

Soc. (2) 42 (1936)). It was Williamson who found a subtle flaw in the existing theory of Hermitian Forms as expounded in research papers and stated in several textbooks including *Canonical Matrices*. This he put right by bringing such forms into line with the signature test that is essential for real quadratic forms: but he generously gave the problem over to his pupil, the late G. Richard Trott, who published the solution in his dissertation for a doctorate. This typical act of his was mentioned to me with appreciation at the 1950 Mathematical Congress by another of his pupils. It was clear that both Williamson and his wife (Lydia Stevenson, who had been a student at St Andrews) had endeared themselves to colleagues and to students in America.

H. W. TURNBULL.

JOHN G. B. MEIKLEJOHN

1872-1951

J. B. MEIKLEJOHN, who died suddenly on 19th January 1951, in his 79th year, was for 52 years a member of the Edinburgh Mathematical Society. He was born on a farm near Thurso and went to school at the Miller Institution, where he later became a pupil teacher. In 1892, after winning a First Class Queen's Scholarship and the Rhind Bursary, he proceeded to Edinburgh University to read Classics. In his second year, however, he was medallist in Professor Chrystal's Junior Class and from then onwards devoted himself to Mathematics.

On graduating M.A., with first class honours, in 1898, he was appointed Assistant Master at Dundee High School. In 1902 he was promoted to be Head of the Department, and he served in this capacity until his retirement in 1938; soon after this he was elected a member of the Board of Directors.

As a teacher he was supreme. Sir Edmund Whittaker once told the present writer that he was the best teacher of Mathematics in the East of Scotland. If there were any doubts as to his rapid promotion to the headship after only four years of teaching, these were soon dispelled, for three years later there began an almost unbroken sequence of highly-placed John Welsh Mathematical Bursars at his old University. His outstanding success as a teacher depended on three things—(1) he

was a first-class mathematician with a great love for his subject; (2) he prepared every lesson with meticulous care; (3) he was a strict disciplinarian.

His teaching was most intensive and there was never a moment of relaxation in any of his classes. No class was ever late in assembling, for awaiting them on the blackboard would be three examples headed "Just Now" and the tawse for anyone who had not submitted one correct example within ten minutes. If he was a "terror," he was a most genial, human terror, for those at the top had continually to justify their place, while those at the bottom had only to fear the tawse for a really abysmal lack of knowledge.

Too busy with his teaching to produce original work, he kept his mind sharp by reading new books on advanced mathematics. New methods were all carefully kept in a series of notebooks for use in his class-work. The present writer well remembers being taught the simpler inequalities from *Hardy*, *Littlewood* and *Polya* and, on later seeing a copy of this book, finding that it had just been published.

Mr Meiklejohn was a keen swimmer all his life, and a month of every summer was spent in exploring some new part of the Highlands and Islands, either on foot or on cycle. To the very end, he kept in touch with most of his senior pupils, all of whom had come to realise that, though at times it may have been hard and strenuous, they had all been through a great formative experience. Having discovered his own mathematical talent late, he devoted his life to ensuring that any in his pupils was soon discovered and then nurtured with every ounce of his ability.

HENRY JACK.

WILLIAM LESLIE THOMSON

1868-1951

The Edinburgh Mathematical Society lost one of its most senior members by the death, on 3rd October 1951, of Mr WILLIAM LESLIE THOMSON, who until the end of the 1950-51 session was most regular in attendance at the Society's meetings.

Mr Thomson was born at Selkirk on 14th February 1868, the eldest of the nine children of a sheep farmer in the Border country;