

In other words, the allusions to the frog and chimpanzee, true or otherwise, are not particularly illuminating in a discussion of Mendelism because there is involved no feature of dominance nor alternation of characters.

In Mr. Punnett's original statement of what is known as the Cuénot theory:²

There are but two relations into which the unsplitable unit character can enter with the individual. It may be present or it may be absent and no third relation can be conceived. From this we are led to ask whether the hypothesis can be brought into any simple relation with the phenomenon of dominance. Is dominance the outcome of the presence of the given factor, and recessiveness the condition implied by its absence? At present we can only say that such a point of view is not at variance with the great majority of cases hitherto worked out. Whether the few instances which now seem contradictory will ultimately fall into line, future work alone can decide.

Nothing very cryptic or very dogmatic about that. In speaking of "roseness," "peaness," etc., Mr. Punnett has merely framed a convenient and probably temporary handle to grasp a difficult subject in order the better to inspect it. We owe him a vote of thanks, that, instead of christening his conceptions with newly coined words dug from the dusty depths of the Greek lexicon, he has rather chosen to emphasize their temporary character by Englishing them, lest others should read into his statements a concreteness he manifestly wishes to avoid.

The writer is of those who believe that the dangerous facility with which the facts of Mendelism fall into categories and A-B-C notations is illusory and that the matter is more complicated than those would have us think who have allowed themselves to be entangled in all-explaining formulæ. Yet working hypotheses we must have in order to advance, and none suggested so far is any more usable, certainly none more lucid, than the one Professor Ritter finds so contaminated with metaphysics.

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ST. LOUIS, MO.,

September 29, 1909

²R. C. Punnett, "Mendelism," 1907.

HYDROGEN POLYSULPHIDE AS A REDUCING AGENT

I SHOULD like to correct a clerical error in the account I gave a few months ago¹ of my investigation of the reducing action of hydrogen polysulphide. The statement "it may be used at the ordinary temperature, dissolved in ionizing solvents, such as water or alcohol, or in non-ionizing media, such as carbon bisulphide" should read "it may be used at the ordinary temperature, *for the reduction of substances* dissolved in, etc."

As is well known, the polysulphide is practically insoluble in water and alcohol.

ALFRED TINGLE

LABORATORY OF THE IMPERIAL CHINESE

PEI YANG MINT, TIENTSIN,

October 10, 1909

SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

Landmarks of Botanical History. By EDWARD LEE GREENE. Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections (Vol. 54), 1909.

We have had many histories of botany, each of which has added somewhat to our knowledge of the growth of the science and of the men who have been its chief workers, or they have given us a new point of view so that we have been able to see how botany has grown and developed from its crude beginnings to the present. In Dr. Greene's book we have another attempt to set forth the matter in a new light, and at the outset it may be said that few men could bring to the task better ability, training and preparation. Nor are there many men who can command equal library facilities, for Dr. Greene's unrivaled private library of the earlier botanical works is supplemented by the Congressional Library, to which as an attaché of the Smithsonian Institution he has had the freest access. This happy coincidence with the unusual freedom from official duties afforded by his position, and a persevering industry, have conspired to favor the production of a monumental work.

In choosing for his title the word "landmarks" the author indicated something as to

¹SCIENCE, XXX., 158 (July 30, 1909).