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June Barrow-Green* (june.barrow-green@open.ac.uk), Faculty of Mathematics, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA, United Kingdom, and **Reinhard Siegmund-Schultze** (reinhard.siegmund-schultze@uia.no), Faculty of Engineering and Science, University of Agder, Serviceboks 422, 4604 Kristiansand, Norway. *“The first man whom you meet on the street”*: tracing back a well-known quotation by Hilbert. Preliminary report.

In his famous lecture at the ICM in Paris in 1900, David Hilbert included a quotation on mathematical understanding which he attributed to “an old French mathematician” but with no hint as to whom he meant. This talk will discuss the quotation and describe the journey taken to trace its origin, a journey which starts in Paris and ends up—via Bradford and Brussels—in Montpellier, and passes by some misattributions along the way. (Received September 20, 2015)