area or circumference is given. The square may also be used to find the area of an ellipse.

Yours faithfully, G. B. GRAVE

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To the Editor of the *Mathematical Gazette*
Mathematics begins with Inequality

Dear SIR,—The statement of R. C. H. Tanner that " even the most rudimentary language contains comparatives " does not appear to be true. The Bantu languages of Africa are conspicuously lacking in comparatives and superlatives. Clumsy verbal constructions are necessary for comparison. In the local language, Luganda, the usual verb is a metaphor from beating someone in a contest or winning a court case. One thing is bigger than another if it " beats it in size ", and it is biggest of a group if it " wins completely in size ". If it is absolutely clear that you are talking about size, you could talk about one number " beating " another, but if you want to be clear about sentences such as " 12 children are *more* than 5 ", and " 5 children are *better* than 12 ", you would have to use the full construction.

On the other hand, there are straightforward concepts approximating to " equals ", " add " (or " marry "), " take ", " share ", " count ", etc

Yours truly, ARTHUR FRENCH

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To the Editor of the *Mathematical Gazette*

DEAR SIR,—Whilst strenuously upholding the freedom, indeed the duty, of a reviewer to say what he believes I feel that your recent review of the O.E.E.C. publications on school mathematics should not pass without comment. The working parties which were gathered together were composed of authorities from many countries whose qualifications it would be hard to surpass, and bearing in mind the international standing of this journal it would be a pity if readers in Europe thought that teachers in England accept the criticisms made by your reviewer without dissent. Far from agreeing that the proposals are " extreme and eccentric " a number of us believe that they are the most important guide to teaching policy in mathematics to be published in recent years, and that they indicate the general direction which needed reforms should take. We cannot see that their main purpose is only to advance the starting point of the University course, rather we think they should be used to enrich the mathematical life of the majority of pupils. Agreement in principle, of course, does not imply support for every detail.

It is true that many English readers will find insufficient reasons for some of the specific topics which they propose to include in future syllabuses, but it is untrue that these topics merely reflect the research