IN order to popularize the metric system, the introduction of which into Russia was provided for by a decree of the Council of Commissaries in 1918, an order has been issued making mandatory the sale of fresh milk in ¼, ½ and 1 liter containers, commencing January 1, 1924, and the sale of products widely used by the population in standard packages, in metric units, is now being organized according to *Economic Life,* Moscow. The decree for the introduction of the metric system was to have become effective January 1, 1922, but the date was subsequently deferred with the understanding that the transition to metric weights and measures by all state institutions and private organizations and persons should be carried out gradually and completed by January 1, 1927. Certain industries (textile, leather, sugar, tobacco, starch and glucose, oil-crushing, tea and coffee, chemical, confectionery, canning and yeast) adopted the metric system by January 1, 1924; the leather goods trade by June 1, and the electrical industry will adopt it by November. Metric units should be used in all technical plans and specifications, commencing October 1, 1925, and in all credit and banking accounting, as well as in budgetary specifications, after October 1, 1926. The number of scales and balances of various types now in use in the entire territory of the Soviet Union is estimated at 1,500,000, including 70 per cent. of even scales, which do not require any adjustment for metric weights; 20 per cent. of decimal beam scales; 8 per cent. of centimal lever scales, and 2 per cent. of miscellaneous devices. Thus only about 450,000 balances will have to be remodeled for the metric system. The total cost of the introduction of the metric system, including the casting of 30,000 tons of weights, popularization and instruction, is estimated at 11,200,000 gold rubles.

UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATIONAL NOTES

THE University of Wisconsin will receive $350,000 by the bequest of Thomas E. Brittingham.

GROUND was broken on June 17 for the State University of Iowa's new $4,500,000 medical building, made possible by the state appropriating funds to equal a gift of the Rockefeller Foundation.

PROFESSOR E. C. COKER, head of the department of mathematics of Winthrop College, has been called to the chair of astronomy and mathematics at the University of South Carolina.

MISS LILA SANDS, Ph.D. (Nebraska, '24), has been appointed an instructor in the department of chemistry at the University of Arizona.

DR. RICHARD HARTSHORNE, Ph.D. (Chicago, '24), has been appointed instructor in geography at the University of Minnesota.

CYRIL BATHO, D.Sc., associate professor of applied mechanics and hydraulics at McGill University, has been appointed professor of civil engineering at Birmingham University in place of Professor F. C. Lea, D.Sc., who has resigned.

PROFESSOR SYDNEY CHAPMAN, professor of mathematics and natural philosophy in the University of Manchester, has accepted the invitation of the governing body of the Imperial College of Science and Technology to undertake the chief professorship of mathematics, beginning in September, in succession to Professor A. N. Whitehead, who has been appointed to the chair of philosophy at Harvard University.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

CORROSION OF POLISHED METAL SURFACES BY ULTRA VIOLET RADIATION

IN previous investigations of the reflecting power of metals no mention is made of the corrosion of polished surfaces by the action of ultra violet radiation which seems to accelerate atmospheric corrosion.

In the course of an investigation of the ultra violet reflecting power of metals and of sulphides having a high metallic lustre Mr. C. W. Hughes and I have observed that portions of the surface which are exposed to ultra violet light become tarnished, while the unexposed parts remain bright. This corrosion is best perceived by breathing lightly upon the surface. Its effect is to perceptibly lower the reflecting power in the spectral region of wave lengths less than 350 μ.

W. W. COBLENTZ

LOWELL OBSERVATORY

A QUESTION OF CLASSIFICATION

IN view of the extremely up-to-date attitude of the geneticists, cytologists and taxonomists, whose conclusions are changing almost from day to day, it is extraordinary to note how excessively conservative they seem to be when dealing with the larger questions of plant classification. In many current textbooks the same primary divisions, or sub-kingdoms, are accepted that were in vogue more than half a century ago. One is inclined to ask whether this is the result of ignorance or merely of indifference.

While it is true that a separation of the plant kingdom into properly coordinated primary divisions is by no means a simple matter, it is rather depressing to find, even in the latest texts,[1] excellent in many respects, no effort at the presentation of a classification more in keeping with our present knowledge of plant relationships. To find that great omnium gatherum of unrelated plant-groups, the

[1] For example, Sinnott's "Botany, Principles and Problems," recently reviewed in SCIENCE.