

Göttingen, March 3, 1964

Dear Professor Mordell:

Thank you for the copy of your review of Lang's book. When I first saw this book, about a year ago, I was disgusted with the way in which my own contributions to the subject had been disfigured and made unintelligible. My feeling is very well expressed when you mention Rip van Winkle!

The style of the author contradicts the sense for simplicity and honesty which we admire in the works of the masters in number theory — Lagrange, Gauss or, on a smaller scale, Hardy, Landau. Just now Lang has published another book on algebraic numbers which, in my opinion, is still worse than the former one. I see a pig broken into a beautiful garden and rooting up all flowers and trees.

Unfortunately there are many "fellow-travelers" who have already disgraced a large part of algebra and function theory; however, until now, number theory had not been touched. These people remind me of the impudent behaviour of the national socialists who sang: "Die werden weiter marschieren, bis alles in Scherben zerfällt!"

I am afraid that mathematics will perish before the end of this century if the present trend for senseless abstraction — I call it: Theory of the empty set — cannot be blocked up. Let us hope that your review may be helpful.

I still remember the nice time we had together during your visit in Göttingen.

With best wishes, also to Mrs. Mordell,

Carl Siegel