

Letters

A pronouncement on spelling

If Boaz is Boas one reads with respect
 His views on the spelling of names, when correct.
 But Riemann and Neumann should always agree
 (Though Riemann has two enns while Neumann has three),
 And his lapse in this matter makes confidence wilt
 In author or editor - whose is the guilt?

One's confidence withers when later one's told
 That 'Чебышев' cannot be spelled as of old.
 For Чебышев surely used ш as one mould,
 Since Rumian's a language with spelling that's good
 For mowing one how to pronounce Rumian names.
 And 'shch' and 'sh' are far from the same.

The spelling of names is not hard if one cares.
 Pronouncing is harder: it hides subtle snares.
 If 'Boas' rhymes with 'prose' then my scansion's impure.
 The rhyming of 'Boaz' with 'so as' seems truer.
 Could it really be Boaz whose spelling was wrong?
 Or Springer whose editors damaged his song?

[P.S. I conjecture that in English pronunciation
 Chebysheff most nearly approximates the Russian original,
 and is therefore the best English transliteration of
 Чебышев. The name was transliterated into French as
 Tchebychef when Markov and Sonin published the collected
 works (1899-1907). I further conjecture that the common
 English forms Chebycheff, Tchebycheff, ..., come to us
 from that French, which should have been further trans-
 literated but wasn't.]

Peter M. Neumann

Peter M. Neumann
 Editor of the Bulletin of the
 London Mathematical Society,
 The Queen's College,
 Oxford.

The "Spelling Lesson" on p.94 of vol.3, no.3
 of the *Intelligencer* is there making its third
 appearance in print. In every instance at
 least one name has been misspelled. Evidently
 it is subject to the same principle¹ that
 requires every article about Bourbaki to
 contain mistakes.

Since no mathematician would misspell
 "Riemann", I am led to conclude that "Boaz",
 like "Halmos" under similar circumstances², is
 a figment of the imagination of some non-
 mathematical editors.

E. S. Pondiczery

E.S. Pondiczery

¹ J. Dieudonné, personal communication, circa
 1970.

² *Scientific American*, July, 1957, p.16.

A moi compte deux mots

A spelling remark

A pleasant poem (*Math. Intelligencer*, 3,
 1981, p.94) recently called attention to the
 occasional misspellings of some names. (Note
 that Riemann has two N's too!). Here is a
 curious case. Since the last century you
 always find: Legendre. Recently I saw a
 letter of his, dated 27 pluviöse an VII (15th
 February 1799). This autograph is clearly
 signed in two words:

Le Gendre

Puzzled, I looked at recent French encyclo-
 pedias and found several of them (Larousse
 dictionaries, *Encyclopaedia Universalis*,
Dictionnaire universel des noms propres Le
 Robert) in agreement with Le Gendre's
 spelling of his own name. The *Petit Larousse*,
 published each year, already adopted this
 spelling in 1959. How long will it take for
 some mathematicians to follow?

Guy Boillat
 Dépt. de mathématiques
 Université de Clermont
 France.

I read with great interest the article by R.
 Courant, *Reminiscences ...* in your journal 3
 (1981) No.4. Allow me to make three remarks:

p.159 The gentleman beside Hilbert clearly
 is Hermann Weyl.
 p.155 Felix Klein (1849-1925) is a misprint.
 Probably it should read 1925.
 p.186 Gruppenbild. Is the young man sitting
 in front on the ground really H. Weyl? Both
 Pólya and Weyl were my teachers at ETH
 Zürich. I recognised Pólya at once; but I
 have difficulties with Weyl.

W. Nowacki
 Universität Bern

*Another source has informed us that the
 young man in question is most probably
 H.L. Hamburger (1889-1956). Eds.*

Advertisement

Post-doc. position, Algebraic Geometry (moduli), available from
 May 1982 for the period of one year in The Netherlands (Amsterdam,
 Leiden or Utrecht). For suggestions or information please write
 to: C. Peters, Mathematical Institute, Wassenaarseweg 80, 2333AL
 Leiden, The Netherlands.

G. van der Geer, F. Oort, C. Peters