

The author recognizes the fact that "the ability to identify and name plants is not the object of botanical study, but it is a great assistance in attaining the knowledge which the true student of botany is seeking—an understanding of the laws of life in the vegetable kingdom." He has made it possible by means of keys and easy descriptions for the beginner to obtain some ideas as to how plants are classified, what botanists think as to the relationship of plant groups, and how to proceed in identifying an unknown plant. As far as it goes the book is a modern presentation of taxonomic botany. It deals with seed-plants only. Even the ferns so commonly included in manuals of this kind are not included, while the pupil gets no hint whatever of anything lower in the scale of plant life. This is a mistake, but a very common one, in botanical manuals, and we must perhaps overlook it for the present. It is pleasant to find a modern sequence of families (Engler and Prantl's) and a strictly modern nomenclature.

#### A NEW BOTANICAL JOURNAL.

WITH the December number the first volume of *Rhodora*, the new journal devoted to the botany of New England, was completed. The idea of a local botanical journal of high grade was a novelty, and its progress during the year was watched with much interest. Now at the end of its first volume we may look over what it has accomplished and judge as to whether a geographical limit is a wise one to be placed upon the field of a scientific journal. By far the greater number of articles deal with flowering plants, and are systematic rather than morphological, although the latter are by no means wanting. The ferns and mosses receive scanty notice, while the algæ and fungi are the subject of frequent papers and notes. Many of these papers have much more than local interest, and might with propriety have appeared in any botanical journal. Of course, there are some 'local notes,' some papers on 'noteworthy plants,' some on 'rare plants,' and some 'additions' to local floras. There is little if any of that species splitting which is too often the bane of local botany. The editorial announcement of a year ago stated that special attention

would be given "to such plants as are newly recognized or imperfectly known within our limits, to the more precise determination of plant ranges, to brief revisions of groups in which specific and varietal limits require further definition, to corrections upon current manuals and local floras, to altitudinal distribution, plant associations and ecological problems." 'Ferns, mosses and thallophytes' were promised a share of attention. It is to the credit of the management that the program outlined at the outset has been so well carried out. *Rhodora* has shown that a geographically limited scientific journal may be successful and useful.

CHARLES E. BESSEY.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA.

#### THE CONFERRING OF UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

THE Chairman of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, Mr. McMillan, introduced, on January 2d, a bill entitled "An act to authorize the regents of the Smithsonian Institution to confer certain degrees and for other purposes." It provides:

"That the regents of the Smithsonian be, and they are hereby, authorized to appoint a board of five examiners, who shall, with the approval of the said regents, prepare and publish a schedule of courses of studies preparatory to the degrees of master of arts, master of science, doctor of philosophy and doctor of science. The said examiners shall from time to time hold examinations in the City of Washington for the said degrees; and, on the satisfactory completion by any candidate of the prescribed course of studies for either of the above mentioned degrees, shall recommend such a candidate to the regents of the Smithsonian Institution for such degrees. The said regents are hereby authorized to confer, under suitable regulations, the degrees above mentioned and also the honorary degree of doctor of laws. Provided, That no person shall be accepted as a candidate for the degree of master of arts or of doctor of philosophy who has not completed a course of study at least equivalent to the course of study required of candidates for corresponding degrees in the most advanced universities in the United States; and provided further, That the

degree of doctor of laws shall be conferred on no more than five persons in any one calendar year.

"Sec. 2. The members of the board of examiners shall hold office during the pleasure of the regents of the Smithsonian Institution. Each examiner shall devote his entire time to the duties of instruction and examination assigned to him by the said regents, and shall receive a salary of \$4,000 per annum, except that the chairman of the board shall receive a salary of \$5,000 per annum.

"Sec. 3. The said regents shall also appoint, subject to appropriations by Congress, such minor offices, and shall establish such rules, regulations and forms as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this act. They shall also establish a schedule of reasonable fees to be paid by candidates for examination for degrees, which fees shall be paid into the treasury of the United States to the credit of the Smithsonian Institution.

"Sec. 4. The said regents are hereby authorized to accept and to administer any bequest or gift of real or personal property which may be made to them to establish lectureships, to endow chairs of instruction, to establish fellowships, scholarships or prizes, to purchase land, to erect buildings, or otherwise to carry out the provisions of this act.

"Sec. 5. The sum of \$50,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated out of any monies in the treasury not otherwise appropriated, to be expended as other public monies appropriated for the use of the Smithsonian are expended to carry out the purposes of this act."

#### THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA.

At the December meeting of the Regents of the University of Nebraska, no election was made of a chancellor to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Dr. George MacLean, in July. The committee on chancellor asked for more time.

Dr. Bessey, acting chancellor, reported upon the condition of the University. Six hundred and twenty-two new students entered the University during the fall term, and at the present time there are registered in all departments

1560 students, this not including the students present in the summer session, nor those registered in the School of Music and School of Agriculture (short course). The total registration for the year will probably reach about 2100. The registrations in scientific work are as follows: Botany, 153; Chemistry, 526; Entomology, 25; Geology, 100; Physics, 348; Zoology, 160; in technical lines, Civil Engineering, 54; Electrical Engineering, 70; Mechanical Engineering, 251; in languages, German, 629; Greek, 172; Latin, 407; French, 328; English, 1556; History, 570; Political Science, 215; Law, 151.

Among the material improvements during the year are the steam tunnels for carrying steam heat to the different halls on the campus, the completion of the interior work on Mechanic Arts Hall, and the erection of 'Experiment Station Hall,' and an additional power plant—the two buildings last named being on the University Farm.

In accordance with a report made by a committee of the faculty, the regents designated exactly the constitution of the faculties of the two four-year colleges ('Letters' and 'Science').

On Acting Chancellor Bessey's recommendation, plans were ordered drawn with reference to the eventual removal of the University from its present site in the city to its domain in the suburbs known as the 'University Farm.' Early removal is not contemplated, but all buildings and other improvements on this domain are to be made hereafter with reference to the future removal of the University to its new site.

The acting chancellor called attention to the desirability of continuing the University work throughout the year, as is done in the University of Chicago, and the regents appointed a committee to investigate the matter and to report at a future meeting.

Dr. William W. Hastings was given a short leave of absence to enable him to make anthropometric investigations in northern Mexico. Professor Nicholson, for many years head professor of Chemistry, was given, on his request, a leave of absence for one year, beginning January 1, 1900. During his absence Dr. John White is head professor of the department.