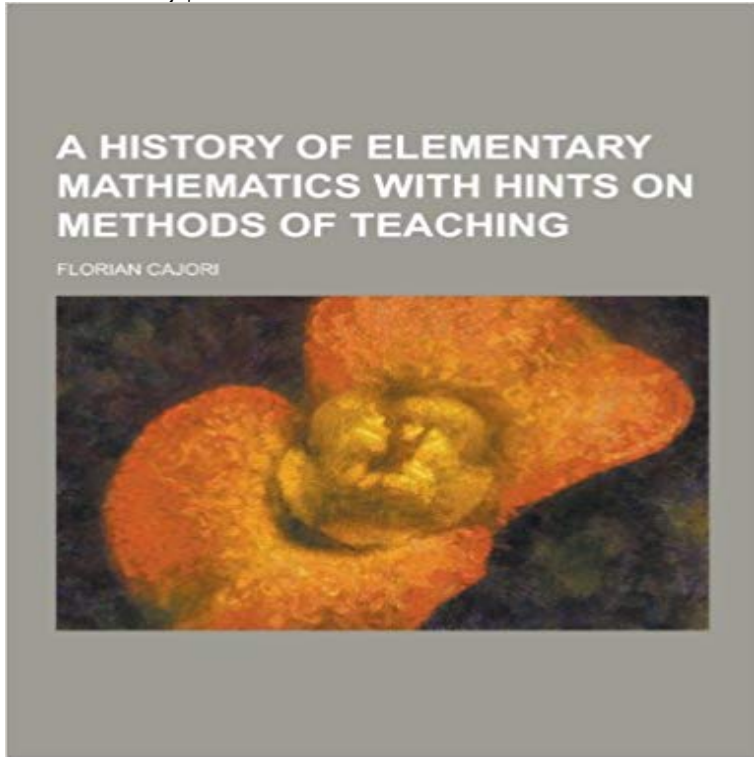


A History of Elementary Mathematics with Hints on Methods of Teaching



This historic book may have numerous typos and missing text. Purchasers can usually download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. Not indexed. Not illustrated. 1897 edition. Excerpt: ... ALGEBRA The Renaissance One of the great steps in the development of algebra during the sixteenth century was the algebraic solution of cubic equations. The honour of this remarkable feat belongs to the Italians.¹ The first successful attack upon cubic equations was made by Scipio Ferro (died in 1526), professor of mathematics at Bologna. He solved cubics of the form $x^3 + mx = n$, but nothing more is known of his solution than that he taught it to his pupil Floridus in 1505. It was the practice in those days and during centuries afterwards for teachers to keep secret their discoveries or their new methods of treatment, in order that pupils might not acquire this knowledge, except at their own schools, or in order to secure an advantage over rival mathematicians by proposing problems beyond their reach. This practice gave rise to many disputes on the priority of inventions. One of the most famous of these quarrels arose in connection with the discovery of cubics, between Tartaglia and Cardan. In 1530 one Colla proposed to Tartaglia several problems, one leading to the equation $x^3 + px^2 = q$. The latter found an imperfect method of resolving this, made known his success, but kept 1 The geometric solution had been given previously by the Arabs. 224 his solution secret. This led Ferros pupil Floridus to proclaim his knowledge of how to solve $a^3 + mx = n$. Tartaglia challenged him to a public contest to take place Feb. 22, 1535. Meanwhile he worked hard, attempting to solve other cases of cubic equations, and finally succeeded, ten days before the appointed date, in mastering the case $X^3 = mx - f n$. At the contest each man proposed 30 problems. The one who should be able

to solve the greater number within fifty days was to be the victor....

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