

done all these things in an interesting way, and has decidedly helped even those students who were well aware from the start that they could not place in the finals.

Several copies of the formula list are on hand, and may be secured by application to Dr. Hale.

E. WERTHEIM

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES,
FAYETTEVILLE, ARK.

A CASTIGATION AND AN APPEAL

RECENTLY Professor G. A. Miller paused in a general address before the mathematicians of America to point out what he considered a flaw in one of my books. He said (this journal, 1924, p. 4) that it is "not true that he (Benjamin Peirce) was in charge of this almanac (the Nautical Almanac) for some years." Miller says that Peirce "did much work on the Nautical Almanac" and "was consulting astronomer from 1849 to 1867." The difference in content between Miller's statement of about fifteen words and my statement of three words ("in charge of") is the same as the difference between tweedledum and tweedledee. The admissibility of my phrasing is still more evident in the light of a passage in the preface of the first volume of the Nautical Almanac: "The theoretical department of the work has been placed under the special direction of Professor Benjamin Peirce, LL.D., and most of the calculations have passed under his final revision." It should be noted that in my book I carefully avoided saying that Peirce held the official title of "Superintendent"; such a statement would have been erroneous.

It should be noted that Professor Miller made two other errors in the passage which he devotes to my book. He informs the mathematicians of the country that among the men "in charge" of this almanac were "J. H. Coffin (1865-1877), and Simon Newcomb (1877-1894)." Now J. H. Coffin was a meteorologist and professor at Lafayette College, and was not superintendent of the Nautical Almanac; it was John Huntington Crane Coffin who was superintendent. Secondly, Newcomb did not retire in 1894. William Harkness, in his preface to the almanac dated September, 1897, says: "Professor Simon Newcomb, U. S. N., was director of the almanac until March 11, 1897." Miller's address contains some other misleading statements, but I confine myself to the part which relates to my book.

However, I do wish to make an appeal for fair play. Unfriendly critics are usually satisfied when they give a book one thorough overhauling. Not so Professor Miller. He prepared a long review of my book and then, during the past four years, followed it up with a procession of articles in various journals, further attacking that book. If his historical

criticisms were careful and accurate, his course might be justified. But I am prepared to show that many of them are not. Many of them are partly or wholly wrong. Also, most of them are superficial in the sense that Miller does not usually consult the original sources. Is it too utopian an appeal to the spirit of fair play to propose that, when a critic finds that he himself is mistaken, he should do justice to the author criticized by publicly retracting his erroneous criticism?

FLORIAN CAJORI

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

QUOTATIONS

MOUNT EVEREST AGAIN

THE time is drawing near when, for the third time in four years, the climbers and scientists of the expedition organized by the Royal Geographical Society and the Alpine Club for the ascent of Mount Everest will turn their faces towards Tibet. General Bruce, once again the leader, as he was in 1922, starts this week for India, with Major E. F. Norton, about a month in advance of the main body, to make the final preparations on the spot. In the article which we publish this morning he discusses some of the chief factors on which the chances of success must depend. The proved competence of the British *personnel* and of the hillmen who acted as porters in 1922—impervious, he says, to cold, exposure and fatigue—is, to begin with, an asset of the highest value. Other assets are the insight which has been gained into the character of the people with whom the expedition will have to deal, and the extreme friendliness of the existing relations between the British and the government of the Dalai Lama—mainly brought about, General Bruce, says, by the action of our own political officers. It may be added that the leader's own wide knowledge and understanding of the Himalayan races have been, and will be again, of great service in the conduct of the expedition. General Bruce considers that the experience in high acclimatization gained during the last expedition will enable the use of oxygen to be delayed till a much later stage than had hitherto been considered practicable, and that this economy in its use will tend to simplify the difficult problem of transport on the highest slopes. On the other hand, the one unknown and unknowable factor—in itself the most important of all—will be the weather. Last year the monsoon, and with it the adverse conditions which cut short the time available for the one last and most promising attempt to reach the summit in 1922, was delayed. If, by great good fortune, the same thing happens this summer, the chances are probably in favor of success. If not—if, that is to say, the bad weather again comes before its time—