MATH VERSES *with Twists*

Sidney R. Levine

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P.O. Box 399
41 First Avenue
Unionville, NY 10988-0399
(845) 726-4444
fax: (845) 726-3824
email: mail@rfwp.com
website: rfwp.com

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PREFACE

From the prehistoric time of counting with pebbles to the present sophisticated computer age, people have indulged in mathematical recreation. They do it for the challenge, the mental stimulation, the testing of wits and ingenuity, the relaxation of tensions, and the sense of triumph when achieving a solution. But they also do it just for fun.

This book contains math problems presented in verse, providing excellent material for bright youngsters to sharpen their wits on, school teachers who want to present something novel to their students, and math buffs of every age who like to grapple with clever problems.

Some of the puzzles are favorites in different dress, some are original, some are for beginners, some are for old-timers, and some will serve as a suitable adjunct to math lessons, but all of them are designed to tickle the mathematical fancy of enigmatologists at every level of proficiency. And what's more, math in verse could, to turn a phrase, make one versed in math.

The appeal of these puzzles has to do not just with the brain teasing that they promote but also with how they are presented. At the core of mathematics is a beat, a rhythm, an order, and a sequence—the same ingredients often found in poetry. Thus, the presentation of math problems in verse form is perhaps only natural. Versification adds to the attraction and enjoyment of mathematical puzzles, but it will also multiply the number of enthusiasts for those puzzles—and may their tribe increase.

1. THE INSECURE TRIANGLE

Can you conceive a triangle talking?
It's fantastic to be sure.
Just imagine that one is speaking,
Telling why it's insecure.

"I'm a simple isosceles triangle
With equal sides thirteen inches in length.
If my ten-inch base were longer,
I'd have more stability and strength.

"Keeping my area unchanged, however,
Is the only condition I require.
Do you think that you'd be able
To help me realize my desire?"

2. THE DURABLE DIGITS

Suppose you had an assignment
For a problem to be solved,
And in the data given verbally
Three digits were involved.

But you simply couldn't remember,
No matter how you tried,
Whether the figures given
Were to be added or multiplied.

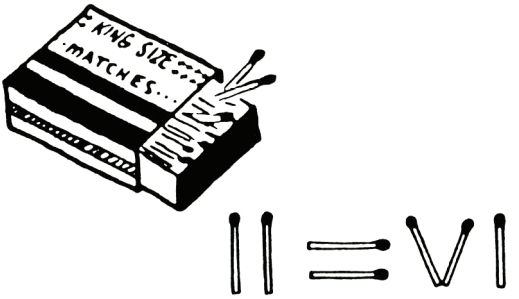
But you noticed in a moment that
There's no difference in effect.
Can you figure which three digits
Act in this respect?

3. A MATCHED EQUATION

A man with unequaled qualities
Could be called a matchless guy,
But if one is without any matches,
That term could also apply.

You perhaps should go and get some,
It'd be well to suggest,
Because to try the following problem
With matches it is best.

The arrangement that is shown below
Is deliberately falsified.
Can you make a simple equation true
By moving one match to the other side?



4. THE BACTERIA COUNT

Bacteria are known to multiply
At an astounding rate.
So just imagine one of them
By itself upon a plate.

It doubles every second till full
When a minute has elapsed.
But when the plate has filled just half,
How many seconds will have passed?

5. THE POSTAL REGULATION

A post office regulation in Moravia
You may not be aware of
Is worth knowing because the following
May arise for you to take care of.

No article may be shipped there
Whose largest dimension exceeds three feet.
This requirement causes much hardship;
For many it's difficult to meet.

Suppose you have a five-foot fishing pole.
To someone there you wish to send it.
How can you possibly ship the thing
And still not have to bend it?