

THE GOLDEN MEAN

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: With reference to the article on the "Golden Mean" in your issue of April 17, may I recall the fact that in a letter which appeared in Vol. XXXII., p. 625, I showed that the mean of the F_1 offspring of two families crossed at random is, on certain assumptions, the geometric mean of the parental averages. I confess that I can not bring Mr. Groth's results for crossing individual plants into line with the theory propounded in my letters, but, at any rate, it is suggestive that a theoretical reason for the appearance of geometric means in connection with inheritance can be given.

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LONDON,
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DISAGREEMENTS IN CHEMICAL NOMENCLATURE

THE number of SCIENCE for January 23 contains an article by Dr. F. W. Clarke which undoubtedly strikes a sympathetic chord in the majority of American chemists. That any chemical element should be given different names by two groups of chemists is indeed lamentable, the more so that each of these groups contains many scientists of enviable reputation who naturally would be expected to place themselves far above the petty jealousies which characterize many societies of less learned persons.

That a scientist who contributes to the known knowledge of chemistry to the extent of discovering a new element should not be granted the privilege of naming that element is anything but just. The columbium-niobium controversy is an excellent example. The discoverer of the element named it columbium; others later took it upon themselves to rechristen the element. The columbium-niobium controversy is not in the least a question of which is the better name—it is a question of bestowing any honor incident to the discovery upon the one to whom it belongs.

But this is merely one of several cases of disagreement in names. In 1798 the French chemist Vauquelin discovered a new element while working with the mineral beryl. Unfor-

tunately Vauquelin did not suggest a name for this new element but he did note that the oxide is characterized by a sweetish taste. On account of this property the editors of the *Annales de Chimie*, the journal in which Vauquelin described his discovery, at once suggested the name glucina for the new earth. The name was immediately adopted by the French. Later the German chemists adopted the name beryllium which they have retained ever since. At the present time the German and Spanish chemists use the name beryllium while the original name glucinum, given by the French, is used by the French, Russian and Italian chemists. Among English chemists as well as those of America, both names are in rather common use. In glancing through twelve chemical text-books in English, all supposedly of college caliber, the author finds that seven make use of the name glucinum whereas only three give preference to the name beryllium. One apparently gives no preference and one does not mention the element except in the table of international atomic weights in which it appears as glucinum. In the publications of the United States Geological Survey the name glucinum is used.

The index of the *Journal of the American Chemical Society* for the year 1904 contains references to articles on beryllium but none on glucinum. For the year 1905 the index likewise contains references under the name of beryllium only, notwithstanding that one of the articles referred to is a note on the atomic weight of glucinum and does not mention the other name. The index for 1906 contains three beryllium references and one glucinum, while those for the years 1908 and 1909 contain beryllium only. In the *Abstract Journal*, four beryllium articles and one glucinum are indexed for the first year, 1907, while the index for 1908 contains references to several beryllium articles and also to several on glucinum. In the volumes of the *Abstract Journal* which have been issued since 1908, the name beryllium alone is used regardless of the name which appeared in the various articles abstracted.