Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers

Bour, Edmond

Born Gray, Haute-Saône, France, 19 May 1832

Died Paris, France, 9 March 1866

Edmond Bour was a professor and mathematician who contributed to celestial mechanics. Bour, the son of Joseph Bour and Gabrielle Jeunet, entered the École Polytechnique in 1850, graduating first in his class in 1852. He then moved to the École des mines. On 5 March 1855, Bour presented "On the Integration of Differential Equations of Analytical Mechanics" to the Academy of Sciences; a shortened version of the work appeared in J. Liouville's *Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics*. In July of that year, he was appointed professor of mechanics and mining at the École des mines at Saint-Étienne

Back at the Paris École des mines, Bour presented two theses on 3 December 1855. One concerned the three-body problem, the other the theory of attraction. In 1859, he became a lecturer on descriptive geometry in Paris, a post he held until the following year when he became a professor at the École des mines. Then in 1861, he became a professor of mechanics at the École Polytechnique. In 1862, Bour was a candidate for membership in the Academy of Sciences, but he lost to Pierre-Ossian Bonnet

In 1858, the prize question in mathematics for the Academy of Sciences concerned the differential equations resulting when any surface is pressed against a given surface. Of five papers submitted, the judges agreed that three provided adequate solutions, but Bour was awarded the prize for his masterful analysis of the case where the given surface was itself a solid of revolution. The judges hoped that he would generalize his analysis, but unfortunately, Bour could not extend the work, dying of an incurable disease.

Christian Nitschelm

Selected Reference

Taton, René (1970). "Bour, Edmond." In *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, edited by Charles Coulston Gillispie. Vol. 2, pp. 350–351. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.