This report is intended to be the first one of a series dealing with the behavior of certain nonlinear physical systems where the nonlinearity is introduced as a perturbation to a primarily linear problem. The behavior of the systems is to be studied for times which are long compared to the characteristic periods of the corresponding linear problems.

The problems in question do not seem to admit of analytic solutions in closed form, and heuristic work was performed numerically on a fast electronic computing machine (MANIAC I at Los Alamos).* The ergodic behavior of such systems was studied with the primary aim of establishing, experimentally, the rate of approach to the equipartition of energy among the various degrees of freedom of the system. Several problems will be considered in order of increasing complexity. This paper is devoted to the first one only.

We imagine a one-dimensional continuum with the ends kept fixed and with forces acting on the elements of this string. In addition to the usual linear term expressing the dependence of the force on the displacement of the element, this force contains higher order terms. For

*We thank Miss Mary Tsingou for efficient coding of the problems and for running the computations on the Los Alamos MANIAC machine.

630 003