



Philosophy and Fun of Algebra By Mary Everest Boole (1832-1916)

Mary Everest Boole (1832-1916) was born Mary Everest in England and spent her early years in France. She married mathematician George Boole. She was the author of several works on teaching and teaching mathematics in particular.

This short book, *Philosophy and Fun of Algebra*, is meant to be read by children and introduces algebra and logic. She uses the word “algebra” broadly, defining it as a “method of solving problems by honest confession of one’s ignorance.” Using this definition, Boole introduces, in a conversational manner, the concepts of logic and algebra, illustrating these concepts with stories and anecdotes, often from biblical sources. At times, her discussion seems somewhat mystical, speaking of the imagination and angels as messengers which guide one toward the next step in a logical investigation. Boole ends the book with a reminder that algebra’s essential element is “the habitual registration of the exact limits of one’s knowledge” and a call for the public to keep this principle in mind when encountering any situation. (Summary written by Patricia Oakley)

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