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WILLIAM CHAUVENET¹

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It is eminently fitting that the prize for mathematical exposition recently established by the Mathematical Association of America at the suggestion of its president, Dr. J. L. Coolidge, should bear the name of Chauvenet.² For Professor William Chauvenet, in whose honor this prize was named, had a real genius for exposition and lucid presentation, combined with a power of expression and purity of language unexcelled in American scientific literature. Although Professor Chauvenet's name has lived and will continue to live for many reasons, this new honor to his memory naturally revives an interest in his life and work.

It is therefore very appropriate that a biographical sketch of Professor Chauvenet should be read at this time before a combined meeting of mathematicians, astronomers and members of the History of Science Section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, not only because of the historic value of his work but also because he was one of the first members of this association as well as one of its first presidents.

Professor Chauvenet's father, William Marc Chauvenet, the youngest of ten children, was born in Narbonne, France, in 1790, and, on account of the early death of his parents, was educated by two older brothers who lived in Italy. As secretary to one of these, who at that time was a chief commissary in Napoleon's army in Italy, he spent the early part of his life in that country. While there he had the time and means to cultivate a natural taste for music and literature. However, at the downfall of Napoleon he was forced to look elsewhere for means of support. He then came to Boston, and later to New York, as a partner in a silk importing company. This enterprise failing, he gave up business and bought a farm near Milford, Pike County, Pennsylvania. In the

¹ An address (here somewhat abridged) delivered at a joint session of Sections A, D and L of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Kansas City, December 30, 1925. See SCIENCE, Vol. LXIII, No. 1622 (Jan. 29, 1926), pp. 123, 126, 138.

² See, *The American Mathematical Monthly*, Volume XXXII, No. 8, p. 439.

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