

## A MATHEMATICAL FANTASY

BY ELIZABETH B. COWLEY  
*Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

PLACE: The living room of the Jones home.

TIME: 4:30 Wednesday afternoon, November 9, 1932.

At the right Ray is seated at a desk studying; Mrs. Jones sewing at left.

RAY. (*Suddenly looking up*) I am tired of studying. Why does a teacher ask a class to write essays about high school studies? They have no value. I know that the world would get along just as well without history and chemistry; and I would like to live in a world where there is no mathematics. (*Yawning*) I am too tired to do anything but sleep and dream. (*Puts his head down on the desk*)

Lights go off and then come on again at once. There is a loud noise outside and a rapping at the door. Mrs. Jones opens the door.

TOWN CRIER. (*Enters ringing a bell, swinging a lantern, and unrolling a scroll*) Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye! All forms and kinds of mathematics are banished now and for all time to come. Anyone found using any mathematics shall be beheaded. All clocks, calendars, money, and other devices using numbers are to be confiscated.

Men enter carrying a large basket into which they throw the clock, the calendar, etc., and then follow the town crier as he leaves the room.

MRS. JONES. (*Sinking into a chair*) What does all this mean? I shall telephone to Mr. Jones and ask him. (*She takes down the receiver*) But I cannot telephone, for the numbers have all been taken from the dial.

MICHAEL. (*Bursting into the room shouting*) Oh, Mother, this is great. No school for a long time. The teachers must destroy all textbooks in arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and bookkeeping; and take the dates and other numbers out of history, geography, physics, and chemistry; and the page and chapter numbers from all—

FRANK. (*Rushing in carrying a football suit*) Here, stop that, will you? This is no fun for me. We cannot play football, for there are no numbers for signals; and all schedules are cancelled.

FRANCIS. (*Enters hurriedly*) Someone come and help me find my car. All license plates have been destroyed. I started to unlock a car I thought was mine, but a fellow knocked me down and said it was his.

EUGENE. (*Enters ringing his hands*) How shall I finish building my airplane? All my measuring implements are gone.

MORRIS. (*Enters panting*) Well, here I am. Am I late for the party? I had to walk all the way from the East End to the North Side. There are no street cars or taxicabs, because they need numbers.

ARTHUR. (*Enters carrying a bundle*) Oh, I tried on almost every pair of boy's shoes in the store before I could get a pair to fit me. There are no sizes now. The worst of it was that there is no money, and I had to give the clerk my fountain pen, my muffler, and my mackintosh.

PHYLLIS. (*Enters crying*) Oh, please help me to find my home. We moved yesterday to a red brick house with white curtains. It was 2345 Fifth—

CHORUS. (*Shouting*) Hush, you will be beheaded for mentioning those numbers.

LAIRD. (*Enters drumming with his fingers*) I can never play the piano again for there are numbers in the scores.

GUY. (*Following Laird*) Oh, we shall never know who was elected President for no one dares to count the ballots.

MR. JONES. (*Entering wearily*) Our firm has gone out of business. No more engineering work can be done. That big office building and that bridge will never be finished. I do not know how we are to live. Luckily my name was painted on the car, and there was plenty of gas in the tank. I shall drive out to Jim's farm. Perhaps he needs a farm hand and will pay me in eggs, chickens, and vegetables.

HOWARD. (*Enters whistling*) Say, Mother, isn't it dinner time? Oh, where is the clock? I am hungry. Lets have a good dinner.

MRS. JONES. We cannot cook until we get some coal and a coal stove. The gas is turned off because the meter is gone. It had numbers. We have some bread and butter and a few cold boiled potatoes left from yesterday.

ALL TOGETHER. Cold boiled potatoes!

The lights go off for a minute. When the lights come on, the clock is in its place and all have left except Ray.

RAY. (*Raising his head and stretching his arms*) Why, the clock is there. It is five o'clock. I must get to work at once and write that essay about the value of Mathematics in our daily life. Wow, that was a terrible dream I had. Oh, how good that supper smells!