

that Wells ever gave much attention to statistics, much less an enthusiastic endorsement."

However, in 1931 H. G. Wells published his encyclopaedic treatise on *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, in which he discussed the possibility of a rationally organized economic system. He considered that some people "will attempt to substitute a confused vision of romantic incoherence, a distorted and foreshortened continuation of the past two thousand years, for this plain prospect of a world with an adequate system of book-keeping. But the movement of the last hundred years is all in favour of the statistician" [Wells 1931, Vol. 1, 432].

On the following page, he wrote that "This prospect of a proper accounting in human affairs presupposes certain things. It presupposes a vigorous extension of scientific enquiry into the field of business, the development of a powerful body of scientific workers in the social and economic field that such institutions as the London School of Economics foreshadow."

Thus, Wells did publicly endorse statistics as an important and useful field of study.

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Professor Tankard replies:

I am glad to know of this statement by Wells. I consulted two of his biographers in doing my research and neither of them knew of a place where Wells wrote specifically of statistics. Realizing that such a statement could exist, however, I qualified my statement with the phrase "It now appears."

ON THE FORGOTTEN MR. VINCENT

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In their recent paper, "On the forgotten theorem of Mr. Vincent," Akritas and Danielopoulos [1978] discuss a theorem which they state was "published in 1836 by a mathematician known only as Mr. Vincent." Although Vincent is not mentioned in several of the more well-known reference books, some details of his

life and work can be found in Volumes 2 and 3 of Poggendorff's *Biographisch-Literarisches Handwörterbuch zur Geschichte der exacten Wissenschaften* [1863-]. This monumental work--still being published--is invaluable for research on both well-known and obscure mathematicians and scientists.

The man in question was Alexandre Joseph Hidulphe Vincent, born 20 November 1797 at Hesdin (Pas-de-Calais). The Poggendorff entries include material from Quérard [1827-1839], Vapereau [1858 and later editions] and the *Mémorial de l'Association des anciens élèves de l'École normale* [1877]. Quérard states that Vincent's principal work was his *Cours de géométrie élémentaire* [1826] and that it is more complete and better coordinated than the work of Legendre [1794] which was followed in the majority of French Colleges at that time. Vincent's book reached a sixth edition and a German version was also published. Vincent also wrote a shortened version [1836b] as well as a small book on arithmetic and algebra [1833a].

The paper [1833b, 1836a] cited by Akritas and Danielopoulos had a sequel [1838] which was also published in both the *Mémoires de la Société royale de Lille* and the *Journal de Mathématiques Pures et Appliquées*, and I am informed by Ivor Grattan-Guinness that a related paper was published by A. H. Desboves [1854].

Vincent wrote at least thirty other papers on a wide variety of topics, including: logarithms of negative numbers, errors involved in calculating by logarithms, calculations of sine tables and of π , crystallisation of minerals, atomic theory, Watt's parallelogram, cycloids, continued fractions, acoustics, etc. Some other papers indicate that he was also interested in the history of mathematics. Twenty-eight of Vincent's papers are listed in the *Royal Society Catalogue* [1872]; most of these are also given in Poggendorff, but each includes works omitted by the other. In addition, Poggendorff indicates that several more exist, in particular in the *Betreff der Musik der Alten*, *Revue Archéologique*, and *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires*.

In 1820 Vincent became a teacher of physics, chemistry, and natural history at the Collège de Rheims and was later promoted to professor of special mathematics. In 1830 he moved to the Collège Bourbon and then to the Lycée St. Louis in 1831. He was elected a member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in 1850, replacing Biot. He died in Paris on 26 November 1868.

One feels that a detailed examination of Vincent's works would prove worthwhile.

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A HISTORY OF MATHEMATICS COURSE FOR TEACHERS

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