Art. XLII.—*Nitroglucose;* by M. Carey Lea.

As nitroglucose has been much less studied than its congeneric nitro-substitution compounds pyroxyline, xyloidine and nitroglycerine, a few words on its preparation and properties may not be uninteresting.

The substitution does not take place in sugar with quite the same facility as with cellulose; the acids need to be stronger and the temperature lower. The sugar, moreover, appears at first to dissolve, and then to separate out again, in the form of a greyish paste, which, when thrown into water and freed from the adhering acid, becomes nearly white.

An attempt to prepare nitroglucose by the use of nitre and sulphuric acid, which succeeds so well and so easily in the case

of cellulose, failed almost wholly with sugar. Not more than two or three per cent of the weight of the sugar was obtained.

With sulphuric and strong nitric acids, allowed to cool thoroughly after mixing, the reaction takes place easily, and a considerable quantity of nitroglucose is obtained. The nitric acid should be as strong as possible, and as the acid of the requisite strength is not easily obtained commercially, I have found an advantage in using in part the fuming sulphuric acid. Two fluid ounces of fuming sulphuric acid, two of common sulphuric, two of strong nitric acid, as near to 1·5 sp. gr. as can be obtained, give good results. The sugar is stirred in, in the form of powder, to a thin paste. The stirring is kept up, and as fast as the nitroglucose separates in doughy masses, it is removed with a spatula and thrown into cold water. A further addition of sugar will give more nitroglucose, but considerably less in proportion than the first addition. As soon as possible, the nitroglucose is to be kneaded up with cold water, to get the acid out. In one case, when this was neglected for ten or fifteen minutes, the nitroglucose passed to a greenish color and apparently was undergoing a commencing decomposition.

The removal of the adhering acid is much more difficult than in the case of pyroxylin, and is an extremely disagreeable operation. The acid pervades the whole of the doughy mass so fully, that the fingers are stained and burned by it, nor can the whole of the acid be removed satisfactorily in this way. The best means I found was to dissolve the crude nitroglucose in a mixture of alcohol and ether, and then to pour this into a large quantity of cold water with constant stirring, and violent agitation afterward. The method is not altogether satisfactory, and seems to be attended with some loss of material, though why, it is not easy to see.

Prepared in this way, nitroglucose is a white lustrous body, which may either assume the doughy amorphous condition or the crystalline, and passes from one to the other with extreme ease. When first formed by the mixed acids, it always has the doughy form. That which I obtained by the use of nitric and sulphuric acid, was crystalline from the first. When precipitated by water from its solution in alcohol and ether, it is doughy and almost liquid, and remains so for a long time, if there is any considerable quantity of it.

The best mode of preserving it appears to be under water. By standing thus it gradually hardens, and passes sometimes to a somewhat hard amorphous mass, and sometimes to a granular crystalline state. It appears to be wholly insoluble in water. A few minute grains of the crystalline form diffused

through 15 or 20 ounces of water, did not dissolve after many hours standing. In a mixture of alcohol and ether it dissolves as easily as sugar in water, and in such quantity as to make the liquid syrupy.

Its detonating properties are but slight. If it be well dried and a match be applied, it deflagrates with a feeble flash.

It has been stated by Dr. V. Monckhover, that when dissolved in alcohol and kept sometime in a warm place, it undergoes decomposition, as evidenced by the fact that the solution then gives an abundant precipitate with nitrate of silver, which at first it did not do. An experiment made in this direction did not give the result thus indicated. A solution of nitroglucose in alcohol, containing about 40 grains to the ounce, was placed in a stoppered vial and was kept in the sand bath at a temperature of about blood heat for nearly a month. But neither it nor a fresh solution gave a precipitate with alcoholic solution of nitrate of silver. It would seem from this that certain conditions of temperature or otherwise are necessary, in order that this decomposition should take place.