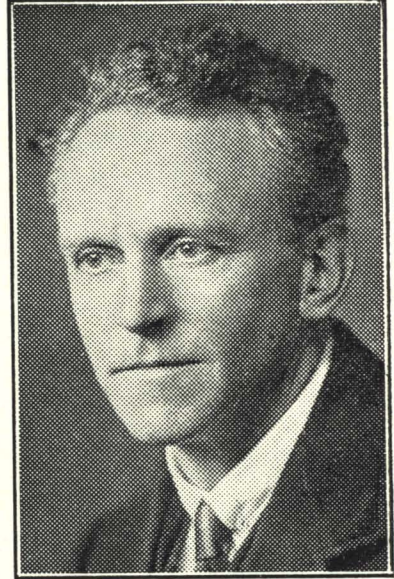


Professor D. M. Y. Sommerville

DUNCAN McLAREN YOUNG SOMMERVILLE, a son of the Rev. James Sommerville, was born at Bewar, Rajputana, India, in 1879. He was educated in Scotland first at Perth Academy and then at St. Andrew's University. His wide interests both literary and scientific showed themselves early. After a most brilliant academic career he was appointed lecturer in the Mathematics Department at St. Andrew's, and held that position till his appointment in 1915 as professor of pure and applied mathematics at Victoria University College, Wellington, New Zealand. In 1905 he was awarded the degree of D.Sc. for a thesis on Topology in Non-Euclidean Space. He was later elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, Fellow of



of the New Zealand Institute, and in 1928 was awarded the Hector medal for his researches in non-Euclidean geometry. While interested in all branches of mathematics and astronomy, he had altogether unusual ability in geometry. In a sympathetic notice in "Nature," Professor H. W. Turnbull concludes: "There has passed from Scotland one who had already become her leading geometer of the present century."

Professor Sommerville was the kindest and most unassuming of men. As a teacher and lecturer he was extremely lucid, and sympathised with the difficulties of the ordinary students. His lectures and text books are models of exposition. It was amazing the amount of extra work he was able to achieve both in elegant summaries of existing knowledge and in original work. His "Elements of Non-Euclidean Geometry" (1914) and "Analytical Conics" (1928) are both on the select list of the "Mathematical Association." His "Introduction to the Geometry of n Dimensions" (1929) and "Analytical Geometry of Three Dimensions" (1934), of both of which works I had the pleasure of reading the proofs, are remarkable expositions of difficult subjects. He had the pleasure of seeing the last book in the press before he died. Of this last book an able review in the Nottingham Guardian says: "Students will find it absorbingly interesting and exhaustive." In the Cambridge Review Professor H. F. Baker, probably the greatest living geometer in England, says: "The volume under review is one which must

gladden the heart of anyone who is anxious for the spread of a wider knowledge of solid geometry among English-speaking people.”

Professor Sommerville did not by any means confine himself to mathematics. He was one of the founders of the New Zealand Astronomical Society and its first Secretary. He was Chairman of the Library Committee of Victoria College, and took a deep interest in library affairs. As was natural for a great geometer, he was very skilful with his hands, binding books, constructing geometrical models, and painting very pleasing landscapes. His very fine collection of models has been generously donated to the College by Mrs Sommerville. In honour of his great work for the College, a number of his friends have purchased an important section of his library for the College.

His death at the early age of 54 is an irreparable loss to his many friends, to Victoria College, and to the world of science. To Mrs Sommerville, who had many interests in art and literature in common with him, would we extend our deepest sympathy.

F. F. MILES.

George Malcolm Thomson (1848-1933).

By the death of the Hon. G. M. Thomson, M.L.C., F.L.S., the New Zealand Institute loses one of its oldest members, one who was held in high esteem not only for his genial personality, but also for his keen and active interest in science, especially Natural History.

Born at Calcutta in 1848, he came to New Zealand when he was twenty years of age, and, except for three years, spent the rest of his life in Dunedin. He joined the teaching staff of the Otago High Schools in 1871, and a few years later became the Science Master, teaching both Botany and Chemistry, a position which he occupied from 1877 till 1903. He cared nothing for syllabus or for examinations; his method was such as to excite the real interest in his subject; his aim was to awaken in his pupils a love for Nature, and this he succeeded in doing, both by his work in the classroom and in his walks round the Town Belt. But he had many other interests; he was at a younger age an active football player; and he became a

