Francis Robert Sharpe

January 23, 1870 — May 18, 1948

Francis Robert Sharpe, Emeritus Professor of Mathematics, died at his home in Ocean City, New Jersey, on May 18, 1948.

Professor Sharpe was born in Warrington, England, on January 23, 1870. He studied at the University of Manchester and at Cambridge University. At the latter institution he worked under the tutorship of E. W. Hobson, and received the B.A. degree in 1892. He was a Lecturer in Mathematics at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, from 1901 to 1904; and then came to Cornell in 1905 as a graduate student and assistant, receiving the Ph.D. degree from Cornell in 1907. He was appointed to an Instructorship in 1906, an Assistant Professorship in 1910, and a Professorship in 1919, which latter position he held until his retirement as Emeritus Professor in 1938. He was always interested and helpful in departmental administration, and served as Chairman of the Department from 1923 to 1926.

Professor Sharpe's earlier interests were in the field of applied mathematics, especially hydrodynamics, and he published a number of papers in this field in various American mathematical periodicals between 1905 and 1912. At about that time, under the influence of Professor Virgil Snyder, he became interested in the subject of algebraic geometry, and, beginning about 1912, his publications were mostly in this field. He was one of a committee of six mathematicians appointed by the National Research Council to prepare a report on Rational Transformations, which was published in 1928 under the title Selected Topics on Algebraic Geometry.

He was an Associate Editor of the Transactions of the American Mathematical Society from 1917 to 1939, and one of the three Editors from 1930 to 1935.

Professor Sharpe will be remembered by many former Cornell students as a patient and kindly teacher with an unusual English accent. He took a keen interest in the work of his students, both graduate and undergraduate, and gave generously of his time in helping them over their difficulties. He was a devoted husband and father, and took an unusually live interest in the musical training and general education of his daughters.

His colleagues remember him for his mathematical skill, his accurate mathematical intuition, and, above all, for his complete sincerity and integrity.

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