

Francis Galton, Georgina Müller, and Caroline Edlmann's Album

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Abstract:

This case study discusses some of the contents of an 19th-century album of letters, autographs, etc., revealing unknown facts about the lives of the album's contributors and the people who wrote the letters and made the other album items, indicating that such albums can be used as research tools.

Key Words: *Caroline Sim (née Elliot) Edlmann (1839-1920); Georgina Adelaide (née Grenfell) Müller (1835-1916). Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911); Sir John Lubbock, 1st Baron Avebury, 4th Baronet (1834-1913); Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900).*

Conflict of Interest: *Dr. Jeroen Staring owns all items as shown in the figures below.*

Introduction: An Album with Initials C.S.E.

In the spring of 2020, a London auction house sold an album of signed letters, cut signatures and related mementos, manuscripts and other collectibles written by royalties, politicians, scientists, artists, clergy, explorers, and Crimean War heroes. The album bore the initials C.S.E. (see *Note 1*).

One of the treasures in the album was a Happy New Year card sent by Georgina Adelaide Müller (*née* Grenfell) and her husband, the scholar, mythographer, philologist, and orientalist Friedrich Max Müller (see *Figure 1*).

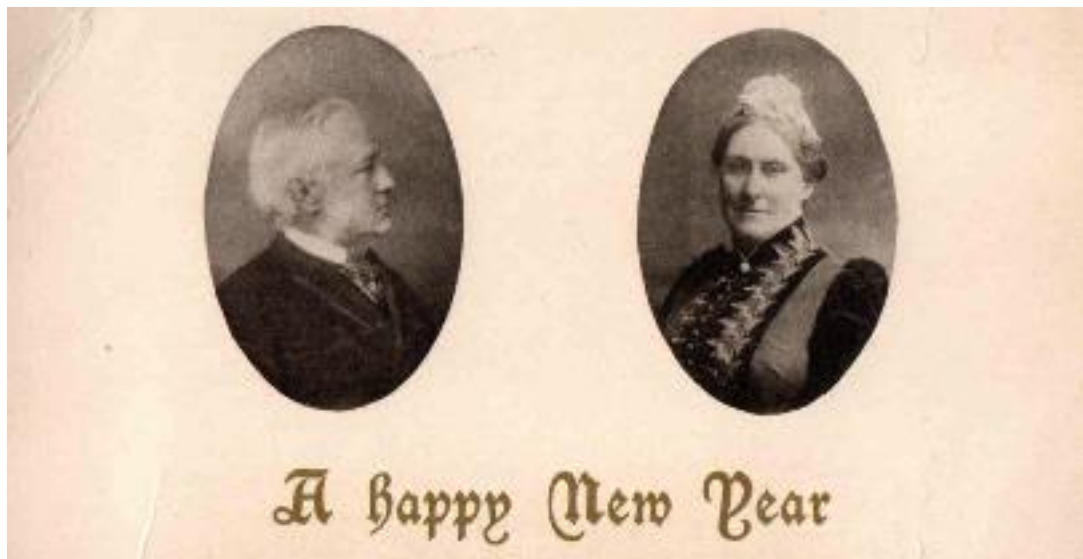


Figure 1: Happy New Year card, featuring Georgina Müller (right) and F. Max Müller (left). (Jeroen Staring Collection).

The album also featured a clipped signature of Friedrich Max Müller (see *Figure 2*).

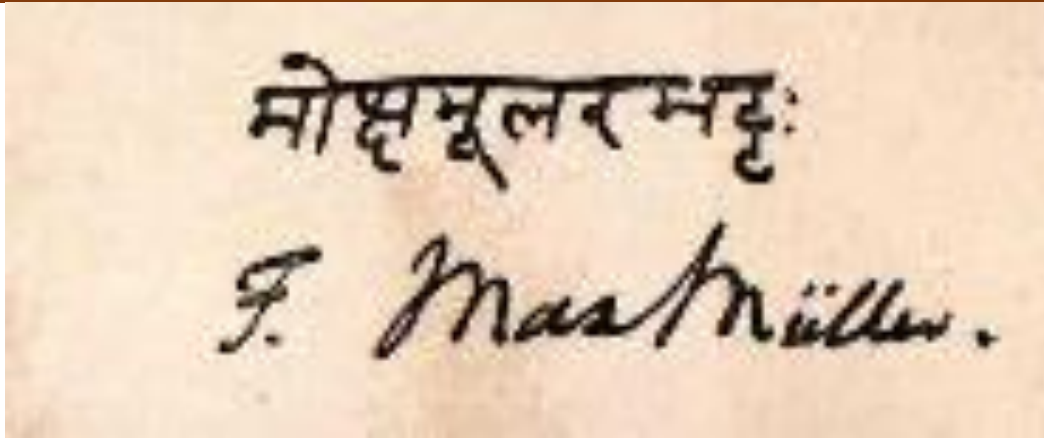


Figure 2: Signature F. Max Müller. (Jeroen Staring Collection).

Three people were the main contributors to the album: Mrs. Callendar, Mrs. Müller, and Mrs. Edlmann (*née* Elliot) — the album’s compiler. The last two persons contributed the most items. For example, the album contained a letter written in July 1904 by Sir John Lubbock, 1st Baron of Avebury, 4th Baronet to “Mrs. Edlmann” (see *Figure 3*).

On the other hand, it should be mentioned that several items in the album had no clear provenance.

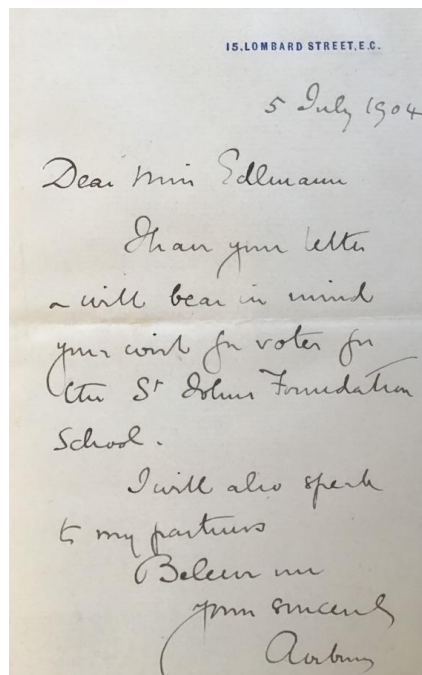


Figure 3: Letter written by Sir John Lubbock to Mrs. Caroline Edlmann. (Jeroen Staring Collection).

Georgina Müller and Caroline Edlmann: Cousins

Georgina Adelaide (*née* Grenfell) Müller — one of the main contributors to the album — was a daughter of Charlotte Adelaide (*née* Elliot) Grenfell (1813-1840) and Riversdale William Grenfell (1807-1871).

Georgina Müller’s mother, Charlotte Adelaide (*née* Elliot) Grenfell, had four brothers, the third was William Elliott (1810-1870). The eldest of two daughters of William Elliott and his wife Charlotte Maria (*née* Atkinson) Elliot (abt. 1810-????) was Caroline Sim Elliot, who married Major Joseph Ernest Edlmann J.P. (1831-1896) on May 11, 1861, in Palamcottah, Madras, India. The couple later moved to Leamington, a spa town in Warwickshire, Warwick in the West Midlands of England (*Leamington Spa Courier*, 1920).

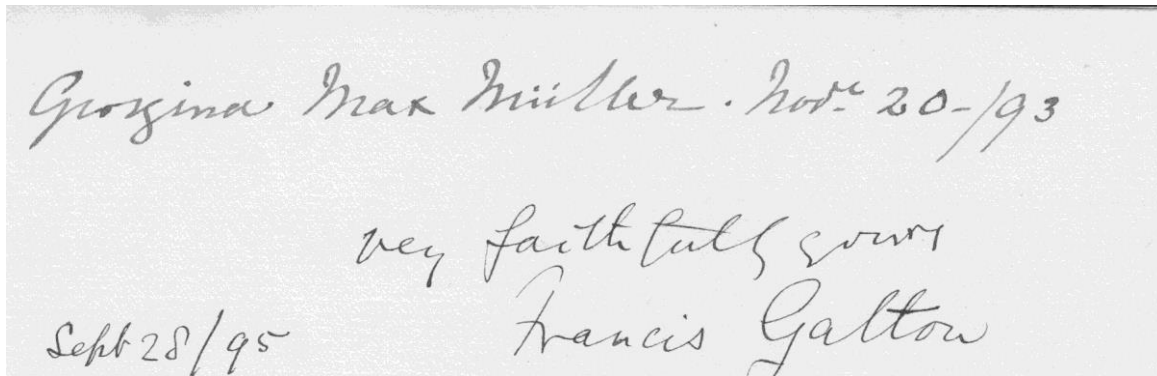
Caroline Sim (*née* Elliot) Edlmann (initials C.S.E.) was the compiling person of the album that remained in the family until it was sold in London in 2020 (compare *Note 1*).

All this together means that Georgina Müller and the album’s compiler, Caroline Edlmann, were related, to be precise: each other’s cousins. They shared the same hobby: collecting letters, photos, autographs, etc.

Also note: Georgina Müller contributed many of her hobby treasures to her cousin’s album.

Francis Galton’s Communication to Georgina Müller (September 28, 1895)

Interestingly, the scholar Francis Galton wrote a “very faithfully yours” note to “Georgina Max Müller” on September 28, 1895, appending a date (November 20, 1893) to her name (see *Figure 4*, right top corner). Galton’s short note ended up in Caroline Edlmann’s album.



Georgina Max Müller. Nov-20-93
Very faithfully yours
Francis Galton
Sept 28/95

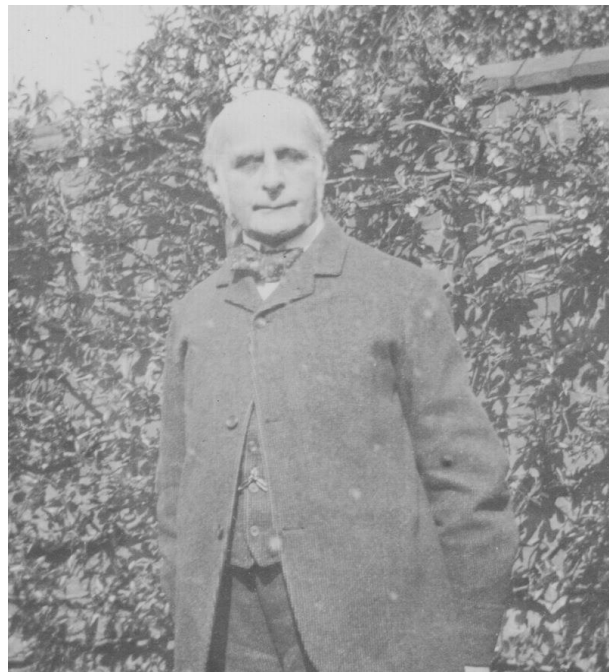


Figure 4: Note written by Francis Galton to Georgina Müller. (Jeroen Staring Collection).
Figure 5: Private photo of Francis Galton. (Jeroen Staring Collection).

According to the logical layout of the album, a private snapshot of Francis Galton in a garden and in casual clothes in the album appears to have originally been sent with the note (see *Figure 5*). Perhaps the date in the top right corner of the note in *Figure 4* refers to the date the photo was taken, or the date Georgina Müller asked for a photo?

In 1888, Georgina Müller’s husband Max had published *Three Introductory Lectures on The Science of Thought* — an edition of a lecture series he had delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in London in March 1887, complete with an *Appendix* of commentaries that had appeared in the literature in response to the lecture cycle (Müller, 1888).

Francis Galton, who sent the above “very faithfully yours” note to Georgina Müller seven years later, was one of those critics of Müller’s theories. By the late 1870s Galton had already corresponded with Max Müller regarding Müller’s language theories, he wrote in a letter to Charles Darwin (Pearson, 1924, pp. 193-194; see also *Note 2*). This is interesting because neither this Galton-Müller correspondence from the late 1870s, nor Galton’s later disagreement over Müller’s theories, is mentioned in Max Müller’s autobiography (Müller, 1901); however, it is in both Francis Galton’s (Galton, 1908, p. 283) and some biographies of the men (*e.g.*, Müller, 1902, p. 218; Pearson, 1924, p. 274).

Note further that neither Francis Galton’s autobiography, nor Max Müller’s, nor biographies of Galton or Müller, mention the fact Francis Galton corresponded with Georgina Müller!

Francis Galton’s Communication to Mrs. Edlmann (October 1, 1895)

Francis Galton was a 19th-century polymath in the truest sense of the word. He contributed to the body of knowledge in disciplines such as anthropology and sociology, geography, meteorology, psychology, psychometrics and statistics, as well as *quasi*-sciences as eugenics. He was also an expert in fingerprint classification (see *Note 3*).

Galton wrote the above “very faithfully yours” note to Georgina Müller on September 28, 1895 (see *Figure 4*), most probably together with the photo above (see *Figure 5*). It is astonishing that three days later, on October 1, 1895, he wrote a short letter to Caroline Edlmann: “Here is an impression of the seal of which I spoke, and which may amuse you. It explains itself.” A seal impression in sealing wax has been pasted on the *petite* letter. Around the print with the lines of a fingertip, it reads: “* FRANCIS GALTON * right ring finger” (see *Figure 6*).

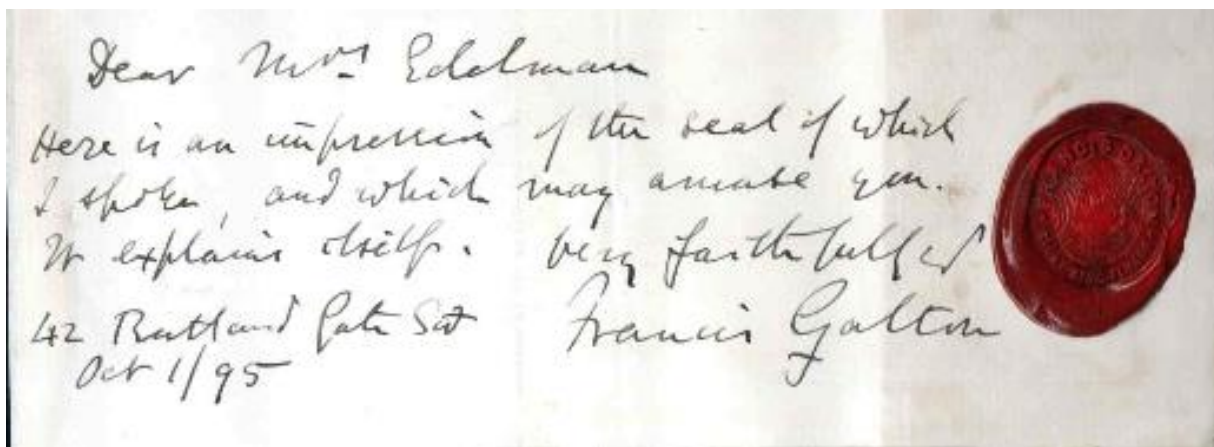


Figure 6: Impression of seal of Francis Galton’s right ring finger in sealing wax, pasted on a *petite* letter, sent by Galton to Mrs. Caroline Edlmann. (Jeroen Staring Collection).

Galton had probably told Caroline Edlmann on one specific occasion that he had his goldsmith make a seal of his right ring finger print with the above text around the fingerprint — to please interested parties, or to arouse interest in fingerprints when corresponding with someone. It seems that Caroline Edlmann was one of the first to be pleased by Galton with a sealing wax impression of the seal of his right ring finger print.

Note that neither Galton’s autobiography, nor most biographies of Galton, mention such a seal — or Mrs. Edlmann (see *Note 4*). However, Karl Pearson’s Galton biography refers to this particular seal — or an identical one — created for Francis Galton: “Galton himself had a seal cut from his right ring finger print, and this is still used on the name cards at the Annual Galton Laboratory Dinner” (Pearson, 1930, p. 216).

Conclusion

Diaries, correspondence, photographs, and photo albums can serve as primary sources for research. The example above shows that albums of memorabilia can uncover unexpected relationships between people and

perhaps shed new light on pre-existing knowledge. Every now and then such albums are sold or auctioned. Researchers could make good use of it.

Notes

1. See: <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/26013/lot/28/?category=list>.
2. Charles Darwin and Max Müller had corresponded earlier that decade about Müller's views — first in 1873 and later in 1875.
See: a. <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/?docId=letters/DCP-LETT-8957.xml>.
b. <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/DCP-LETT-8962.xml>.
- See also: c. <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/?docId=letters/DCP-LETT-9802.xml>.
d. <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/?docId=letters/DCP-LETT-9808.xml>.
e. <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/?docId=letters/DCP-LETT-10194.xml>.
f. <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/?docId=letters/DCP-LETT-10201.xml>.
3. Faulds (1905, 1910, 1915); Galton (1892); Herschel (1916).
4. Compare, for instance, Forrest, 1974; Galton, 1908; Gillham, 2001; Middleton, 1981.

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