

Scott, Mary Augusta.
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"Prof. Cayley," The Evening Post, New York, vol. 94
(Monday 4 February), page 7, column 2.

Prof. Cayley.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE EVENING POST:

SIR: In your interesting obituary of the late Prof. Cayley, of last Monday, the 28th, you omit one fact which testifies both to the remarkable practical ability of the man and to the respect and affection in which he was held in Cambridge. Prof. Cayley was for some years president of the Council of Newnham College, which means that he was practically its president. No one would detract from the fame of the wise and gracious lady who guided the affairs of the college through the early days of doubt and small things, but it is only just to say that not a little of the almost phenomenal success of the first college for women at Cambridge was due to the practical common sense and native shrewdness of the great professor of mathematics. Miss Clough found a tower of strength in Prof. Cayley.

Curiously enough, they were both persons of few words. Prof. Cayley's taciturnity had a touch of humor in it to the observer. He would sit in a company, silent and abstracted, as if under that cornice-like brow he were working out the fourth dimension. But now and then a pertinent remark or a keen thrust showed that the passing scene was part of the problem too!

I remember an amusing instance of this at a dinner-party during the jubilee year. The women of England, as is well known, presented the Queen with a thank-offering of some £70,000, largely made up of small subscriptions. It was assumed by many of the enthusiastic but rash donors that she would expend the money for the benefit of her sex, by founding a college, or perhaps opening a woman's hospital. What the Queen did was to put up a monument to the Prince Consort at Frogmore. A prominent lady in Cambridge, who had given two and sixpence, was very indignant, and vented her mind, in a letter to the Times, demanding back her two and six. This story was going round the table merrily, while Prof. Cayley was absorbed in his dinner. Suddenly he broke out in his odd, high-pitched voice: "She ought to have known what the Queen would do. England is peppered all over with monuments to the Prince Consort, but there was none at Frogmore."

A familiar Cambridge anecdote of Prof. Cayley is that in his demonstrations before a class he wrote 2, said 3, and meant 4.

His daughter chronicles a bit of shrewd observation in a recent letter. At the time of the birth of the little Duke of York, he said he could hardly rejoice to see a third male heir to the throne come into the world. For his part, he preferred a woman sovereign.

Prof. Cayley was at one time a great pedestrian, and used to go every summer to Keswick. Those who have had the good fortune to climb Skiddaw and Blencathara with him, know how delightful he was on the path. But to enjoy

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his companionship and to keep him at ease--he was very shy--you had to have that rare social quality, the gift of intelligent silence.

You are in error as to his family. He leaves a widow, with two children, a daughter and a son. Henry Cayley was a wrangler of the same year as Philippa Fawcett. He did very well in his class, but, it is needless to say, was outdistanced by that brilliant young woman.

MARY AUGUSTA SCOTT.

BALTIMORE. January 31.

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