
History of the Theories of Aether and Electricity. Volume II. *Sir Edmund Whittaker.* Philosophical Library, New York. 1954. xi+319 pp. \$8.50.

This is the second volume of the most complete account to date of the subject. The first volume, covering the period up to 1900, was reviewed in the *Journal* last year (53: 180, 1953). The author intended to cover the first half of the 20th Century in one volume, but it now appears that two will be required, since the present work extends only to 1926. This is, of course, a most fascinating period in the history of electromagnetic theory covering, as it does, the discovery of Special Relativity, Quantum Theory, General Relativity, Matrix Mechanics, and Wave Mechanics. No one could be better qualified to give an account of the history of these subjects than the famous British scientist who has devoted the years since his retirement (at 73) from his position as professor of mathematics at Edinburgh mainly to historical studies. He is now 81, and is apparently carrying out his task with undiminished vigor. The current volume is a brilliant account of discoveries so recent that they have barely begun to be taught in present-day physics courses. Physicists and historians of science everywhere will eagerly await the appearance of Volume III; bringing the account up to virtually yesterday will require an Olympian detachment which few men would be capable of achieving more fully than the indomitable Sir Edmund.

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