

ten a brief account of 'The Spores of Certain Coniferæ,' describing certain features of the male gametophyte and the megaspore.—G. J. Peirce has published a preliminary notice of 'Artificial parasitism,' giving an account of his experiments in growing a pea on a plant of horse bean, the pea blossoming and setting seed.—Albert C. Herre records the remarkable growth of the thallus of *Ramalina reticulata*.

PROFESSOR BURTON-OPITZ, of Columbia University, has undertaken the charge of the abstracts of American publications on the relations of medicine and chemistry for the *Biochemische Centralblatt*. Authors are requested to send him reprints.

#### SOCIETIES AND ACADEMIES.

##### CLEMSON COLLEGE SCIENCE CLUB.

THE first regular meeting of the club for the year was held on September 29, at 8 p. m., in the lecture room of the Electrical Laboratory of Clemson College. Professor W. M. Riggs discussed 'Recent Advances in Electrical Engineering.' Dr. R. N. Brackett presented a paper on 'The Present status of the Nitrogen Problem.'

HAVEN METCALF,  
Secretary.

#### DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE.

##### VARIE AUCTORITATIS.

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: In looking over the numbers of SCIENCE on my return from my summer's work in the Rocky Mountains I find in your issue for August 12 a communication from Dr. C. R. Eastman entitled 'Variæ Auctoritatis,' in which he complains of the carelessness of scientific writers in citing ancient authorities, and brings me in at the head of his list of offenders quoted.

While agreeing with Professor Eastman in the general principle laid down by him, his remarks with reference to me seem to flavor of a certain disingenuousness.

He refers to my paper on 'The Theories of Ore-deposition Historically Considered,' in which, on page 2, I am made to say that 'It is said that as early as Origenes, 600 B. C., etc.,' whereas Origenes flourished about 200

A. D. Dr. Eastman very courteously pointed out this error in a personal letter to me in June last, and in reply I stated that this was something that had escaped my notice in proof-reading, and that the sentence should have read, 'Thus it is said by Origenes that as early as 600 B. C., etc., etc.,' at the same time referring him to my authority, Professor K. von Zittel, who, on page 3 of his 'History of Geology and Paleontology' says, 'Origenes reports of Xenophanes of Colophon that he had observed sea shells on mountains, etc., etc.'

With regard to his second criticism, I am unwilling to admit any error in my words as published. In opening my section on the 'Scientific Period' I remark that 'Up to this time (the close of the eighteenth century) even the name geology had hardly been recognized, natural history or mineralogy being the title usually given to works that treated of it.' Later, in speaking of De Saussure's work I say, 'He also appears to have been the first to use the name geology for *his* science.' Dr. Eastman says that my statement is incorrect, inasmuch as Richard de Bury spoke of Geologia as the 'earthly science' in 1344. That this learned prelate, or some other philosophical writer of an even earlier date, may have used the word does not disprove the correctness of my statement that De Saussure was the first (geologist) to use this term for *his* science. My statement does not necessarily imply that he was the first man who ever used the word, and I should have considered it a useless waste of time to have searched all ancient literature to find out by whom it was first used, for I do not feel at all sure that de Bury is entitled to that credit.

S. F. EMMONS.

##### THE SWALLOWING OF STONES BY SEALS.

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: So far as I am aware no satisfactory reason has been advanced for the swallowing of stones by seals, and this statement may probably be extended to other animals. They are not taken in for ballast, for the empty seals keep down as easily as the others; they are not swallowed for the purpose of grinding up food, for they occur in the stomachs of nursing pups; they are not