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MATHEMATICIANS, AND POETRY AND DRAMA¹

By Professor RAYMOND CLARE ARCHIBALD

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IN general reading for a number of years I have been interested in accumulating information concerning, firstly, those who had not only achieved something noteworthy in mathematics but had also written verses or dramas; secondly, poems about mathematicians; and thirdly, the numerous incidental citations of mathematicians in poetry by poets of more or less distinction. Such general reading has not been confined to any one language, and translations of poetical or dramatic work of mathematicians were within the scope of my search. The large amount of material collected is in more than a score of languages, from the time of Pythagoras and his "Golden Verses"² down

to the present. It is my purpose to give you some idea of the nature of this material. I am not aware that any one else has previously discussed this general theme.

The relations between poetry and mathematics have been considered by a number of writers;³ but this is

and Golden Verses together with the Life of Hierocles, and his Commentaries upon the Verses. Collected out of the choicest manuscripts and translated into French, with annotations. By M. Dacier. Now done into English. The Golden Verses translated from the Greek," by N. Rowe. London, 1707. Greek text and Rowe's translation, pp. 149-164 + i-xi. "Pythagoras," a play by Martin Slaughter, was first acted in London in 1596.

³ E. J. Wilczynski, "Poetry and Mathematics," *The University Chronicle*, 3: 191-204, 1900; read at the annual meeting of the Science Association May 2, 1900. I. Ionescu, "Matematica si poezia," *Gazeta Matematica*, 17: "Suppliment," pp. 1-3, May 15, 1912. D. E. Smith, (a) "Mathematics and Poetry," Florence, 1922, 8 pp.; (b) "Poetry of Mathematics," *Mathematics Teacher*, 19: 291-296, 1926; (c) "The Poetry of Mathematics and other Essays," New York, 1934, "The Poetry of Mathematics," pp. 1-13; contains practically all of (a). S.

¹ Address of the retiring vice-president and chairman of Section L (Historical and Philological Sciences), American Association for the Advancement of Science, delivered at a joint meeting of Sections A and L, of the American Mathematical Society and of the Mathematical Association of America; illustrated by 22 lantern slides. Richmond, Va., December 28, 1938.

² See, e.g., "The Life of Pythagoras, with his Symbols

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