

SCIENCE

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FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 1903.

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ON THE FOUNDATIONS OF MATHEMATICS.*

THE American Mathematical Society gives its retiring president the privilege of speaking on whatever he may have at heart. Accordingly, this afternoon I propose to consider with you some matters of importance—indeed, perhaps of fundamental importance—in the development of mathematics in this country; and it will duly appear in what non-technical sense I am speaking 'On the Foundations of Mathematics.'

A VIEW.

Abstract Mathematics.—The notion within a given domain of defining the objects of consideration rather by a body of properties than by particular expressions or intuitions is as old as mathematics itself. And yet the central importance of the notion appeared only during the last century—in a host of researches on special theories and on the foundations of geometry and analysis. Thus has arisen the general point of view of what may be called *abstract mathematics*. One comes in touch with the literature very conveniently by the mediation of Peano's *Revue des Mathématiques*. The Italian school of Peano and the *Formulaire Mathématique*, published in connection with the *Revue*,

* Presidential address delivered before The American Mathematical Society at its ninth annual meeting, December 29, 1902.

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