

THE MATHEMATICAL MAGPIE

Being more stories, mainly transcendental,
plus subjects of essays, rhymes, music, anecdotes,
epigrams, and other prime oddments and
diversions, rational and irrational, all derived
from the infinite domain of mathematics.

Compiled and edited by
Clifton Fadiman



COPERNICUS
AN IMPRINT OF SPRINGER-VERLAG

Contents



CARTOON <i>by Abner Dean</i>	x
<i>Introduction by</i> CLIFTON FADIMAN	xii

I. A SET OF IMAGINARIES

CARTOON <i>by Alan Dunn</i>	2
THE FEELING OF POWER <i>by Isaac Asimov</i>	3
THE LAW <i>by Robert M. Coates</i>	15
THE APPENDIX AND THE SPECTACLES <i>by Miles J. Breuer, M.D.</i>	20
PAUL BUNYAN VERSUS THE CONVEYOR BELT <i>by William Hazlett Upson</i>	33
THE PACIFIST <i>by Arthur C. Clarke</i>	36
THE HERMENEUTICAL DOUGHNUT <i>by H. Nearing, Jr.</i>	48
STAR, BRIGHT <i>by Mark Clifton</i>	70
FYI <i>by James Blish</i>	97
THE VANISHING MAN <i>by Richard Hughes</i>	107
THE NINE BILLION NAMES OF GOD <i>by Arthur C. Clarke</i>	111

II. COMIC SECTIONS

THREE MATHEMATICAL DIVERSIONS <i>by Raymond Queneau</i>	121
1—An Exercise in Style: Mathematical	121
2—On the Aerodynamic Properties of Addition	124
3—The Geometrical Disappearance of Dino	125

CONTENTS

THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF FIGURES <i>by Corey Ford</i>	127
A, B, AND C—THE HUMAN ELEMENT IN MATHEMATICS <i>by Stephen Leacock</i>	131
CARTOON <i>by Johnny Hart</i>	136
A NOTE ON THE EINSTEIN THEORY <i>by Max Beerbohm</i>	137
THE ACHIEVEMENT OF H. T. WENSEL <i>by H. Allen Smith</i>	141
NEEDED: FEMININE MATH (with an Addendum from <i>The New Yorker</i> on Culver City Arithmetic) <i>by Parke Cummings</i>	143
CARTOON <i>by Alfred Frueh</i>	145
TWO EXTRACTS <i>by Mark Twain</i>	146
MATHEMATICS FOR GOLFERS <i>by Stephen Leacock</i>	148
THE MATHEMATICIAN'S NIGHTMARE: THE VISION OF PROFESSOR SQUAREPUNT <i>by Bertrand Russell</i>	153
MILO AND THE MATHEMAGICIAN <i>by Norton Juster</i>	159

III. IRREGULAR FIGURES

CARTOON <i>by Saul Steinberg</i>	178
SIXTEEN STONES <i>by Samuel Beckett</i>	179
O'BRIEN'S TABLE <i>by J. L. Synge</i>	186
THE ABOMINABLE MR. GUNN <i>by Robert Graves</i>	191
COCONUTS <i>by Ben Ames Williams</i>	196
EUCLID AND THE BRIGHT BOY <i>by J. L. Synge</i>	215
THE PURSE OF FORTUNATUS <i>by Lewis Carroll</i>	219
CARTOON <i>by Saul Steinberg</i>	222
THE SYMBOLIC LOGIC OF MURDER <i>by John Reese</i>	223

IV. SIMPLE HARMONIC MOTIONS

CARTOON <i>by James Frankfort</i>	240
THE SQUARE OF THE HYPOTENUSE <i>Music by Saul Chaplin</i> <i>Lyrics by Johnny Mercer</i>	241

THE TA TA	245
<i>Music by Joseph Charles Holbrooke</i>	
<i>Jingles by Sidney H. Sime</i>	
V. DIVIDENDS AND REMAINDERS	
CARTOON <i>by Saul Steinberg</i>	252
APOTHEMS <i>from G. C. Lichtenberg, S. J. Lec, G. Polya,</i> <i>Lewis Carroll, Jules Renard, George Orwell, Goethe,</i> <i>Winston Churchill, J. B. Mencken, A. De Morgan,</i> <i>Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, Bill Mortlock, Anon-</i> <i>ymous</i>	253
A SUBSET OF ANECDOTES <i>from A. De Morgan, Thomas</i> <i>Jefferson Hogg, George Gamow, W. W. R. Ball,</i> <i>Simon Newcomb, Elliot Paul, A. J. Lohwater</i>	257
A LITTLE NURSERY MATHEMATICS <i>from Iona and Peter</i> <i>Opie, Frederick Winsor, L. A. Graham</i>	262
A QUADRINOMIAL OF POEMS	265
To a Missing Member of a Family Group of Terms in an Algebraical Formula <i>by J. J. Sylvester</i>	265
Portrait of a Mathematician <i>by Christopher Morley</i>	266
From <i>The Dunciad</i> <i>by Alexander Pope</i>	266
Geometry <i>by William Wordsworth</i>	266
SURD AND ABSURD	269
Me <i>by Hilbert Schenck, Jr.</i>	269
CARTOON <i>by Leo Demaré</i>	270
Song of the Screw—Anonymous	271
The Modern Hiawatha—Author Unknown	273
The Loves of the Triangles <i>by John Hookham Frere and</i> George Canning	274
The Mathematician in Love <i>by W. J. M. Rankine</i>	276
$E = mc^2$ <i>by Morris Bishop</i>	278
Engineer's Yell—Author Unknown	278
Rhymes <i>by Algebra by William Whewell and Stephen Barr</i>	279
Note on θ , ϕ , and ψ <i>by Michael Roberts</i>	279
A Song Against Circles <i>by R. P. Lister</i>	281

CONTENTS

Wockyjabber by Hilbert Schenck, Jr.	281
Einstein: A Parody in the Manner of Edw-n Markh-m by Louis Untermeyer	282
Tending to Infinity by J. L. Synge	283
The Superlative Degree by Earnest Elmo Calkins	283
The Magic Box by W. R. Baker	283
The Kiss Precise by Frederick Soddy	284
The Kiss Precise (generalized) by Thorold Gosset	285
The Hexlet by Frederick Soddy	286
Short Cuts to Success by Ronald A. Knox	287
A GROUP OF LIMERICKS	289
The Young Lady Named Bright by A. H. Reginald Buller, F. R. S.	289
There Was an Old Man Who Said, "Do . . ."—Author Unknown	290
Snip, Snip by Hilbert Schenck, Jr.	290
CARTOON by <i>Paul Peter Porgés</i>	291
The Young Man of Sid. Sussex by Arthur C. Hilton	292
Pun in Orbit by Hilbert Schenck, Jr.	292
A Mathematician Confided—Author Unknown	292
A Mathematician Named Klein—Author Unknown	293
THREE RANDOM POINTS	294
The Map of England and the Absolute by George Santa- yana	294
Cupid with an Adding Machine by Charles D. Rice	296
The Miniver Problem by Jan Struther and L. A. Graham	298