



Spinning tops, the 'operatives lecture' of the British association

John Perry

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This historic book may have numerous typos and missing text. Purchasers can download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. Not indexed. Not illustrated. 1908 Excerpt: ...except one, it is easy to calculate that unknown element. Usually what we aim at in such a calculation is the determination of the moon's mass, as this phenomenon of precession and the action of the tides are the only two natural phenomena which have as yet enabled the moon's mass to be calculated. I do not mean to apologize to you for the introduction of such terms as Moment of Inertia, nor do I mean to explain them. In this lecture I have avoided, as much as I could, the introduction of mathematical expressions and the use of technical terms. But I want you to understand roughly, the Inertia or Mass of a body expresses its resistance to change of mere translational velocity, whereas, the Moment of Inertia of a body expresses its resistance to change of rotational velocity. I stand that I am not afraid to introduce technical terms when giving a popular lecture. If there is any offence in such a practice, it must, in my opinion, be greatly aggravated by the addition of explanations of the precise meanings of such terms. The use of a correct technical term serves several useful purposes. First, it gives some satisfaction to the lecturer, as it enables him to state, very concisely, something which satisfies his own weak inclination to have his reasoning complete, but which he luckily has not time to trouble his audience with. Second, it corrects the universal belief of all popular audiences that they know everything now that can be said on the subject. Third, it teaches everybody, including the lecturer, that there is nothing lost and often a great deal gained by the adoption of a casual method of skipping when one is working up a new subject. Some years ago it was argued that if the earth were a shell filled with liquid, if this liquid were quite frictionless, th...

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