

SCIENCE

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THE HUMANIZATION OF THE TEACHING
OF MATHEMATICS¹

CONTENTS

<i>The Humanization of the Teaching of Mathematics:</i> PROFESSOR C. J. KEYSER	637
<i>Benjamin Franklin Thomas:</i> PROFESSOR HENRY S. CARHART	647
<i>Attendance at German Universities:</i> RUDOLF TOMBO, JR.	648
<i>The Medical School of the University of Illinois</i>	649
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i>	650
<i>University and Educational News</i>	653
<i>Discussion and Correspondence:—</i>	
<i>Phenotypes, Genotypes and Gens:</i> DR. O. F. COOK. <i>Cross Cutting and Retrograding of Stream-beds:</i> DR. F. S. DELLENBAUGH. <i>Reported Discovery of Radium in Northern Arkansas:</i> PROFESSOR A. H. PURDUE. <i>The American Association for the Advancement of Science:</i> PROFESSOR CHAS. H. HERTY... 654	
<i>Scientific Books:—</i>	
<i>Smith's Bacteria in Relation to Plant Diseases:</i> PROFESSOR CHARLES E. BESSEY. <i>Friend on the Corrosion of Iron and Steel:</i> PROFESSOR WILLIAM H. WALKER. <i>Pender's Principles of Electrical Engineering:</i> PROFESSOR FREDERICK BEDELL. <i>Smith's Electro-analysis:</i> PROFESSOR JOSEPH W. RICHARDS	659
<i>The Habits of Flies of the Genus Cordylobia, Parasitic on Man in Africa:</i> DR. FREDERICK KNAB	662
<i>The National Academy of Sciences</i>	663
<i>The American Federation of Teachers of the Mathematical and the Natural Sciences:</i> EUGENE R. SMITH	663
<i>Anthropology at the Washington Meeting:</i> PROFESSOR GEORGE GRANT MACCURDY	665

WHEN the distinguished chairman of your mathematical conference did me the honor to request me to speak to you, he was generous enough, whether wisely or unwisely, to leave the choice of a subject to my discretion, merely stipulating that, whatever the title might be, the address itself should bear upon the professional function of those men and women who are engaged in teaching mathematics in secondary schools. Inexpertness, it has been said, is the curse of the world; and one may, not unnaturally, feel some hesitance in undertaking a task that might seem to resemble the rôle of a physician when, as sometimes happens, he is called upon to treat a patient whose health and medical competence surpass his own. I trust I am not wanting in that natural feeling. In the present instance two considerations have enabled me to overcome it. One of them is that, having had some experience in teaching mathematics in secondary schools, I might, it seemed to me, regard that experience, though it was gained more than a score of years ago, as giving something like a title to be heard in your councils. The other consideration is that, in regard to the teaching of mathematics, whether in secondary schools or in colleges, I have acquired a certain conviction, a pretty firm conviction, which, were it properly presented, you would doubtless be generous enough and perhaps ingenious

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