



SCIENCE IN ART

A Display of the Arts and Sciences in 1698

by E. C. WATSON

AS ENGRAVER TO Louis XIV, Sebastien Le Clerc (1637-1714) illustrated most of the early publications of the Académie des Sciences, and his engravings constitute a contemporary pictorial record of the Academy's personnel, apparatus, meetings and proceedings from 1670 to 1714 that is not only unique but also remarkable in its amount and in its accuracy.

Trained and practiced as an engineer as well as an engraver, a lifelong student of physics, geometry and perspective, a minutely painstaking and precise draughtsman, Le Clerc was able to depict the work of the Academy and its various scientific instruments with the greatest fidelity and understanding. His work affords an excellent example of the effective use of scientific

material by the artist, as well as of the values of art in recording and humanizing scientific achievements.

The engraving reproduced on this page was executed by Le Clerc in 1698, at the time when the Académie was being reorganized and was moving its collection of apparatus and its equipment to new quarters in the Louvre. It is considered to be Le Clerc's best work and is notable not only for the accuracy and fidelity with which the various scientific instruments are delineated, but also for the number and variety of the subjects, their distribution and grouping, the handling of the composition. As an engraving showing the state of scientific technic at the close of an epoch it has probably never been surpassed.

One of a series of articles devoted to reproductions of prints, drawings and paintings of interest in the history of science—drawn from the famous collection of E. C. Watson, Professor of Physics and Dean of the Faculty of the California Institute.