

John Edward Aloysius Steggall, M.A., Hon. A.R.I.B.A., LL.D.

PROFESSOR JOHN EDWARD ALOYSIUS STEGGALL died in Dundee on November 26, 1935. He was born in London on November 19, 1855, the son of Dr J. W. B. Steggall, a physician whose family came from East Anglia and from whom the son inherited a love of architecture. He was educated, under the well-known headmaster Dr Abbott, at the City of London School, and afterwards at Trinity College, Cambridge, where in 1877 he gained the Sheepshanks Medal for Astronomy, and in the next year graduated second Wrangler, Hobson being senior. After taking the first Smith's prize Steggall taught for a few terms—at Clifton College (1878-79), next at Owens College, Manchester (1880-83)—and in 1883 was appointed to the Chair of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy at the newly founded University College, Dundee. The responsibility of shouldering the work of two separate departments was considerable, and when in 1895 a redistribution was made he continued as Professor of Pure and Applied Mathematics till he retired in 1933, after attaining his jubilee year of distinguished work in his Dundee post.

Steggall was a brilliant mathematician who carried far into the twentieth century that adaptability and gift of problem solving which used to be such a feature of the Cambridge Mathematical Tripos. The present less spectacular but more solid methods which lay the foundations for prolonged research were scarcely encouraged in those days, and later the full time-table of the early years in Dundee left little opportunity for embarking on such a course. Yet the many papers which Steggall wrote for the Edinburgh Mathematical Society show an incisive neatness which reveal no mean artistic power. His chief interests were in the theory of numbers and kinematical geometry; he was an exceptionally good examiner who maintained an alertness and freshness of outlook to the end.

He was an admirable colleague, and with his students he was popular; one who is now a Professor of Engineering writes: "He sparkled in the many branches of learning which his facile genius enabled him to pursue. He was at home in physics and mathematics, a connoisseur in music and in art—more than a dilettante in architecture—whatever he touched he adorned. . . . It must have been difficult for an intellect such as his to break down the stores of knowledge into fragments suited to our powers of

assimilation. He exercised on us his wit, but, though sometimes caustic, it was never used to humiliate. His encouragement was vitalizing."

His collection of books and engravings, his delicate pen sketches of architectural detail and spreading mountain form, his mathematical models and his craftsmanship in woodwork and photography reveal many interests. He was a keen cyclist, and when sixty-five years of age he rode the five-hundred-mile journey from Dundee to Cardiff to attend the meeting of the British Association. He was a buoyant and entertaining holiday companion.

At Dundee he took an active interest in college, city, and church, in the administrative duties of the University, the Dundee School Board and Educational Authority, and in helping to found the Dundee Social Union. As a man of science he insisted on the importance of fostering the classical and artistic side of education at a college set in a large industrial city.

In 1878 he married Isabella Katherine, the sister of Sir James G. Frazer, O.M. (his college friend at Trinity, Cambridge, who was second classic in the same year of graduation). He is survived by his wife and two daughters. His only son, who was an officer in the Royal Navy, was killed at the Battle of Jutland, 1916.

On vacating his Chair in 1933 he received the honorary degree of LL.D. of St Andrews University. He was also an honorary associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects. An outstanding figure in the life of the youngest college of an ancient University has passed on.

He was elected a Fellow of the Society in 1885.

H. W. T.