

THE MITTAG-LEFFLER TESTAMENT AND
INSTITUTE.*

WE the undersigned, modifying our joint testament of January 6, 1883, do here declare our last will, which is to bequeath all our possessions, after our deaths, to a foundation bearing the name Mittag-Leffler Mathematical Institute.

This institute shall have for its purpose to maintain and develop still further the position now held by pure mathematics in the four Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Norway, but especially in Sweden, and also to make known and appreciated at its true value beyond their borders the share of these countries in the highest sphere of intellectual life.

In the accomplishment of this task, no objects other than those mentioned above shall be considered. No account shall be taken of personal friendships, or of the desire to lend pecuniary assistance to those in need. Neither shall any consideration be given to the needs of practical life, to examination questions, to political opinions, or to the aims of any science other than *pure* mathematics.

The Institute shall accomplish its task as follows:

1. By preserving and enriching the mathematical library of the undersigned G. Mittag-Leffler, with all that appertains to it in the way of manuscripts, portraits, family collections and souvenirs, and other objects.

The library shall remain in the large stone villa situated on our property in quarter No. 16, called Mitgård, at Djursholm, and shall not be incorporated in any other collection of books. The villa has been built and arranged with this purpose in view, and contains several rooms in which readers can work without disturbance.

The small part of the villa which is now used as a dwelling shall also be devoted, after our deaths, to the library.

The library shall be open to all mathematicians, but, to prevent abuses, only under the authorization of the president of the executive committee of the Institute. The books

* The following extract from the Mittag-Leffler testament was published on the occasion of the celebration at Stockholm of Dr. G. Mittag-Leffler's seventieth birthday, March 16, 1916. It is translated for the BULLETIN by Dr. CAROLINE E. SEELY.

shall not be lent out, and shall be used only in the library building.

2. By granting fellowships, for study at home or abroad, to young people of both sexes, belonging to the four countries above named, who have given evidence of real aptitude for research and discovery in the domain of *pure* mathematics.

Moreover, works of unusual importance, written by inhabitants of these countries, may be made the objects of special recognition, in the form of a gold medal, of the same form and design as the small Nobel medal, and as long as copies shall remain, of a set of the *Acta Mathematica*, in a special binding bearing the name of the author crowned.

3. By awarding prizes for discoveries really worthy of the name in the domain of *pure* mathematics. These prizes shall be given without regard to the nationality of the author. He may belong to any country whatever, and inhabitants of the four Scandinavian countries shall not enjoy, in this matter, any privilege. The prize shall be awarded only for a discovery bringing with it new ideas of such a nature that they give a new impetus to the science. It is desirable, however, that the prize be awarded once at least in every six years. This prize shall consist of a large gold medal and a diploma, of artistic design, the latter stating the scientific reasons for the award, and of as complete a set as possible of the *Acta Mathematica*, in special binding bearing the name of the recipient. He shall be invited to appear personally at Djursholm to receive the prize, a suitable appropriation for his travelling expenses being made. The prize shall be presented at a special ceremony in the great hall of the library.

4. When the annual revenues of the Institute shall exceed the amount indicated below, there may be created, beside the post of director, other remunerated positions, whose holders shall devote themselves to exclusively scientific writing and teaching in the domain of pure mathematics.

To the preceding provisions the following shall be added:

A. The Executive Committee of the Institute shall be composed of the Swedish members of the first class (pure mathematics) of the Royal Academy of Sciences, together with Professors Ivar Fredholm and N. E. Nörlund, during their lifetimes. The Director of the Institute shall also be a member. The Committee may also add to its membership, for a suitable period, any Swedish mathematician of real

eminence who shall agree entirely with the motives that have actuated us but who shall not yet have become a member of the first class of the Academy of Sciences. There may also be added to the Committee a mathematician from one of the three other Scandinavian countries, under the same conditions.

B. As soon as possible, there shall be appointed, to fill the post of scientific and executive Director of the Institute, a mathematician of eminent rank, who shall appear particularly qualified for this charge, and whose activities shall be devoted exclusively to personal research and shall contribute, at the same time, to the ends pursued by the Institute. He shall also, when suitable occasion arises and for strictly scientific purposes, give courses of lectures for a limited number of really gifted auditors.

From the material standpoint, he shall be placed in a more advantageous position than any professor of mathematics in any University in the four Scandinavian countries. He shall be domiciled at Djursholm, and if possible in the immediate neighborhood of the library. An appropriation shall be made for his house rent until a special building shall have been fitted up for his use. His nomination shall be made, on recommendation of the Committee, by His Majesty the King, if, as we venture to hope, His Majesty deigns to consent.

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E. At least once in every six years, the Institute shall hold a special meeting. The mathematicians of the four Scandinavian countries shall receive a personal invitation to attend. We hope that, in consideration of the importance of the Institute for these countries, all will be present if possible.

It is to be desired that the day of this meeting be chosen to coincide with the date of the meeting of the congress of Scandinavian mathematicians at Stockholm. On this occasion shall be read a report of the activities of the Institute since its last special meeting. The ceremony shall be invested with a character of dignity that shall emphasize plainly the elevated mission of the mathematical sciences, as well as the purpose of the activities of the Institute.

Finally, I, the undersigned G. Mittag-Leffler, wish to declare that the model which I have had in mind for the Institute founded by my wife and myself, is the Institut Pasteur at Paris. It seems to me that this Institute has fulfilled the

mission of a center of scientific research better than any university or academy. The universities have everywhere, in addition to their scientific task, another that often interferes very seriously with it, namely the training of teachers and officials. As for the academies, which have been the most effective institutions from the scientific standpoint up to the present time, they suffer from two disadvantages: on the one hand, the main activities of most of their members are not confined to their interests, and on the other hand, when this is not the case, the scientist lacks the stimulus to his own investigations to be found in guiding or assisting the researches of others. Our Institute is not connected with an establishment where experimental research can be carried on, but on the contrary, in conformity with the needs of pure mathematics, with a special and very complete library.

One may find in our country sufficient possibilities for the creation and organization of institutes for the natural sciences, but very few people, apart from specialists, understand the importance and the mission of pure mathematics. That is why the undersigned, G. Mittag-Leffler, has always desired to be able to found an institute like that which we hope to have established by this testament.

Our testament owes its origin to the lively conviction that a people that does not accord to mathematics a high place in its estimation, will never be in a position to fulfil the most lofty tasks of civilization, and to enjoy, in consequence, that international consideration which is itself, in the end, an effective means of preserving our place in the world and of safeguarding our right to live our own life.

The testament contains finally some directions to the effect that the Institute shall enter upon its activities on the death of G. Mittag-Leffler, except for certain life interests to be assured to Madame Signe Mittag-Leffler, and certain directions with regard to the administration of the estate and to certain small life interests and other allowances.