

Peirce, Herbert Henry David.
1914

"Charles Sanders Peirce," Boston Evening Transcript
(Saturday 16 May), part 3, page 3, columns 5-6.
By C. S. Peirce's brother,
Fisch, Second Supplement.

CHARLES SANDERS PEIRCE

Some Appreciation of a Harvard Philoso-
pher, First Among American Pragmatists,
Who Recently Died in Secluded Retirement

Charles Sanders Peirce, second son of the late Benjamin Peirce, Perkins professor of astronomy and mathematics at Harvard University for forty years, and of his wife, Sarah Hunt Mills, who died at his home in Milford, Pa., on April 19 last, in his seventy-fifth year, was born in September, 1839, of a family eminent in scientific pursuits and in the higher branches of education. Beginning with Benjamin Peirce, Sr., for several years librarian of Harvard, the sum of the services of the Peirce family in that seat of learning, including that of his son Benjamin and of his grandson James Mills Peirce, numbered over one hundred years.

Charles Peirce, from his youth to the end of his life, exhibited in a marked degree the family trait of mathematical ability as well as the allied sciences, his mind finally centring itself upon logic and philosophy, but never forsaking mathematical research.

Even in childhood Dr. Peirce exhibited remarkable qualities of mind and a profound love of study and research, pursued, however in his own way and by original methods. He appeared to have acquired the art of reading and writing by himself without the usual course of instruction. As a child he was forever digging into encyclopedias and other books in search of knowledge upon abstruse subjects, while discussions with his learned father upon profound questions of science, especially higher mathematics and philosophy, were common matters of astonishment, not only to his brothers and sister, but to his parents as well.

Charles however was no prig or pedant. His mirthful, contagious laugh, his keen sense of humor and ready wit made him a bright and ever welcome companion in all gatherings. He was always capable of holding his own with unconscious ease whether among his elders or with simple unpretentiousness joining in the sports of the youngest and smallest. His own choice was for intellectual games, especially chess, of which he early became a master.

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Mr. Peirce was mainly fitted for college at the Cambridge High School, with one term, prior to the entrance examinations, at the famous school of Mr. Epes Sargent Dixwell, in Boston. He was graduated from Harvard in 1859, among the youngest of his class, and entered the Lawrence Scientific School where he took the highest honors for research work in chemistry, which attracted the attention of some of the great German universities as valuable contributions to science. Pure mathematics, astronomy and logic, however, early attracted Peirce more deeply than the more practical pursuit which he then abandoned, and devoted himself to astronomy, passing long nights at the Harvard observatory, and, later, to pendulum observations and computations for determining the earth's density. His research regarding it was noted with warm praise by the French Academy and by other European scientists.

It was during this period of Peirce's practical work in the field of physics, that he published his book on "Photometric Research" beside many articles on the history of science, metaphysics, psychology, gravitation, chemistry, map projection and astronomy. He also edited his father's work on "Linear Associative Algebra," a mathematical contribution which was contemporaneously considered to ascend so far into the realm of pure mathematics as to make it improbable that it could ever find a reading public sufficient to warrant further publication than the one hundred lithographed copies which constituted the original edition. At this time also he was employed by the publishers of the Century Dictionary to prepare the greater part of the scientific definitions for that great lexicon.

Research in the domain of his chosen subject, logic, and the art of reasoning, had long been drawing Peirce away from the more practical and immediately profitable paths of science. He had already formulated and given to the world the principle of logic which he was first among Americans to call "Pragmatism" and which the late Professor William James of Harvard afterward amplified and carried to higher development. In 1887 Mr. Peirce, feeling the burden and friction of the busily active world too distracting for the pursuit of his studies, retired to the place he bought in Pike County, Pennsylvania, where, surrounded by his voluminous library, he immersed himself in the sea of philosophic thought from which he rarely emerged, living in Milford the life of a recluse and an anchorite.

During the pursuit of his studies this profound thinker contracted a gnawing and a progressing malady which greatly impaired the regular continuity of his labors defeating the full fruition of the brilliant promise of his life. His pursuits could not win for him popular applause, but to those who knew him well he gave a light which can never fade.

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