

that it is not uncommon to speak of mathematics as a dry study ; but it is dry only for the reason that the grapes were sour to the fox — because he could not reach them. The truth is, that to those who have the resolution and perseverance to master its noble truths, it becomes one of the most fascinating of all pursuits. This is particularly true of the higher and more difficult parts of the subject — those sublime heights where your own fellow-citizen, the prince of American mathematicians,* soared so high, and gathered so many laurels, which he wreathed around the very cycles of the heavens. It is said that he who has the strength of wing to carry him fairly into the ethereal regions of the differential calculus, often becomes more fascinated than men in any other pursuit. So many new and unthought-of truths flash upon his mind, as he follows the golden thread of demonstration, that he seems to breathe an atmosphere almost freed from the grossness of earth. In such pursuits we can easily believe the English mathematician sincere when he exclaimed, *Crede mihi, extingui dulce erit mathematicarum artium studio* — “Believe me, it will be sweet to die in the study of mathematics.”

But though mathematics be full of curious and fascinating truths, yet such is the nature of the subject that I shall scarcely be able to clothe even one fair example in a popular dress. Let me attempt one or two founded upon the doctrine of infinitesimals. To one who has not thought on the subject this proposition seems not a little paradoxical, viz., that a man may approach nearer and nearer to a fixed object eternally, and yet not be able to reach it ; yet by slackening his pace in a certain ratio, the result would be that he could never reach

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