

SCIENCE

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CONTENTS

<i>The Human Significance of Mathematics:</i> PROFESSOR CASSIUS J. KEYSER	663
<i>The New York Meeting of the National Academy of Sciences</i>	680
<i>Karl Eugen Guthe</i>	685
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i>	686
<i>University and Educational News</i>	690
<i>Discussion and Correspondence:—</i>	
<i>The Position of References in Journal Articles:</i> DR. F. A. BATHER, DR. CLARENCE J. WEST. <i>Injections of the Bundle of His:</i> PROFESSOR A. W. MEYER. <i>The Pistillate Spikelet in Zea Mays:</i> PROFESSOR ALBAN STEWART. <i>A Remarkable Flight of Caddis Flies and Chironomids:</i> W. L. MCATEE. <i>On the Nomenclature of Electrical Units:</i> PROFESSOR A. E. CASWELL. <i>Cooperation in Labelling Museums:</i> HARLAN I. SMITH. <i>Dr. Edward Hindle:</i> PROFESSOR G. H. F. NUTTALL	690
<i>Scientific Books:—</i>	
<i>Cannon on Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear and Rage; Crile on the Origin and Nature of the Emotions:</i> PROFESSOR JAMES R. ANGELL.	696
<i>Special Articles:—</i>	
<i>A Sterile Siphon Tip Protector:</i> IVAN C. HALL	700

THE HUMAN SIGNIFICANCE OF MATHEMATICS¹

Homo sum; humani nil a me alienum puto.—*Terence.*

THE subject of this address is not of my choosing. It came to me by assignment. I may, therefore, be allowed to say that it is in my judgment ideally suited to the occasion. This meeting is held here upon this beautiful coast because of the presence of an international exposition, and we are thus invited to a befitting largeness and liberality of spirit. An international exposition properly may and necessarily will admit many things of a character too technical to be intelligible to any one but the expert and the specialist. Such things, however, are only incidental—contributory, indeed, yet incidental—to pursuit of the principal aim, which is, I believe, or ought to be, the representation of human things as human—an exhibition and interpretation of industries, institutions, sciences and arts, not primarily in their accidental or particular character as illustrating individuals or classes or specific localities or times, but primarily in their essential and universal character as representative of man. A world-exposition will, therefore, as far as practicable, avoid placing in the forefront matters so abstruse as to be fit for the contemplation and understanding of none but specialists; it will, as a whole, and in all its principal parts, address itself to the general intelligence; for it aims at being, for the multitudes of men and

¹ An address delivered August 3, 1915, Berkeley, Calif., at a joint meeting of the American Mathematical Society, the American Astronomical Society, and Section A of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.