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Limericks on the "Century of Genius"

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<She writes on board.> 1 pp/M, 15 poms, 3 pt o.oil, 5# om, 5# che/EmC; 5 yd wht lin, 8 yd gy cot /WRM; see AG/bbsit Wed., ret/Ms rpin.

D: "So, what's that supposed to mean?"

W: "It says: one papyrus from Millitonius' Officius Maximumis. Fifteen pomegranates, three pints of olive oil, five pounds of oatmeal, and five pounds of cheese from Emporium Centrius. Five yards of white linen cloth and eight yards of gray cotton cloth from West Ridge Mallius. See if Annalisa Galivantius will baby sit while I go to Alter Guild meeting on Wednesday. Return Matilda's rolling pin. Now, how would you feel if I wrote that all out in complete and logical sentences? I'd use paper as fast as you do, instead of just a scrap now and then!"

D: "I see what you mean. It is a bit shorter your way. Let me work on this a bit. I guess instead of writing 'the unknown quantity' I could write 'x' and instead of 'the unknown quantity squared' I could write 'x^2.'"

W: "Well that's a start, but I hope you can improve on it some more."
(END TAPE)

"This has been a 'Future Historical Figure' report, live from Alexandria. Egypt. I am Gofar A'Field saying good bye for all of the Good Morning Empire staff and reporters. Stay tuned for your local news."

Limericks on the "Century of Genius"
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In the century of genius they reigned,
When great strides in Math were gained.
From 16- to 1720
Arose brilliant minds o'plenty,
'Though things 'tween church and reason were strained.

Galileo (1564-1642)
Galileo found great hope
In improving the telescope.
With Rome he disputed,
When Ptolemy he refuted,
But, later, acquiesced to the Pope.

Kepler (1571-1630)
Kepler was in a nice groove,
When he saw the planets move.
He caused great commotion
With his laws of their motion.
For Ptolemy they did disprove.

Descartes (1596-1650)
A dreamer and egotist was Descartes,
Who gave Cartesianism its start.
Expanding all knowledge from
His "Cogito ergo sum,"
He took all opposition to heart.

Fermat (1601-1665)
Probability's founder was Fermat.
Far from calculus he was not.
But he was socially unsmart
And ticked off Descartes,
'Though it was his advice he sought.

Pascal (1623-1662)
Pascal. Fermat's false friend.
Much time with vacuums he would spend.
His math machine we adore,
The triangle, press, and more.
He was lost to religion in the end.

Newton (1642-1727)
Newton was a prideful man,
Thinking calculus alone he began.
'Though his theories on light
Were not perfectly right,
Discovering gravitation was grand.

Leibnitz (1646-1716)
Towards Leibnitz was Newton quite spiteful.
Who was calculus' founder rightful?
Pick whomever you want.
Leibnitz influenced Kant,
And his theories of monads were insightful.

Bernoulli (1654-1705)
Notable for calculus were truly
James and brother John Bernoulli.
Also Daniel, John's son,
Was a capable one.
The conservation of energy he proved coolly.

Those mathematicians reigned supreme,
Who had the courage to dream.
Had I my druthers,
They'd all be my brothers,
And I'd be on a winning team.

News Extra: Ancient Document Discovered

"Could be the greatest find of all time if validated" says professor

by Shawn Dolezilek
The Associated Press

Members of the Archeology Department at Kansas State University held a news conference yesterday, describing the first translations of an ancient document discovered six months ago at a dig site just outside of Alexandria, Egypt.

"We knew we had something special as soon as we dug it up, but we wanted to be absolutely positive of the translation before we went public," said Edward Wycliffe, head archeologist of the dig which found the document.

The document itself has been carbon dated to 250 A.D., and the author claims to be the ancient mathematician Diophantus. In the document, he describes a "dream" he had about a particular mathematical problem. The extraordinary part of the document, and the controversial part, is the particulars of the dream. These first translators find evidence of specific sequences where he appears to be describing several modern concepts and appliances.

"If this holds up, these descriptions make Nostradamus look like a side-show fortune teller," says prophecy expert Dan Drieffen.

The panel at the news conference noted that many copies had been sent to translation experts and the original copies to the Smithsonian for further scrutiny.

"We have no doubts our results will be validated," said Wycliffe. "And, when they are, we will be forced to take a serious look at ideas about the nature of time that we have previously found laughable."

THE DOCUMENT
Even now, these many years after I was smitten by my dream, it comes back to me as if I were still there. The otherworldly sights and putrid smells of my dream would have been enough to scare lesser men to death, but what I learned from my dream scares me even more. I have forced myself to call what happened a dream, for if I do not, the logical implications would have driven me to madness long ago. Or, at the very least, if I had tried to describe this scene to my contemporaries, I surely would have been laughed out of the Museum. Lying here, knowing now that I have per-

haps days, or maybe mere hours left to live does not lessen the sense of fright and wonderment I felt, oh, those many years ago.

I write this text more as an open letter to myself, in an effort to exorcize the memories of that day before I go forth on the Great Journey. After I have finished this and have died, my servants are to bury this a goodly distance from my wonderful city of Alexandria. I hope that time will claim this letter before it is ever found, but if any sons of the Roman Empire, many generations hence, find this work and wonder from whence it came, I am so obliged to tell who I am, and why my story is credible.

I am Diophantus of Alexandria, respected scholar and mathematician of the Museum at Alexandria, the same Museum the likes of the great Euclid and Eratosthenes taught at during the days of Greek primacy. Surely, my contributions to mathematics have been important enough that, provided this letter is ever found, my name will make my tale credible.

Even now, some fifty years after the fact, I still try to make sense of all