

mathematicians. Certainly, to ordinary folk, reading the words of either is "very like the process of dining on gold plate in the presence of kings, very splendid, very ceremonious and not a little appalling."

A year or two after this introduction to Quaternions I had the pleasure of meeting the author in Edinburgh. "The lion in his den" is at first sight quite as formidable as some of his books would lead one to expect. While he was reading my letter of introduction it was not strange that I found myself eyeing him rather fearfully and wondering what he would do as soon as he was through with it. A few words disarmed all fear; his first sentence was a hearty welcome, his second some joke on transatlantic colleges. Before the interview was over I could easily have imagined myself talking not to one of the greatest of living mathematicians and physicists, but to some rollicking, overgrown school-boy. It would not be difficult to conceive him at kites and ten-pins still, eager for success or alarmingly worked up over the prospect of defeat.

One glimpse of Tait—one does not say *Mr. Milton*—and you remember him forever. Big, burly, broad-shouldered, with a loose gray coat buttoned at the chin, his whole dress wearing a decidedly careless and unprofessional look; he can be seen regularly every morning crossing the university quadrangle in the direction of the large theatre-like room in which he holds his lectures. There is a gleam in the small twinkling eyes that is fascinating—a strange concentrating power that seems to transfix the object looked at. When they flashed round the room it was as if he had drawn a rapier. And yet those eyes can be as merry as a boy's. Edinburgh men delight to tell of the time when he turned a tub of water on some students who insisted on crowding too near an experiment which he was performing. He is a wonderful teacher—clear, keen, with a genius for sticking to his subject, and an enthusiasm that never fails to arouse even the dulllest and most careless of his hearers. Rarely does he fail in an experiment. When he does it is because the atmosphere has been too much for him, or other hostile influences have been at work. Tait always warns the students of these before he proceeds, but they only smile. They have learned to take the announcement as calmly as if he were some crack marksman declaring that they should not hold him accountable for possible stray shots. Never can there have been a more successful, a more brilliant demonstrator.

While he was a student at Cambridge, so I am told, it was flung in the face of the mathematicians that they never stood high in Scriptural knowledge. Tait and another student, a competitor with himself for the position of Senior wrangler, agreed privately to wipe out this stigma from mathematics. This they did by taking year about the prize which was said to lie beyond