seum of Natural History, assistant professor of zoology.

Two appointments from European universities to the faculty of the medical school of Johns Hopkins University have been made as follows: Dr. J. W. McNee, of University College, London, is to be associate professor of medicine. Dr. Bela Halpert, first assistant to Professor Otto Grosser at the University of Prague, is to be instructor in anatomy.

DR. ROBERT C. MILLER, who during the past three years has been engaged in the marine borer investigations of the San Francisco Bay Marine Piling Committee and the National Research Council, has been appointed assistant professor of zoology in the University of Washington.

THE following appointments have been made at the University of Virginia: Dr. Leroy A. Calkins, of the University of Minnesota, to professor of obstetrics and gynecology; Dr. Alfred Chanutin, of the University of Illinois, associate professor of biological chemistry; Dr. Arthur Ferguson Benton, national research fellow at the California Institute of Technology, to assistant professor of chemistry, and Dr. A. A. Pegan to acting assistant professor of geology.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

WOMEN OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

IN the third article on "The history of the A. A. A. S." by Professor Herman L. Fairchild, in SCIENCE, for May 9, p. 411, it is said that: "The only woman official of the association was Mrs. Erminnie A. Smith, who was secretary of the section of anthropology in 1885." This is incorrect, as there have been at least three other women officials, all of the section of anthropology. Two were chairmen of that section, *viz.*, Miss Alice C. Fletcher at the Buffalo meeting of 1896 and Miss Lillian J. Martin in 1915. In 1894 I was elected secretary of the section for the following meeting, but resigned before it was held. The secretary who had been elected for the 1897 Detroit meeting similarly resigned, and I was then elected for the second time and served as secretary at that meeting.

There was an odd combination of circumstances at Detroit in 1897. The president of the association did not attend the meeting; my husband, W J McGee, was chairman of anthropology and senior vice-president of the association; his time was therefore mainly occupied by his duties as acting president, while I became acting chairman, as well as secretary, of the section.

ANITA NEWCOMB MCGEE

WOODS HOLE, MASSACHUSETTS

POISONING FROM CASTOR BEANS

I HAVE been much interested in the recent letters regarding allergic reactions with castor beans. The castor bean grows wild here over wide areas and is commonly eaten by many people as a substitute for the oil or a pill for a cathartic. This practice is so common that it is currently believed that the beans are innocuous, but there is ample evidence to the contrary.

In 1920 a soldier stationed in Schofield Barracks ate five castor beans one afternoon. The morning of the second day he died in coma, the direct cause of death being acute nephritis. He had anaphylactic symptoms within a few hours after ingestion of the beans, followed by an intense toxemia which was fatal through kidney damage. This was considered at the time to be due in all probability to a ricin poisoning, which may have been absorbed through the mucous membrane of the alimentary canal, or possibly, and I think more likely, through a lesion somewhere in the canal.

I have since seen two cases where the ingestion of a single bean was followed in five minutes by edema of the mouth and pharynx and in one case of the glottis. This progressed in each case to a degree which made speech or swallowing extremely difficult, and in one case respiration became dangerously impeded. In each case there was general urticaria with giant wheals. Adrenalin relieved all the symptoms promptly and permanently.

The asthmatic and hay-fever symptoms mentioned in previous communications are entirely new in my experience, and it would interest me greatly to hear whether any one else has experienced them.

H. L. ARNOLD

HONOLULU, HAWAII

THE ENCYSTMENT OF VAMPYRELLA ELEGANS (H. AND L.)

AN interesting analysis of the conditions leading to encystment of *Didinium nasutum*, by Mast and Ibara, appeared in *Biological Bulletin* last August. In their introduction, they cited the opinion of Root that suctoria encyst when they lack food; of Mast that Didinium sometimes encysts when food is lacking; of Miss Carter that Amoeba encysts when food is abundant; of Miss Hogue that Amoeba limax encysts due to metabolic waste products, which lead to a weakened vitality, "resulting in the loss of power of assimilation"; and of Calkins, who, in speaking of encystment in general, says it is "a special adaptive process by which the organisms are enabled to survive when the environment is unsuitable."

In this connection, facts concerning the *Vampyrella elegans* (H. and L.) that appeared under the title