

November 6th 1954.

My dear Ron,

First let me say how very much I appreciate the way in which you have written to me on reading what I have written on the blood groups. I have tried to construct a logical system and (whether or not you approve its application) that it should have struck you as such is a great pleasure to me.

I have pushed on with it - because (correctly or incorrectly) I believed it right to do so; and therefore a duty to attempt it - which should not be shirked.

You say (and you may well be right) that, in constructing a simple and logical notation, I have smoothed off many of the peculiarities which are, in fact, aids to memory, and you question whether a rapid change is to be desired.

I do want you, Ron, to consider whether in saying that you may merely be voicing the point of view of people like yourself and myself who know the present notation already -

the view of those who have had to remember a difficult and illogical notation via its peculiarities, and who have found it easy to do so because they have followed its development gradually from the start.

Would you really find it easier to master such a system as the present one, rather than a logical notation (clearly distinguishing what has to be distinguished), were you to come to it now for the first time? (In exactly the same way, you may be one of those who found it easier to learn irregular than regular verbs: but that is not the usual reaction of those who learn them).

I want you to think of the many intelligent people (e.g., Julian) who maintain that they find the present notation of the blood groups a real barrier to understanding them. Is it really easier to learn such a system "by its peculiarities" than to follow one which is so simple that, having easily grasped its basis, Race and Sanger could look out ahead what the notation of a blood

E. B. FORD, F.R.S.
University Reader in Genetics
and Director of the Genetics Laboratory

GENETICS LABORATORY,
DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY,
UNIVERSITY MUSEUM, OXFORD.
TELEPHONE 55728

Group was going to be, without difficulty, off hand as they talked? I do doubt it.

There is the question whether a rapid change is to be desired. Well, the complexities of the blood groups are increasing rapidly. The longer one delays, and the more there is to change, the more difficult it will be to substitute an improved notation.

Ever yours,
Henry

6th November, 1954.

My dear Henry,

May I congratulate you most heartily on the award of the Darwin Medal? It is, as you can guess, a particular pleasure to me that you should have this honour which you have most especially deserved. It has always been a cause for regret that the Society has been sometimes misled into awarding this medal to people whose contributions to evolutionary science have not been conspicuous. They will find it hard, however, to get a succession of recipients up to the precedent set this year.

Sincerely yours,