

Richard, Louis Paul Émile | Encyclopedia.com

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(*b.* Rennes, France, 31 March 1795; *d.* Paris, France, 11 March 1849)

mathematics.

Richard, the son of a lieutenant colonel in the artillery, was the eldest of four children. A physical impediment resulting from an accident prevented him from pursuing a military career, and he began teaching in 1814 as *maître d'Étude* at the *lycée* in Douai. There he became friendly with the student A. J. H. Vincent, who became a historian of Greek Mathematics and member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. The two friends later met again in Paris, where they held similar posts.

In 1815 Richard was appointed professor of the *Sixième* at the Collège de Pontivy. He became professor of special mathematics the following year. In 1820 he was called to Paris to teach elementary mathematics at the Collège Louis-le-Grand, and in 1822 he was given a chair of special mathematics, which he held until his death.

During this period virtually the only concern of secondary-school mathematics teachers in France was to prepare students for the entrance examination for the École Polytechnique. For this purpose, three classes were sufficient: preparatory, elementary, and, finally, special classes. Richard taught the latter class with extraordinary distinction. No program was imposed. Richard, rising above the routine, gave instruction in the principal modern theories, including the new geometry introduced by Poncelet. He was one of Poncelet's most fervent supporters, and when, in 1846, a chair of higher geometry was created at the Sorbonne for Michel Chasles, Richard was one of his most diligent auditors.

Richard stayed abreast of advances in mathematics, with which he constantly enriched his courses. The exercises he propounded were zealously investigated by his students. Of the many distinguished scientists whom he trained, the most famous, [Evariste Galois](#), attended his class in 1828–1829. His students also included Le Verrier, J. A. Serret, and especially Hermite, to whom Richard entrusted the manuscripts of Galois's student exercises.

Richard never married.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Despite the entreaties of his friends, Richard published nothing. On his life and work, see the notice by Olry Terquem, in *Nouvelles annales de mathématiques*, **8** (1849), 448–451.

Jean Itard