious disease which at one time and another has been very prevalent in India. Horses have recently been killed there by eating imported seeds of some of the vetches. It seems possible, therefore, that some toxic principle may be present in the beach pea. The question might be settled if a series of experiments were made on guinea pigs.—EDITOR SCIENCE.]

SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE.

Encyklopaedie der mathematischen Wissenschaften.

Mit Unterstützung der Akademien der Wissenschaften zu München und Wien und der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen.