To the Editor, *The Mathematical Gazette*

DEAR SIR,

May I draw attention to a trend in Mathematical Examinations a A and S Levels? Over the years there has been a steady increase i Calculus and Applied Mathematics, with a corresponding decrease i Pure Mathematics.

This may well be sound practice for the majority of boys, but i brings severe drawbacks for the ablest mathematicians. There is no little space for testing Algebra, and sometimes none for testing pur geometry. Yet these two subjects are the best training ground for rea scholars.

Would it not be possible to cater for both schools of thought? Fo instance, at A level, papers 1, 2, 3 on Calculus, Pure, Applied could b compulsory: whilst paper 4 gave a choice 4a Calculus and Applied or 4b Pure Maths.

The most promising boys are I believe suffering under the presen arrangement. They are few in numbers, but important in the future o the country.

Yours faithfully, R. M. CARE

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To the Editor of *The Mathematical Gazette*

DEAR SIR,

For the benefit of readers of the Association's "Second report on th teaching of arithmetic in schools" I append comments on three of it historical statements. Others also, particularly page 28, requir qualifying but too much space would be required.

Page 20, second paragraph, states "Decimal fractions may be said t have been invented in the sixteenth century A.D. by Christoff Rudol but his work does not appear to have been appreciated. Fifty-five year later, in 1585, Stevin published an account ..." This is grossly mis leading. It is well known that Smith's contention that Rudolff invente decimals [**1**] arises from his misconception as to the meaning of the wor "inventor" [**2**]. Most historians [**3**] regard Stevin as the inventor c decimals.

Page 27, third paragraph, states "In 1585 the Dutchman Simo Stevin published a book to popularise decimals and he used two nota tions. The number 123.456 he wrote as

(i) $123'4''5'''6''''$

or

(ii) 123(0)4(1)5(2)6(3)."

Notation (ii) is substantially correct, except that Stevin enclosed hi exponents in complete circles instead of parentheses, but notation (i although similar to that used transitionally by a few subsequent writers was never used by Stevin in any of his published works [**4**]. It is tru that Stevin used the words "primes", "seconds", "thirds" etc., in respec