

## DAVID EUGENE SMITH—IN MEMORIAM

With the death of David Eugene Smith on July 29, 1944, at age eighty-four, the world lost one of the most colorful and influential figures in the fields of the history and teaching of mathematics. It is not possible to choose the one in which Professor Smith accomplished the most or reached the greatest number of individuals. He lives on in the lives of innumerable persons whom he inspired as teachers and whom he inspired as writers, as well as in his own writings. He will live on long after all these persons have gone, in the great library that he presented to Columbia University in 1931. In the limited space at our disposal, we shall try chiefly to give some idea of the immense value of this collection for the history of mathematics.

Let us first note briefly some facts concerning Doctor Smith's career. He was born at Cortland, N. Y., in January 1860, and here he received his early education to the extent that he spoke both Latin and Greek as a boy. When the Cortland Normal School opened, he was the first student to enroll, and at seventeen years of age he entered Syracuse University. During the years 1881-87, Syracuse conferred on him the degrees of Ph.B., Ph.M. and Ph.D. From 1881-84, he practiced law at Cortland, N. Y., before taking up the teaching of mathematics at the State Normal School in Cortland until 1891. For the next seven years, he was professor of mathematics at the Michigan State Normal College, Ypsilanti, and then for three years principal of the New York State Normal School at Brockport. In 1901, he accepted an appointment as professor of mathematics at Teachers College, Columbia University. Here he continued until his retirement as professor emeritus in 1926.

Already in 1900 he had commenced to attract attention by his writings and had started the publication of the series of elementary mathematical texts which were later enormously popular, some of them being translated into Spanish, Arabic, and Chinese. For several years about 1930, more than a million copies of his books were sold annually. It was not long after coming to Columbia University that Doctor Smith started the series of annual trips to different parts of the world, and the collection of items for the Library, now at the service of scholars in beautifully appointed quarters.

Professor Smith was a collector from his youth up. He once related that as a boy he had read a Victorian novel, *St. Elmo*, by Augusta J. Evans, published first in 1866. In this book he found a description of the furnishings of some "quaint and elegant rooms." A few phrases