Galton's "Life History Album."

IN 1902 the second edition of "The Life History Album," by the late Sir Francis Galton, was published by Messrs. Macmillan and Co. Ltd. This album contains blank tables and squared paper by means of which to record the physical and mental development of 'children' from the ages of 0 to 100 years. I have kept (and am continuing) such records of my two daughters from 0 to 22 in one case, and 0 to 15 in the other. Such individual records are of interest to those concerned, but are of little value to biologists unless there are many of them. As the second edition was published twenty-six years ago, there are probably by now several hundreds of these albums containing records, and it would be well if, say, the Galton laboratory had a list of the names and addresses of the owners so that the albums could be borrowed by that laboratory for some particular investigation.

I propose to prepare such a list for presentation to the Galton laboratory, and consequently shall be obliged if those who know of the existence of such albums will kindly send particulars of them to me at 17 Victoria Street, London, S.W.1. It is suggested that the particulars should include:

(1) The name and address of the owner.

(2) The limits of the age of child covered by the records.

(3) The sex of the child.

A. S. E. ACKERMANN.

17 Victoria Street, Westminster,
London, S.W.1, Aug. 10.

A Simple Method of Distinguishing Plotted Points for Reference.

IN plotting the results of experiments it is often necessary to use different marks for points, to distinguish between the results obtained by different investigators or to allow rapid reference to numbered experiments. Circles, dots, triangles, crosses, and coloured inks are commonly used for this purpose, with or without the addition of identifying letters or numbers.

In the case of diagrams, and especially those for small-scale reproduction, the use of coloured inks and letters is often impracticable, so that the stock of distinguishing marks is sometimes quite inadequate.

In work now in hand, I have successfully got over the difficulty by what is believed to be a novel application of the semaphore system. The plotted point is marked in the usual way by either a dot, a small circle, or a large circle, but to its periphery is attached a short line, like the arm of a semaphore. I find that eight positions of the arm at 45° angular displacement can be distinguished quite easily, thus giving twenty-four distinctive marks.

The number can be doubled by adding a short line at right angles to the end of the semaphore arm, thus ♁, and can be increased to seventy-two by a similar addition to the left, thus ♃.

W. BEVAN WHITNEY.

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Sept. 26.

Hybrids of *Ægilops*.

DURING the last four years I have been engaged in the study of crosses between species of *Ægilops*. One of these, which I wish to record at present, is the hybrid between *A. ovata* L. and *A. cylindrica* Host.; this possesses all the morphological characters of *A. triuncialis* L. and cannot be distinguished from it except that the hybrids so far have proved sterile I hope shortly to complete the cytological study of the crosses.

I also discovered that the hybrids of *A. triuncialis* with *A. cylindrica* exactly resemble *A. persica* Boiss., now classed by Zhukovsky as a subspecies of *A. triuncialis*. *A. triuncialis* is one of the most widely distributed species of *Ægilops*, its range extending from Portugal throughout the Mediterranean region to Persia and Afghanistan. Systematists recognise a large number of varieties, differing chiefly in the number and length of the awns on the glumes.

I have little doubt that *A. triuncialis* is of hybrid origin, the typical form being the result of hybridisation between *A. ovata* and *A. cylindrica*; the short-awned form, *A. persica*, appears to arise from the back-crossing of the hybrid with the *cylindrica* parent, while the long-awned varieties are doubtless the product of back-crossing with the *A. ovata* parent.

JOHN PERCIVAL.

The University, Reading,
Sept. 25.

Can the Hand be thrust in Molten Lead without Injury?

IN NATURE of Sept. 8, p. 349, Mr. A. S. E. Ackermann asks this question. For many years it has been the practice in this Department to dip the fingers into molten lead when lecturing on the 'spheroidal state' of liquids. No special precautions are taken to free the fingers from grease, as is commonly advised; they are rinsed under the water tap and shaken to remove drops of water. It is even sufficient, if one finger only is to be used, to moisten it by putting it into the mouth. Of course, the fingers do not remain long in the lead, being withdrawn immediately they are covered, though undue haste in dipping and removal spoils the demonstration.

The existence of a badly conducting layer of vapour can also be shown by dipping the dry finger into liquid air. In this experiment, as the hand is hot relative to the liquid, the latter forms its own protective film, whereas in the former case the protection from injury is due to a layer of water vapour.

J. R. CLARKE.

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Change of Resistance of Lead by the Action of Radium.

WHILE engaged in an investigation to determine the number of free electrons in metals, we have noticed a change in resistance when β particles and γ rays from radium are allowed to impinge on an insulated thin plate of lead. We have further noticed that the change is not permanent and that the resistance varies with time, returning to its original value.

Recently we have noticed that M. Rienci (*Accad. Lincei, Atti*, 7, pp. 400-405, March 1928) has found that the resistance of a thin pellicle of matter increases or decreases according to the nature of the charge, and for the most part the change is permanent.

Any real change in resistance, under the conditions of our experiment, has to be clearly distinguished from thermal effects due to the radiations. As the paper above referred to is not available to us, we are not in a position to know the details of Rienci's experiment.

Work on the subject is proceeding and the results will be published when ready.

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