

52 (19 February 1891) 160

NOTES

There is a strong chance that the editorial reply at 54 (11 February 1892) 110 is by Peirce. If that is the case, then this note on Cajori is probably by Peirce, since this book is mentioned in the later editorial comment. See also: Fisch's new supplement. This note is unassigned in Haskell's *Index to The Nation*, vol. 1.

Florian Cajori (1859-1930) was graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1883, and from 1884 to 1885 studied mathematics and physics at The Johns Hopkins University. From 1898 until 1918, he held a chair in mathematics at Colorado College, and from 1903 to 1918 also was dean of the department of engineering at that school. From 1918 until 1929, he taught at the University of California where he held the post of professor of the history of mathematics, the first of its kind in America. He authored over 200 journal articles and a dozen textbooks. He was a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (of which he held the presidency, 1917-1918) and the American Mathematical Society.

—The Bureau of Education's Circular of Information, No. 3, 1890, is a bulky pamphlet on 'The Teaching and History of Mathematics in the United States,' by Prof. Florian Cajori of Colorado College. Three-quarters of the 400 pages are given to the history proper, full in facts and decidedly anecdotal, but sadly wanting an index. Some of the stories are rather personal. The following relates to Prof. J. J. Sylvester, who is referred to as "Silly":

"His manner of lecturing was highly rhetorical and elocutionary. When about to enunciate an important or remarkable statement, he would draw himself up till he stood on the very tips of his toes, and in deep tones thunder out his sentences. He preached at us at such times; and not infrequently he wound up by quoting a few lines of poetry to impress on us the importance of what he had been declaring. I remember distinctly an incident that occurred when he was at work on his *Universal Algebra*. He had jumped to a conclusion which he was unable to prove by logical deduction. He stated this fact to us in the lecture, and then went on: 'GENTLEMEN' [here he raised himself on his toes], 'I am *certain* that my conclusion is correct. I will WAGER a hundred pounds to *one*; yes, I will WAGER my *life* on it.' The capitals indicate when he rose on his toes, and the italics when he rocked back on to his heels. In such bursts as these he always held his hands tightly clenched and close to his side, while his elbows stuck out in the plane of his body, so that his bended arm made an angle of about 140°."

Following this historical matter are twenty-three questions concerning methods of teaching and the like answered in the briefest manner by professors of 168 colleges, with other decisions by teachers in normal schools and others by principals of high schools. All this part of the book is diffuse and ill-edited. Little or no discrimination has been exercised in selecting the institutions; and from many of the most important there are no replies. There are none from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, Ann Arbor, Cornell, Clark University, or the University of Wisconsin, all of which seats of learning should have been visited.

—The arrangement of the answers is such as to cover a great deal of paper while affording the reader no facilities; the whole thought, apparently, having

been to save trouble to the compiler. As a fair sample of the value of these decisions, we may summarize those which sprawl over the half of three pages in response to the question, "Do scientific or classical students show the greater aptitude for mathematics?" The answers are:

Decidedly, the scientific, from 41 colleges.	
Decidedly, the classical, " 28 "	
Apparently, the scientific, " 7 "	
Apparently, the classical, " 9 "	
Sensibly equal, " 13 "	
Doubtful or nearly equal, " 14 "	

The more expanded statements could easily be put into half-a-dozen lines more. These replies prove nothing, unless proof be needed that most college professors know little of the aptitudes of their students. The last forty pages of the book are occupied with historical essays, germane to the subject, though of no great value. An appendix gives a useful bibliography of American treatises on the calculus, thirty-three in number.

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A CARICATURE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: As one of Sylvester's pupils, I wish to express my regret that the *Nation* should have reproduced a passage so ill-calculated to give a correct impression either of his personality or of his influence, as that which was quoted in a note in your current issue. The intention of the writer may have been good enough, but no reader would gather, from what he says, that Sylvester's bursts of "rhetoric" were merely the overflow of that burning enthusiasm for his science which animated him constantly, which inspired his pupils (at least for the time) with something of the same ardor, and which enabled him, when past the age of seventy, to kindle a remarkable mathematical revival at Oxford upon his return to England. It is to be regretted that if any personal sketch was to be presented to readers who have not known Sylvester, it should have been one showing such bad taste, and preceded by the use of a silly nickname which, I believe—and for the credit of Johns Hopkins students' sense and breeding I trust that I am right—was never in use among the students at Baltimore. X.

FEBRUARY 22, 1891.

52 (12 March 1891) 217-218

THE TEACHING OF MATHEMATICS

"F. H. L." is identified by Haskell (*Index to The Nation*, vol. 1, p. 201) as being F. H. Loud. The editorial reply is attributed to Peirce by Fisch and Haskell in *Additions to Cohen's Bibliography*. If the review of Cajori's book—see 52 (19 February 1891) 160—was written by Peirce, then it is probable that the editorial remark following Cajori's letter is also by Peirce. This piece is unassigned in Haskell's *Index to The Nation*, vol. 1.