

SCIENCE

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THE EARLIEST KNOWN AMERICAN ARITHMETIC¹

THE American activity of the printing press began in Mexico about the year 1539, Juan Pablos being the first printer. From this press issued in 1556 a work on the value of silver and gold by Juan Diez Freyle, who devoted in his treatise considerable attention to both arithmetic and algebra. This section, with brief notes and translation, has been published in facsimile by Professor David Eugene Smith. A year after the Sumario by Juan Diez Freyle appeared a work on astronomy, and scientific publications of America begin with these works.

A systematic arithmetic was published at Mexico in the year 1623 by Pedro Paz. At the present time no copy is known to historians of mathematics who have written about this field.

The second arithmetical text-book of the new world, "Arte Menor de Arismetica," by Atanasius Reaton, appeared in the year 1649 at the press of the Widow of Bernard Calderon. Some copy of this work has been known to Spanish-American bibliographers, since the bibliographical description was given by Medina in his bibliography of Mexico. The writer prepared in 1924 a list of arithmetics of colonial America, but search at that time failed to locate any copy. However, recently Mrs. Lota Spell, librarian of the Garcia Library at the University of Texas, called my attention to the fact that a copy of this arithmetic is in this library and has very courteously assisted me in obtaining a reproduction by rotograph.

The work is dedicated to Pedro de Soto Lopez, "Contador del Tribunal del S. Oficio de la Inquisicion de esta Nueva Espana, Prior de la Universidad de los Mercaderes deste Reyno, I vez Administrador de las Reales Alcavalas." The approbation of Contador Martinez de Zuvieta, representing the Visitor General of the Holy Inquisition, is given. Herein Atanasius Reaton receives also the title Contador or Accountant. The Licence based upon the approbation was duly issued on December 17, 1648.

In his prefatory letter to the reader Reaton notes that twenty-one years before he had prepared a book, Contador General, de Arismetica, y Geometria, for

¹ Address of the vice-president and chairman of Section L—Historical and Philological Sciences—American Association for the Advancement of Science, Kansas City, Mo., December, 1925.

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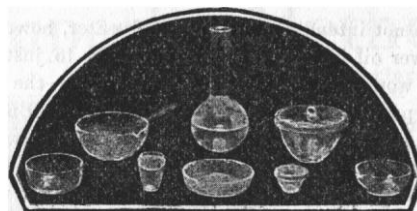
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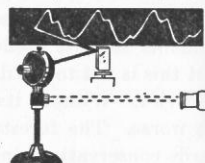
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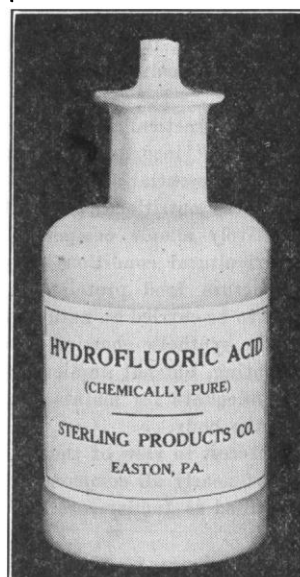
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