

redissolved with higher temperatures. In the past summer some difficulty was experienced with it in preserving larger fishes in warm weather. A sample of the formalin was submitted to Dr. Palmer, Professor of Chemistry in the University of Illinois, for examination. The following is his report on it: "We find that it contains 38½ per cent. of formic aldehyde. This is practically the quantity that is supposed to be contained in commercial formalin, i. e., 40 per cent. formic aldehyde. I find that nearly one-half of the formic aldehyde is polymerized, i. e., about 18½ per cent. is in the form of the polymer tri-oxymethylene. I am not sufficiently familiar with the use of the formalin as a preservative to be able to state whether this polymerization will interfere with the use of the formalin as a preservative, but would suggest that possibly the formalin has proved unserviceable because nearly half of the constituent which is expected to do the work is in the form of the polymer, and probably unserviceable."

NOTES ON THE EXAMINATION OF VEGETABLE POWDERS.

BY JOHN S. WRIGHT.

[Abstract.]

Brief accounts were given of the methods employed in preparing vegetable powders for microscopical studies, especially through the use of clearing and other microchemical reagents. References were made to the work previously done along this line and to the literature of the subject. Histological characters of vegetable powders were discussed, particular attention being paid to the value of the microscope as a means of identifying and detecting adulterations in granulated and powdered drugs and spices.

THE STAINING OF VEGETABLE POWDERS.

BY JOHN S. WRIGHT.

[Abstract.]

The use of differential stains to aid in the study of the histological elements of vegetable powders is in many instances important. If in

the study of a powder it may be stained differentially to correspond with the staining which can be employed upon various sections made of the original crude material, it becomes much easier to refer the minute granules and fragmentary elements to the tissues from which they originated.

There are two ways by which we may produce differentially stained powders for microscopical examination. The first and simplest is to make thick ($\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{4}$ mm) transverse sections of the tissues to be studied. These may then be stained in the usual manner, after which they are triturated in a mortar to a No. 60, 80 or 100 powder, as the case requires. Such powders are differentially stained in a satisfactory manner, but the fragments and cell masses often show truncated ends, due to sectioning, which are not found in powders produced wholly by grinding.

While the above process is an aid to the proper understanding of powders it is not of direct service in the great number of cases in which the microscopist is required to determine the identity and purity of powders. In such instances any staining method to be of service must enable the operator to differentially stain the powders directly. This may be accomplished by placing about $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ gm. of the powder in a glass tube (50 to 60mm long and 10 to 15mm in diameter), one end of which has been closed by tying over it a piece of closely woven white silk cloth. Resting on this cloth bottom the powder may be treated with the various bleaching fluids, washed, double stained, dehydrated and cleared for mounting by allowing the tube to stand in watch glasses into which the stains and reagents have been poured. In this way a number of powders each in a separate tube may be treated at the same time. Owing to the great capillarity of fine powder it may often be necessary to promote the drainage and washings by blowing on the free end of the tube with the mouth; in this way it is possible to make rapid transfers from one reagent to another.

CRYPTOGAMIC COLLECTIONS MADE DURING THE YEAR.

BY M. B. THOMAS.

During the past year some very interesting collections of cryptogams have been made in the local flora of Montgomery County.