Berry, Arthur (1862–1929)

J. K. Whitaker

A Cambridge mathematician who dabbled briefly in economics, Berry was born on 28 May 1862 in Croydon and died on 15 August 1929 in Cambridge. Entering King’s College, Cambridge, in 1881, he was Senior Wrangler in the Mathematical Tripos of 1885 and became a Fellow of King’s in 1886. After extension lecturing, he returned permanently to Cambridge in 1889. Thereafter, apart from administering Cambridge extension lecturing from 1891 to 1895, he devoted himself to King’s and the teaching of mathematics, highly regarded but publishing little.

Berry’s social and political interests were broad. As an undergraduate he had co-founded the Cambridge Economic Club, to which he delivered a paper on factory legislation (Berry 1886). He must have attended Alfred Marshall’s lectures and subsequently, at the latter’s request, lectured on mathematical economics from 1891 to 1900, after which W.E. Johnson took over. Marshall also instigated Berry’s only two publications on economic theory (Berry 1891a, b). The first, which survives only as an abstract, was a significant contribution to the emerging marginal productivity theory of distribution on lines already sketched by Marshall. The second was a masterful resolution of a dispute between Marshall and F.Y. Edgeworth over the theory of barter, background letters on which are reproduced by Guillebaud (1961, Vol. II, pp. 791–8). After 1891 Berry drifted away from economics, partly because of heavy administrative work, and partly because of friction with Marshall over the question of women’s status at Cambridge.

As an economist (and also more generally) Berry was talented but without a strong drive towards original work. His best-known publication was a history of astronomy for extension audiences (Berry 1898). See The Times (1929) for further biographical information.

Selected Works


**References**
