fund, the interest of which might serve the means of partial support, but through some oversight a large portion of the original fund was dissipated. I think our fund is as large as it should be, perhaps larger. I shall be surprised if some of the conservative and substantial fellows and members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science do not come out in support of the views here expressed.

W. J. Beal.

Agricultural College, Mich.,
February 20, 1903.

ABUNDANT HONORARY DEGREES.

To the Editor of Science: In *Bulletin* No. 12, Volume III., issued by the University of Missouri, is a review of the manifold achievements of the university, especially those of benefit to the state of Missouri.

Along with other items appears the statement that 2,869 degrees have been conferred 'for work done.' 'Of honorary degrees 152 have been conferred.' Figured into percentage the number of honorary degrees becomes nearly 5.3 per cent., or more than one honorary degree for every twenty regular degrees. I think Missouri is to be congratulated upon the extraordinary proportion of eminent men connected with her university, and I can not help wondering why I am so ignorant as never to have heard of the names even of many of those of the honorary 5.3 per cent. class. I wonder less, perhaps, than might be expected because the custom of bestowing honorary degrees on unknown people is almost universal among American colleges and universities.

Is it not time to raise a universal protest against this habitual debasement of the highest academic honor? All of our universities sin grievously in this respect, and give honorary degrees to soldiers, politicians and many other classes of worthy people who can not present the slightest claim to scholarly eminence.

When we consider how much more many a little-known scholar does for the world than many celebrated soldiers and politicians, it seems proper that the practice should be reversed. I venture, therefore, to propose: (1) That we all strive to restrict the bestowal of honorary degrees exclusively to scholars and investigators, who alone have any claim to them, and (2) that we petition the national government to make all eminent physicists honorary generals, all eminent chemists honorary admirals, all eminent naturalists honorary governors, and all members of the National Academy honorary senators.

C. S. M.

Boston, February 23, 1903.

SHORTER ARTICLES.

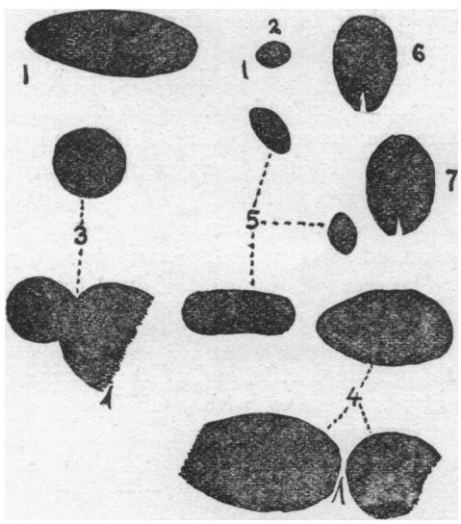
THE SACRAL SPOT IN MAYA INDIANS.

In 1901, while at Tekax, Yucatan, making measurement of the Mayas of that district, the parish priest told me that it was commonly believed that every pure-blood Maya Indian had a blue or purple spot upon his back, in the sacral region. He said that this spot was called *uits,* 'bread,' and that it was an insult to a Maya to make reference to his *uits.* To satisfy the curiosity of the priest, and my own, I examined a boy of ten years and two men, all of pure Maya blood. No one of the three presented any trace of a sacral spot, and I concluded that the common belief, if it had any basis, must relate to an infantile spot such as has long been known to occur in the Japanese, Eskimo, etc. Having no opportunity then to examine Maya babies, I determined to watch for the sacral spot among the infants of such tribes as I might later visit.

In my last journey to Mexico, just ended, I expected to see babies among six Indian populations—Aztecs, Zapotecs, Tzotzils, Tzendals, Chols and Mayas. From changes in my plan I really came into contact with the Aztecs and Mayas only. Aztec friends in whom I have confidence, in the states of Pueblo, Mexico and Tlaxcala, agreed that Aztec babies do *not* have a sacral spot; I made no personal examination.

In the town of Palenque, Chiapas, I examined all the *little* babies of the town—not a heavy labor, as the town is small. The people here call themselves Mayas, but claim to be closely related to the Chols. Probably the population is a mixture of the two peoples, who are closely related in language, and

probably in blood. To my surprise, I found the spot in every one of the seven babies of pure Indian blood. It seems, however, to be far more evanescent among the Mayas than among the Japanese and other populations, being rarely found in individuals of more than ten months of age. Three babies, less than ten months in age, but of mestizo (mixed-blood) parentage, showed no trace of the spot. The spot is variable in size, shape and position, but it is always in the sacral region; in color it is blue or a bluish-purple; it gradually disappears and two or three of the cases seem to show an original single spot broken up into separate blotches which lose distinctness.



The sizes and shapes of the spots observed are accurately shown in the accompanying cut, reduced to one half the diameter. The notes made regarding each are here presented:

1. Boy; eight months. Spot well marked; dark purple; median, three inches above the anal fold. An older brother, two years old, showed no sign of the spot, but his mother says he was equally well marked at birth.

2. Girl; one year. Spot well defined; just to the right of the upper end of the fold.

3. Girl; three months. Two faint and badly defined spots just to the left of the upper end of the anal fold; a darker and better defined spot above.

4. Boy; two months. Two faint and badly defined spots, one on either side of the anal fold; a third, darker and better defined, above.

5. Boy; ten months. Only the lower of three spots is fairly defined, and it is faint, like a disappearing bruise; the other two are fainter. The three look like the separated parts of a spot which is disappearing. The group is median and located a little above the anal fold.

6, 7. Boys; twins of two months. Spots are pale blue but well defined; they are almost identical in form, size, color and position. They just overlap the upper end of the anal fold.

FREDERICK STARR.

February 6, 1903.

THE EGGS OF THE EASTERN ATLANTIC HAG-FISH, MYXINE LIMOSA *Gir.*

EGGS of a hag-fish from the Newfoundland banks were described by the present writer in 1900 (*Mem. N. Y. Acad. Sci.*, Vol. II., pp. 31–43) from specimens in the Verrill collection, Yale University. They were then looked upon as belonging to the common North Atlantic *Myxine glutinosa* Linn. Since that time, however, the eggs of five other species of myxinoids have been examined, and a fairly definite knowledge is at hand in the matter of the degree of variation in these eggs within specific limits. It follows from these studies that the differences between the eggs of *M. glutinosa* as described by Jensen and those of the Newfoundland form are too great (*op. cit.*, pp. 35, 42) to warrant the eggs of both types to be included under *Myxine glutinosa*. Accordingly I have come to the conclusion that we must consider the American specimens as probably representing *Myxine limosa* Girard, the common hag-fish of Maine. I would also note that a study of variation among myxinoids has recently led me to conclude with Mr. Garman that *Myxine limosa* is to be accepted, not as a variety of *M. glutinosa*, but as a valid species.

BASHFORD DEAN.

ORIGIN OF NAME MONOTREMES.

I HAVE been unable to find any reference to the early use of the now familiar name Monotremes, and the information may be of