

Lucien Augustus Wait

— Sept. 6, 1913

“We, the members of the University Faculty, desire to place on record an expression of appreciation of the life and services of Lucien Augustus Wait, a detailed report of which was placed on our record on the occasion of his retirement in 1910 (President’s Report, 1909-10, Appendix II, pages VIII and IX.)

“Upon his return from a two years’ journey around the world, he renewed his keen interest in the affairs of the University, in particular of the Department of Mathematics, in the progress it was making in research, and in the welfare of its members. We shall all miss his kindly sympathy and helpful encouragement. We express our sorrow and extend our sympathy to the bereaved family of our late associate and friend.”

G. P. Bristol, E. L. Nichols, V. Snyder

Source: Records, p. 609, October 15, 1913

RETIREMENT STATEMENT

On the retirement of Professor Lucien Augustus Wait from active teaching after a long and successful career, his colleagues in the University Faculty desire to place on record their high estimate of his services to the cause of education and sound learning.

Called in 1870 to an Assistant Professorship in the Department of Mathematics in the third year of its history, fresh from study at Harvard, he bore an important part in shaping the policy of the Department, and in establishing its well-known high standards. His unusual ability as a teacher and organizer led to his promotion in 1877 to the Associate Headship of the Department, relieving Professor Oliver of much of the administrative work ; and he became sole head at Professor Oliver’s death in 1895.

His administration has always been notable for efficiency, harmony, and devotion to high ideals of scholarship. In planning the mathematical instruction, he has kept steadily in view its various aims and purposes, including intellectual discipline, preparation for the scientific professions or for work in pure science, and the training of teachers and investigators. How well he has succeeded in the difficult task of holding an even balance among the diverse interests is well-known to all who have had any personal concern in the matter. On the disciplinary side, he has been careful to have the instruction of every grade placed upon a sound logical basis; on the scientific side, while keeping in close touch with the related departments in the College of Arts and Sciences, he has also studied

the needs of the various professional Colleges; and in the interests of prospective teachers he has always given due prominence to the pedagogical side of the work.

A notable feature of his administration is the encouragement he has given to the research work of his younger colleagues and of the graduate students. He has always planned that each instructor, after his initiatory period, should take some share in the graduate work, and should not be so overburdened as to leave him no time for his private investigations. Professor Wait has also encouraged the preparation of suitable text-books, being ever eager to adopt progressive methods of presentation and instruction, and has himself set an example of thoroughness and effectiveness in the class-room.

While firm in enforcing the rules and standards of the Department, his unfailing courtesy is proverbial; and his qualities as a teacher and a man have gained him the warm regard of a long line of Cornell alumni, and of the Faculty and Trustees, many of whom are numbered among his former students.

A man of ripe and varied culture, Professor Wait has taken a deep interest in all the educational problems which have come up before the Faculty, and his accustomed attitude has exhibited a fine blending of the progressive and the conservative. We shall miss his genial presence from our meetings, but we hope he may long remain a member of our University community.

Source: Records, p. 494, June 10, 1910