Corporation to the New York Academy of Medicine. A part of the money is to be used in erection of a twelve-story building for the academy, which is planning an enlarged program for the medical profession and for the instruction of the public in preventive medicine.

DR. MAX NORDAU, the German philosopher, author of "Degeneration," died in Paris on January 23, in his seventy-fourth year.

THE Journal of the American Medical Association states that the University of Toronto is in urgent need of $60,000 to purchase "insulin" for treatment of the thousands of people suffering from diabetes who are daily applying for treatment. The chairman of the university committee on insulin, Colonel A. E. Gooderham, considers that the problem of funds for the purchase of insulin is one that should be settled by the provincial government. At present, only about twenty patients can be treated each day.

ANNOUNCEMENT was made at the meeting at Atlantic City of the American Roentgen Ray Society of an offer of a $1,000 award by the American society for the best original research in the field of X-ray, radium or radio activity. The competition will close July 1, 1923, and the prize will be awarded by a committee consisting of Dr. George E. Pfahler, Philadelphia; Dr. Frederick Baetjer, of Baltimore, and Dr. George W. Holmes, of Boston.

THE *Gorny Journal*, relating to the mining industries of Russia, and first issued in 1825, has resumed publication. It was supplanted in 1917 by official sheets of the labor organizations, but in its January-February issue of Volume 98 (1922) it returns to its original form. The board in charge of its publication includes a majority of members who were at the head of mining affairs before the revolution, as well as a considerable number of professors of the Petrograd Institute of Mines.

THE preparation by the Paris Academy of Sciences under the direction of M. Lacroix, permanent secretary, of a bibliography of the periodicals to be found in the various libraries of Paris has been completed and is now in press. Fifty thousand francs are required to pay expenses. Of this sum, nine thousand francs have been received in gifts and the academy has added fifteen thousand francs taken from the Foundation Lontreuil.

A REGULAR meeting of the American Physical Society will be held in Fayerweather Hall, Columbia University, New York, on Saturday, February 24. If the length of the program requires it, there will also be sessions on Friday, February 23. Other meetings for the current season are as follows: April 20-21, Washington. Pacific Coast Section; place not yet determined. November 30, Chicago. Annual meeting.

UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATIONAL NOTES

PLEDGES amounting to approximately $1,000,000 have been given for the establishment of a non-sectarian school of religion for the University of Michigan.

TWO science buildings are being completed at Pomona College, Claremont, California. The Mason Hall of Chemistry, made possible through the generosity of a trustee, will cost $275,000, including adequate provision for its endowment. The Crookshank Hall of Zoology is being erected at a cost of $100,000.

THE China Medical Board of the Rockefeller Foundation has made a conditional gift of $75,000 to the Peking Union Medical College for the erection of one of the two science halls which are provided for in the plans for a group of buildings to be erected on a 300-acre site. The gift is contingent on the raising of an equal amount for the erection of the other science hall. A campaign to raise the $1,000,000 necessary for the erection of the new buildings was recently launched by L. Leighton Stewart, president of the university.

DR. WILLIAM S. MCCANN, associate professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins University, has been appointed professor of medicine at the University of Rochester Medical School.

M. PAILLOT has been appointed to the newly established chair of experimental physics at the University of Lille.

DR. L. E. ROBERTS, physical chemist at the U. S. Bureau of Mines, has accepted the posi-

tion of assistant professor of chemistry at the University of Arizona, to fill the position vacant by the death on November 21 of Professor B. Tatarian.

M. LASSOUR has been appointed professor of microbiology at the University of Nancy.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

THE STARCH GRAIN

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: The article by O. L. Sponsler on "The structure of the starch grain" in the November issue of the *American Journal of Botany* is of more than ordinary interest. If we understood the structure of the starch grain and could produce it artificially in the laboratory it would mark the beginning of our intimate knowledge of biological problems.

The starch grain is elusive and one may study hundreds of specimens and yet not have the typical specimen revealing its intimate structure. Some years ago I obtained a hint from Fischer's work on Inulin. Late on a summer's afternoon I went to the laboratory and treated all of the starches which I had with aniline dyes. The mixtures were allowed to spontaneously evaporate over night and I obtained specimens which showed without doubt the complex nature of the grains. This was particularly true of potato starch. As I had a quantity of the stained material, I supplied all who wished specimens and it was not until a year or more later when I attempted to repeat the experiments, that I could not confirm my original work. I then very carefully attacked the problem in much the same way as I had studied the continuity of protoplasm, but to no avail. I worked for several years trying to repeat these experiments but have never succeeded since.

Mr. Sponsler has studied the starch grain using X-rays in much the same way that Herzog and Jancke had done in the study of the cell wall. Mr. Sponsler's attack of this problem is of very great scientific interest and while his results seem to indicate that the starch grain does not have a crystalline structure, I doubt if the results are conclusive. As I have shown, there is a substance in the grain which is dextro-rotatory and it is not at all difficult to observe starch grains which show, as pointed out by Meyer and Schimper, a spherocrystal structure.

HENRY KRAEMER
KRAEMER LABORATORIES,
MT. CLEMENS, MICHIGAN

WHAT IS A PLANT?

THE writer has unsuccessfully sought for a definition of the term *plant* suitable to use when introducing the subject of botany to college classes. The definitions given in the dictionaries are all unsatisfactory. According to Webster's International Dictionary (1922), a plant is "any member of a group of living organisms exhibiting irritability in response to stimuli, though generally without voluntary motion or true sense perception." Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary (1913) defines a plant as "an organized, non-sentient being endowed with vegetable as distinguished from animal life." Both definitions, but particularly the latter, recall Linnæus' distinction, long discarded, of plants as structures that grow and live, while animals grow, live and feel. The definition given in Jackson's Glossary of Botanic Terms (3rd ed. 1916)—"a vegetable production, nourished by gases or liquids and not ingesting solid particles of food"—is even more unfortunate. The text-books are still more vague, commonly not even attempting a definition, but plunging abruptly into a discussion of the special characteristics of plants.

In the belief that a concise, clear-cut definition of the term is of very definite value to the beginning student, the writer ventures to present to his colleagues for their criticism the following definition which he has been using in his classes: *A plant is an organism possessing chlorophyll or descended from chlorophyll-possessing ancestors.* This definition, given at the outset, makes the method of nutrition the primary basis for distinction between the two groups, the other differences being naturally presented as in large measure the consequence of this fundamental difference. At the same time, it provides for the inclusion of the non-green plants and places significant emphasis, at the very beginning of the course, upon the idea of evolution. Bacteria, except possibly certain of the higher filamentous forms, are excluded. In view of the power of chemosynthesis possessed by certain members of that group, and of the very plausible possibility that they