

THE appended graph (Fig. 1) records the intensity of daylight during the recent total eclipse at Criccieth. The measurements were made by a Trotter photometer set up to face that part of the clouds which hid

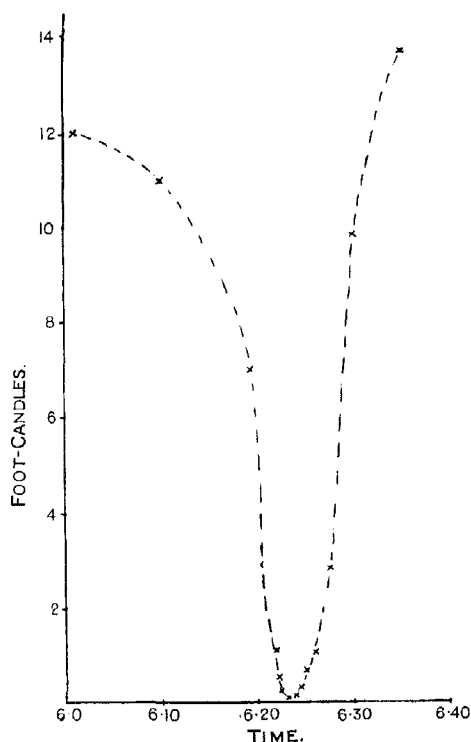


FIG. 1.

the sun from Mr. A. Taylor and his colleagues at the observing station there.

The sudden onset and retreat of the darkness is well shown. The minimum recorded intensity (at 6^h 23^m) was 0.05 foot-candle, so that in 7 minutes after totality the intensity of daylight increased more than 270-fold.

J. H. SHAXBY.

Physiology Institute,
University College,
Cardiff.

The Hythe Skulls.

I AM gratified by the letter of the editor of *Bio-metrika* in NATURE of July 2, which suggests, though it does not say, that Miss Hooke did not mean to hint that I had wilfully selected certain skulls from the Hythe collection and discarded others which did not suit my purpose. This disclaimer was urgently needed. The suggestion of the editor that only the largest and thickest skulls had been picked out of the stack in 1851 is rather irrelevant, since the question of size is not the point.

What anthropologists who have quoted my paper are interested in is whether these skulls are broader and shorter than any other series of medieval or modern English people shows, and I submit that an average based upon 590 skulls, so long as the imputation of purposive selection is withdrawn, is not likely to differ appreciably from that of a like number recovered since. The question of whether it is advisable to deduce results from skulls which have been reconstructed from fragments, possibly crushed

and warped with damp, is quite an open one. In my experience the results are often grotesque caricatures of the original skull, and measurements taken from them are more likely to vitiate than to improve a fair average. In any case, the estimate of five years in which to piece together the fragments in the great stack at Hythe shows an optimism which, though I may admire, I cannot share. It might be done in fifty years, but the results would be quite untrustworthy. Any one interested in these skulls will find a later paper of mine upon them in *Archæologia Cantiana*, vol. 30, p. 203, in which I give my reasons for believing them to be largely of foreign origin, though I freely admit that in my first paper I assumed them to be those of Kentish people.

F. G. PARSONS.

St. Thomas's Hospital,
London.

"Index Kewensis."

I UNDERSTAND that it is not generally known that the Sixth Supplement of the "Index Kewensis" was published last year by the Clarendon Press. This includes references to the names of genera and species of flowering plants which were published during the five years 1916-1920, and also includes many which had appeared in previous years in publications which, owing to the War, were not available at Kew.

As I have been informed that many sets of the "Index Kewensis" in botanical and horticultural libraries appear to be incomplete, and that in some cases supplements have been purchased for libraries which do not possess the original volumes, I have been asked to direct attention to the importance of the work. I would also point out that it is necessary, in order to keep abreast of botanical nomenclature, to possess all the supplements which have been published as well as the original "Index."

Copies of the original "Index" or of any of the six quinquennial supplements may be obtained from the Secretary, The Clarendon Press, Oxford.

ARTHUR W. HILL.

Royal Botanic Gardens,
Kew, Surrey,
June 24

An Early Reference to Continental Separation.

THOSE geologists who are interested in the Wegener hypothesis of the shifting of continents and the literature of the subject may like to know that while reading an old book entitled "Eclipses, Past and Present," by the Rev. S. J. Johnson (James Parker and Co., 1874), I was rather surprised to find the following remarks: "If we study our earth carefully, we shall see that everywhere it bears marks of having undergone a fearful catastrophe. Fossil substances, which originally belonged to the sea, have been found on the heights of mountains; the bones of animals have been discovered in countries the most remote from those they inhabit. Again, *if we look at our maps, we shall see the parts of one continent that jut out, agree with the indented portions of another. The prominent coast of Africa would fit in the opposite opening between North and South America, and so in numerous other instances.* A general rending asunder of the world would seem to have taken place. . . ."

I have italicised the important words.

W. WRIGHT.

24 Balham Park Road,
S.W.12.