

we may without loss of generality suppose that the two parallel line segments PP' , QQ' have a common right bisector."

Yours faithfully,
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DEAR SIR,—I wonder whether any reader of the *Gazette* would help me with the following question.

A perfectly flexible inextensible string of length L is thrown down at random on a horizontal table. It is assumed that the form of the string is represented by $x = x(s)$, $y = y(s)$, these functions possessing derivatives of all orders for $0 < s < L$. The experiment is repeated many times. What is the average value of the rectilinear distance between the ends of the string?

In spite of the obvious idealisation involved, this looks like a valid mathematical model of a performable experiment, like the famous experiment of the Comte de Buffon (cf. T. H. O'Beirne, *Puzzles and Paradoxes*, Oxford University Press (1965), p. 193). But do we actually have here a well-stated mathematical problem? And, if so, what is the answer?

Yours faithfully,
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DEAR SIR,—Mr. J. P. Marchant's article in the October, 1967 issue of the *Mathematical Gazette* was certainly friendly and frank. I hope I will not be thought unfriendly if I add that its attitude was that of a 20th Century Luddite.

I too have been deeply involved in computer education for the past five years but, unlike Mr. Marchant, I am greatly excited by the prospects of computer education. I hope that, in this country, it develops to a stage where we can be confident that we are giving our students an education likely to enable each of them to make their maximum contribution to society, not only in this decade but in the last three decades of this century and beyond.

I agree with Mr. Marchant's aims "to instil a high standard of morality and sense of duty", . . . "to teach growing people to think clearly and to be able to communicate clearly", these are thoroughly laudable ideals shared by many enthusiasts for computer education and I fail to see how computer education comes to be linked in Mr. Marchant's mind with a lack of morality and sense of duty.

"Quality of work" and "tenacity of labour" are two more widely accepted ideals which Mr. Marchant mentions. What could be of a higher quality than a well-written, well-conceived, skilfully programmed,