

THE FIRST JOSIAH WILLARD GIBBS LECTURE

The first Josiah Willard Gibbs Lecture was delivered under the auspices of this Society on February 29, 1924, by Professor M. I. Pupin, of Columbia University, in the auditorium of the Engineering Societies' Building, New York City. A large and distinguished audience was present, including, besides members of the Society, many physicists, chemists, and engineers who had been invited to attend.

In introducing the speaker, President Veblen spoke as follows:

"In instituting the Willard Gibbs Lectures, the American Mathematical Society has recognized the dual character of mathematics. On the one hand, mathematics is one of the essential emanations of the human spirit,—a thing to be valued in and for itself, like art or poetry. Gibbs made notable contributions to this side of mathematics in his work on vector analysis and multiple algebras.

"On the other hand, mathematics is the handmaiden and helper of the other sciences, both in their most abstract generalizations and in their most concrete applications to industry. In this field Gibbs may be justly described as transcendental,—even if we think only of his work in thermodynamics. For his paper *On the equilibrium of heterogeneous substances* is one of the foundation stones of physical chemistry.

"It is hoped that the Willard Gibbs Lectures will remind the mathematicians of something that we fear they sometimes forget,—the existence of an outside world. It is equally hoped that they will remind the outside world that mathematics is a going concern,—not a pedantic exercise for the torment of school boys, but a living organism growing larger and stronger each year. Also it is intended that these should be lectures which we can all understand. We hope not to have an experience like one I heard of