

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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Inheritance of an Abnormality.

A CASE of the heredity of an abnormality of the hand may be of interest to some of your readers.

A father and a mother with normal hands had a family of three sons and seven daughters. The eldest son had an abnormality of each hand, the second and third fingers being apparently jointed to the same bone, and the third daughter has a different abnormality, both hands being affected. The accompanying skiagram, kindly taken for me by Mr. J. J. Blake, of Onslow Road, Richmond, will



FIG. 1.—Abnormal hand of third daughter.

show the character of this abnormality. All the remaining children had normal hands.

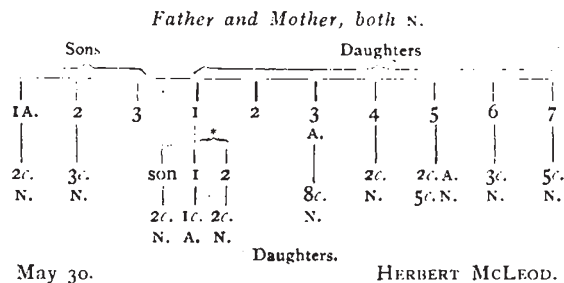
The eldest son had two children without abnormalities, and the second son three children that were normal. The eldest daughter had one son and two daughters normal; the son has two normal children, the first daughter one child abnormal, and the second daughter two children normal.

Returning to the third daughter with the abnormal hands, all her eight children are normal; the fourth daughter has two normal children; the fifth daughter has two children abnormal and five normal; the sixth has three normal, and the seventh five normal children.

There is no tradition of abnormalities in any of the relations of the father or mother. It may be mentioned that the husbands of the eldest and fifth daughters, some

of whose descendants are abnormal, are first cousins (not first cousins of their wives).

The following scheme may make the relationship more clear (N signifies normal; A, abnormal; and c, children):—



May 30.

Thermometer Scales.

A DECIDED disadvantage of the centigrade scale in meteorology is the use of negative numbers for temperatures below freezing point. In taking out means of months where negative numbers occur the labour is doubled, and other additional sources of error have to be avoided.

The Fahrenheit scale is not so liable to this trouble, but there are other objections to its use. Both of these scales might be superseded by a scale starting from absolute zero, on which the temperature of melting ice is 350°. Such a scale is compared in the following table:—

	°C.	°F.	Positive
Absolute zero	-273	-459	0
Mercury melts	-39	-38	300
Ice melts	+0	+32	350
Very hot weather	+39	+102	400
Water boils	+100	+212	478

The great advantage of this positive scale in meteorology is that temperatures, except the most unusual, fall between 300° and 400°, so that temperature columns might be headed "300° plus." On this scale water, under a pressure of 31.3 inches, boils at 480°, so that the most important temperatures in physics are easy to remember.

R. T. A. INNES.

Government Observatory, Johannesburg, May 12.

Solar and Lunar Halos.

AN interesting halo round the sun was seen a few miles from here, on Dartmoor, from 7.30 p.m. to sunset on June 7. The halo consisted of a double circle, the inner one having an angular radius of about fifteen to twenty degrees, with concentrations of light at the top and at the right extremity—the bottom of the ring was below the horizon, and the left extremity hidden by clouds—and a concentrated ray from the sun to the top of the circle. The outer circle was double the diameter of the inner one, and much fainter. A similar halo round the moon (with the exception of the outer circle) was observed the same evening.

ROWLAND A. EARP.

The Laboratory, Buckfastleigh, Devon, June 12.

THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH AND THE GOVERNMENT.

THE great deputation on behalf of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, which waited on the Secretary for Scotland at the Scottish Office in Parliament Square in Edinburgh on June 1, stated a strong case in favour of more liberal treatment of the society by the Government. As one speaker expressed it, they were met there on Scottish soil, indeed at the very heart of the ancient metropolis of the kingdom of Scotland, to confer with their own Secretary of State, and to urge the claim of a society