

gerous. Sometimes I insert after the word air "by the agency of light and chlorophyll." The clause relating to ancestors, however, makes the diagnosis of a plant quite impossible, and indeed introduces some very hypothetical material. We try to reach the conclusion that the statement of a real definition requires the contents of at least one book on general botany, with suitable lectures and laboratory experience or field work, and that the definition can be improved by more and more of such study. If there is a better definition, let us have it.

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### "EROBIC"

I HAVE read with very great interest the article on the "Bacteriology of Influenza," but I want to make one suggestion in reference to the spelling of "Erobic" and "Anerobic." This, it seems to me, ought to be "Ærobic" and "Anærobic."

I am fully converted to the use of the "e" instead of "æ" and "œ" as a rule, but in "erobic," for instance, "er" misleads one as to its meaning, as it comes from the Greek "ær." The same is true of "anerobic." It seems to me very clear that "æ" should be retained in this case, as an exception.

I confess, when I first read "erobic," I wondered what the word meant. My first idea was of an obscure reference to "eros" in "erobic." I was quite misled, and it took me an appreciable time to determine that it meant "ærobic." I hope that the spelling of these two words in this number of SCIENCE will not be continued.

I am a member of the consulting committee of the Simplified Spelling Board, and therefore am prejudiced in favor of the "e" instead of "æ" or "œ," but this, I think, goes beyond the mark that even the Simplified Spelling Board justifies.

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PHILADELPHIA

FEBRUARY 15, 1923.

### QUOTATIONS

#### GIFT TO THE ROYAL SOCIETY

THE magnificent gift, which we announce this morning, by Sir Alfred Yarrow to the

nation, through the Royal Society, of £100,000 for the advancement of scientific research should serve two purposes. It should be of most substantial help to numbers of investigators who are hampered or depressed by want of funds, and, as it throws the heavy responsibility of administration upon the Royal Society, it should serve to rehabilitate the illustrious institution in the eyes of those who are concerned not so much with science itself as with the politics of science. To touch on this second point first. There can be no question that Sir Alfred Yarrow, who is himself an honored member of the Royal Society, has done wisely in entrusting his fund to the society, for there is no other body possessed of traditions, prestige and authority to equal it in the kingdom, or, indeed, in the world. But of late years there has been a strong disposition to criticize the society's attitude towards the practical affairs of life. It has been felt that it has often preferred a dignified position of aloofness towards current interests, and it has seemed to let go by default some of its unique claims to be the real leader and adviser of the nation in scientific administration. It ought, one might argue, to be the invariable channel through which private benefactions to science should be directed. It ought to have a controlling voice in the application of government grants for scientific purposes; it ought, in short, to be as thoroughly active in practical matters as its individual members are in their own spheres of study. The obligations which this princely endowment now casts upon it should help substantially to enhance its authority. From this point of view alone Sir Alfred Yarrow's gift will, we believe, be welcome; for the Royal Society is of such a composition that its voice can never be negligible; its opinion on all matters connected with science must always be of paramount influence, and no one who has the interests of science or of knowledge at heart would care to see it miss its opportunities. We urged considerations of this kind last December, when the new council was appointed; and now the society has a brilliant opportunity of making good the ground that some of its sincerest well-wishers may have feared that it had lost.

As for the need of such an endowment for